Preliminary Evaluation Report for the Gowa: Teachable Moments for Apache Children Early Literacy Program

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Program Overview

Gowa: Teachable Moments for Apache Children (https://extension.arizona.edu/gowa) is an early literacy program developed and delivered by University of Arizona Cooperative Extension in collaboration with a community advisory board of stakeholders from the San Carlos Apache Tribal Lands.

The Gowa: Teachable Moments for Apache Children program promotes the early literacy skills of young children on the San Carlos Apache Tribal Lands by helping adult caregivers increase their use of five early literacy practices (reading, talking, singing, playing, and writing). This program aims to build on what parents, grandparents, child care providers, and other caregivers are already doing by providing fun interactive activities that can be added to everyday life. The program also provides participants with books and other early literacy materials.

In this report we provide preliminary evaluation findings for programming offered between April 2021 and June 2023. The Gowa: Teachable Moments for Apache Children program consists of four types of programming: Drop-In Literacy Events for parents, a Multisession Program for Parents, Professional Development Events for Early Care and Education (ECE) Professionals, and a Multisession Program for ECE Professionals.

Preliminary Evaluation Findings

Drop-In Literacy Events for Parents

The Drop-In Literacy Events for parents are single-session early literacy events held in the community for families with zero-to-six-year-old children. Each session is 30-60 minutes long and includes activities that promote reading, talking, singing, playing, and writing, such as storytime events, telling family stories, and letter scavenger hunts.
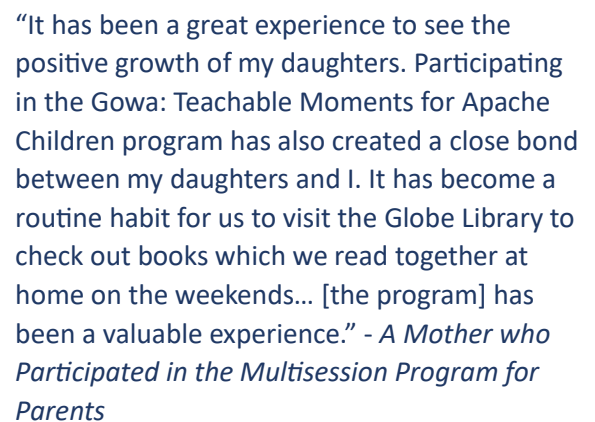
Between April 2021 and March 2023, we held 41 drop-in literacy events that were attended by over 350 families. Seventeen of these 41 events were held online and the remaining 24 were held in-person in locations across the San Carlos Apache Tribal Lands, for example at the Globe Public Library, Bylas Exhibit Hall Building, Seven Mile Activity Center, and Mount Turnbull Academy.

In total, 363 families with young children participated in the drop-in events. Almost all (93%) of the adult participants identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native. At the end of each event, we asked the adult participants for feedback on the event. Almost all of them reported that they liked the event (98%) and would attend another one (94%). The high number of participants who indicated that they would attend another event is encouraging as the drop-in events are designed to familiarize families with the program and encourage them to attend future drop-in events and/or a multisession program.

Multisession Program for Parents

The multisession program for parents is a six-session program for parents and other adult caregivers of young preschool-aged children. Participants attend six hour-long sessions which are usually held once a week in the same location. The sessions cover topics such as the alphabet, using environmental print (letters and words that are found in the community, e.g., on signs), and how to use nature and science to promote early literacy.

The multisession program for parents was held twice; once in May 2022 and once in January 2023. Six parents attended these programs, all were invited to participate in the evaluation study, and four agreed to participate. All participants in the evaluation study were over 18 years old and read and signed an informed consent form describing the evaluation study before participating.

> "It has been a great experience to see the positive growth of my daughters. Participating in the Gowa: Teachable Moments for Apache Children program has also created a close bond between my daughters and I. It has become a routine habit for us to visit the Globe Library to check out books which we read together at home on the weekends… [the program] has been a valuable experience." - *A Mother who Participated in the Multisession Program for Parents*

Two of the parents who participated in the evaluation study identified as San Carlos Apache, one identified as Navajo/Apache and one identified as Asian. The participants had a wide range of educational attainment, one had a high school diploma or GED, one an associate degree, one a bachelor's degree, and one a graduate degree.

During the first and the last session of the multisession program for parents, participants were asked six questions about their use of early literacy practices. Three out of the four adult participants answered these questions at both the beginning and the end of the program, and one participant only answered the questions at the beginning of program. As shown in Table 1, the participants' answers to these questions suggest that most of them were reading and telling stories to their children before participating in the program. This suggests that we might need to refine our recruitment methods to reach families who will benefit the most from the program.

