

# Local Service Initiatives

**Name of Initiative:** Montana Tribal Head Start Literacy Project

**Station:** Montana PBS

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## Briefly describe the initiative and be as specific as you can be about the products or services that the initiative includes.

This initiative is designed to improve literacy behaviors at the preschool level utilizing Rocky Boy Head Start (initially) and the Between the Lions children's program and materials from WGBH, Boston. It is based on work developed in New Mexico Tribal Head Starts last year and is one of the prototypes for a national roll-out of a literacy initiative for Tribal Head Starts nationally – how the materials are adapted and enhanced with culturally appropriate stories, books, and language. As a collaborative, WGBH has provided DVDs, books, curriculum, training, and bins of materials to be used in 5 classrooms on the Rocky Boy Chippewa-Cree Reservation in rural Montana; MontanaPBS is overseeing the project, brought the initial participants together, and will design the state-wide implementation; the Office of Public Instruction and the Montana State Head Start Collaboration Office have provided technical assistance and some financial aid with hopes of legislative funding pending review of this first, limited implementation.

## How does this initiative fit into your “portfolio” of other Local Service Initiatives? Is it one of many initiatives and projects, or does it take the bulk of your “Local” resources?

Montana is a vast state with a high percentage of citizens living in poverty. MontanaPBS has provided hundreds of workshops for parents and child care providers in the area of literacy. It is also a state with seven American Indian Reservations where low literacy is of concern. The Rocky Boy project extends the overall aim of the MontanaPBS to provide effective literacy materials and workshops to the early childhood community. While this is an extension of the former RTL framework and presently is in the testing phase, we hope it will become the hallmark of the literacy service we provide in Montana.

## What station assets, competencies and/or relationships does the initiative build upon?

This builds upon relationships previously developed (Montana Head Start Collaboration Office), relationships that have been project specific (Office of Public Instruction) and new relationships (WGBH and Rocky Boy Tribal Head Start). It brings the strengths of programming and outreach together while serving an underserved population. It also enables MontanaPBS and OPI to pursue state funds designed for Indian Education. While this is an unfunded project, at this time, we anticipate many outcomes, some financial, that we do not at present have in place. WGBH is pursuing monies at the federal level, we will pursue funds at the state legislative level, and success in this project will open the doors for a variety of foundation, corporate and private support.

## How would you describe the community benefit of this work? What needs are being addressed?

The literacy rate of those living on the Rocky Boy reservation is low – schools are not meeting No Child Left Behind standards and fall under the deficient category. This project is designed to address some of those problems – specifically phonemic awareness and phonics at the preschool level. We know that in other test areas, there are reports of children reading sooner and with better skills. The ability to read is paramount to success for any citizen, but a special concern on this reservation.

## Who is the “customer?”

4 and 5 year olds at Rocky Boy Tribal Head Start

**How do you know or measure if the customer's needs are being met?**

While there is no formal evaluation, we will be looking closely at reading behaviors and doing follow-up with both teachers and Head Start personnel because we do want to make this a state-wide program. Also, WGBH will be using this to learn how to extend it nationally.

**Who benefits from the initiative?**

Children, parents, teachers and community at Rocky Boy

**How do you measure the benefits?**

Anecdotal  
Whether or not teachers see value in the program and want to continue  
Reading rates of children as they progress through school

**Describe the financial model for the initiative, being as specific as possible. How much does it cost? What are the sources and amount of revenue? How does it fit into your station's overall economic model?**

This is speculative only – the station has no outside money for this project. WGBH provided travel and training funds, curricular materials, and technology. MontanaPBS funded travel for the Director of Outreach to participate in the New Mexico training and to conduct training at Rocky Boy. The Montana State Head Start Collaboration Office provided initial funds to commission story boards for cultural application. We are hoping for a federal footprint through WGBH, state funding through OPI and their Indian Education specialist, and grants for expansion.

**Could other stations use this idea or model? Would it work for any size station or licensee type?**

Yes, to a certain extent. The purpose is to expand to other states but we can only do that with demonstrated success and financial support, so, while MontanaPBS is participating without funding at this point, implementation in other states would not be on this financial model!