Table 1		
	Before the program	**After the Program**
How often do you…		
read stories to your children?	2 days a week on average for the 4 participants	3 days a week on average for the 3 participants
tell stories to your children?	4 days a week on average for the 4 participants	3 days a week on average for the 3 participants
	Number who Strongly Agreed Before the program	**Number who Strongly Agreed After the Program**
How much do you agree with the following statements?		
I feel comfortable looking through books with my child.	4 out of 4 participants	3 out of 3 participants
Reading or telling stories to my child helps him/her use his/her imagination.	4 out of 4 participants	3 out of 3 participants
My child likes having stories told or read to him/her.	3 out of 4 participants	3 out of 3 participants
Reading or telling stories to my child helps us connect emotionally.	2 out of 4 participants	3 out of 3 participants

At the end of the multisession program for parents, participants were also asked if they used 12 early literacy practices more often since attending the Gowa: Teachable Moments for Apache Children program. As shown in Table 2, nearly all of the participants indicated using the 12 early literacy practices more often after attending the program.

Table 2	
Do you do these activities more often since attending one or more Gowa: Teachable Moments for Apache Children program sessions?	
	Number Who Answered Yes
Talk with my child	3 out of 3 participants
Sing with my child	3 out of 3 participants
Play with my child	3 out of 3 participants
Read to my child	3 out of 3 participants
Tell my child a story	3 out of 3 participants
Look at pictures in a book with my child	3 out of 3 participants
Point out letters or words on signs to my child	3 out of 3 participants
Say and explain a new word to my child while reading together	3 out of 3 participants
Ask my child questions while reading together	3 out of 3 participants

	Number Who Answered Yes
Show or help my child their name or other words	2 out of 3 participants
Write with my child	2 out of 3 participants
Play games or do puzzles with my child	2 out of 2 participants*

Note: *One of the participants did not select an answer to the last question.

Participants were also asked about their satisfaction with the program and their perception of the program's quality at the end of the multisession program for parents. All three parents reported that they found the program to be enjoyable, interesting, and important and two of the three participants indicated that they found the program to be challenging.

Professional Development Events for Early Care and Education (ECE) Professionals

The professional development events are single-session workshops for ECE professionals. We held two professional development sessions in 2022, both of which were developed in response to requests or suggestions from community members. Following both sessions, we asked participants to complete a short evaluation survey.

When asked about what they found most useful about the book sharing workshop, one participant responded, "Just feeling comfortable being indigenous. It's great to see that there is a native influence in language and literacy that we can all relate to."

On January 28, 2022, we held an online book sharing workshop during which an Apache educator and a Navajo children's book author talked about how to use children's books and oral storytelling with young children and participants shared children's books by and about Indigenous people. Sixty-nine people attended this workshop and 55 completed an evaluation survey. Seventy eight percent of the participants who completed an evaluation survey reported that what they learned during the workshop would be useful in their work often and the remaining 22% said it would be useful sometimes. Just over half of the attendees reported that it would be hard or very hard to learn about the topics covered during the workshop elsewhere. View a recording of this workshop here: https://extension.arizona.edu/native-book-sharing-workshop-spring-2022

On June 24, 2022, we held an in-person professional development workshop titled "Creating Engaging Videos Using a Smartphone" at the Gilson Wash Activity Center in San Carlos, AZ. This session was purposefully kept small (it was limited to 15 participants) so that hands-on instruction could be provided. Eleven of the 15 people who registered, attended. Ninety-one percent of the 11 participants reported that they would use the information they learned in the workshop in their work often or sometimes. About half of the participants said that the information they learned would be hard or very hard to find outside of the workshop. View a recording of this workshop here: https://extension.arizona.edu/creating-engaging-videos-using-smartphone

Multisession Program for Early Care and Education Professionals

The multisession program for ECE professionals is a seven-session program for Head Start and Pre-K teachers and center- and home-based child care providers who teach and care for preschool-aged children. Participants attend seven hour-long sessions which are usually held once a week in the same location. Each session focuses on how participants can increase their use of talking, reading, singing, playing, and writing in their classrooms or centers to prepare children to learn to read.

Between January and June 2023, the multisession program for ECE professionals was offered three times, once at St. Charles School (11 participants), once at Peridot Head Start Center (9 participants), and once at Rice Elementary School (6 participants). Of the 26 total participants, 25 identified as Native American or Alaska Native. Of the 21 people who reported their tribal affiliation, the majority (86%) identified as San Carlos Apache. Almost all of the participants (93%) indicated that they typically teach or care for 11 or more children at a time. Eighty-five percent of the participants had

been an ECE teacher or provider for 3-4 years and 15% had been one for 1-2 years. All of the 26 participants agreed to participate in the evaluation study.

At the end of sessions two through six, participants were asked a series of questions about the knowledge they gained and their confidence in using the skills they learned during the session. As shown in Table 3, after the sessions, the majority of participants felt they gained knowledge about and were more confident using early literacy practices.

Table 3				
As a result of today's session, do you know more about the importance of:	YES, a lot more	YES, some more	NO, not really	DOES NOT APPLY, I already knew about it
• talking with young children to promote early literacy? *(asked at the end of Session 2)*	18 participants	3 participants	0 participants	0 participants
• extending conversations with young children to multiple turns? *(asked at the end of Session 2)*	10 participants	11 participants	0 participants	0 participants
• reading with young children to promote early literacy? *(asked at the end of Session 3)*	7 participants	9 participants	0 participants	1 participant
• writing with young children to promote early literacy? *(asked at the end of Session 4)*	9 participants	7 participants	0 participants	0 participants
• singing with young children to promote early literacy? *(asked at the end of Session 5)*	10 participants	5 participants	0 participants	0 participants
• play to promote early literacy? *(asked at the end of Session 6)*	12 participants	5 participants	0 participants	0 participants

As a result of today's session, are you feeling more confident about using these skills with young children?	YES, definitely more confident	SOMEWHAT more confident	NO, not really any more confident	DOES NOT APPLY, I was confident already
• How to extend conversations with young children *(asked at the end of Session 2)*	16 participants	5 participants	0 participants	0 participants
• How to use games and activities to extend conversations with young children *(asked at the end of Session 2)*	18 participants	3 participants	0 participants	0 participants
• Engaging young children before and during reading *(asked at the end of Session 3)*	11 participants	5 participants	0 participants	1 participant
• Extending ideas and vocabulary words from books to other activities with young children *(asked at the end of Session 3)*	11 participants	6 participants	0 participants	0 participants
• Using the words and letters in the environment around you to promote early literacy *(asked at the end of Session 3)*	12 participants	5 participants	0 participants	0 participants
• Recognizing the different kinds of pre-writing markings that children write or draw before they learn to write letters and words *(asked at the end of Session 4)*	12 participants	3 participants	1 participant	0 participants
• Knowing why it is important to use multisensory activities *(asked at the end of Session 4)*	13 participants	3 participants	0 participants	0 Participants

As a result of today's session, are you feeling more confident about using these skills with young children?	YES, definitely more confident	SOMEWHAT more confident	NO, not really any more confident	DOES NOT APPLY, I was confident already
• How to incorporate multisensory activities to promote writing *(asked at the end of Session 4)*	13 participants	2 participants	1 participant	0 participants
• How to use names to help young children start to learn to write *(asked at the end of Session 4)*	13 participants	2 participants	1 participant	0 participants
• How to use songs to teach words and sounds *(asked at the end of Session 5)*	12 participants	3 participants	0 participants	0 participants
• How to use songs and singing to transition between activities or parts of the day *(asked at the end of Session 5)*	12 participants	3 participants	0 participants	0 participants
• How to use games to teach letters and words *(asked at the end of Session 6)*	12 participants	5 participants	0 participants	0 participants
• How to add letters and words to familiar games *(asked at the end of Session 6)*	12 participants	5 participants	0 participants	0 participants
• How to use a journal to promote writing *(asked at the end of Session 6)*	13 participants	4 participants	0 participants	0 participants
• How to use a journal to track children's progress and to share that progress with their parents or family members *(asked at the end of Session 6)*	14 participants	3 participants	0 participants	0 participants

Note: There were a different number of participants who attended each session.

At the end of the seventh session (the last session), participants were asked if they used twelve early literacy practices more often since attending the Gowa: Teachable Moments for Apache Children program. As shown in Table 4, most participants reported that they used the early literacy practices more often after attending the program.

Table 4	
Do you do these activities more often since attending one or more Gowa: Teachable Moments for Apache Children program sessions?	**Number of participants who answered yes**
1. Have conversations with young children that involve several back-and-forth turns	16 out of 16 participants
2. Use games, activities, or other strategies specifically to encourage longer conversations with young children	16 out of 16 participants
3. Use strategies before and after reading to engage young children	15 out of 16 participants
4. Use the words and letters in the environment around you to promote early literacy	15 out of 16 participants
5. Use strategies to help children to identify, say, and write the letters in their names	15 out of 16 participants
6. Use multisensory activities to promote writing with young children	14 out of 16 participants
7. Use songs to teach words and sounds to young children	14 out of 16 participants
8. Use songs and singing to transition between activities or parts of the day	14 out of 16 participants
9. Use games to teach letters and words	14 out of 16 participants
10. Extend ideas and vocabulary words from the books you read with young children to other activities with young children	13 out of 16 participants
11. Use journals to promote writing	11 out of 16 participants
12. Use journals to track and share children's progress in learning pre-reading skills with their parents or other family members	8 out of 16 participants

Note: There were 10 participants who did not complete these questions which were administered during the seventh session.

At the end of the last session, participants were also asked about their satisfaction with the program and their perception of the program's quality. All 16 of the participants who attended the last session felt that the facilitator was knowledgeable, participating was worthwhile, and would recommend the program to others who work with young children. Additionally, nearly all providers very much agreed that the programming was enjoyable (all 16 participants), interesting (15 out of 16 participants), and important (14 out of 16 participants). Thirteen of 16 participants felt the program was very much or somewhat challenging, one found it a little challenging and two reported that it was not at all challenging.

Conclusion

This report provides a summary of the evaluation data that were collected for the Gowa: Teachable Moments for Apache Children program between April 2021 and June 2023. The data reported here suggest that program participants were using early literacy practices before participating in the program and continued to do so after participating. Participants reported being satisfied with the programming and finding it worthwhile. However, the sample sizes presented here are very small and therefore it is hard to draw conclusions from these data. Continued evaluation is needed. We plan to continue offering the program and collecting evaluation data through at least the end of August 2024, after which another evaluation report will be produced.