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Jerry Gomez: Just a couple of lines that I think are so meaningful, that are the heart of Head Start, and this is 1970, it says, "Many of the benefits of Head Start are rooted in change. These changes must take place in the family itself, in the community, and in the attitudes of people and institutions that have an impact on both. It's clear that the success of Head Start bringing about substantial changes demands the fullest involvement of parents, substitutes and families of children enrolled in programs."

"Unless this happens, the goals of Head Start will not be achieved and the program itself will remain a creative experience for the preschool child in a setting that is not reinforced by needed changes in social systems into which the child will move after his Head Start experience."

Bessie Baluyot: We, here in the Head Start program, we try to help the families and the children to develop their potentials -- whatever they have, 'specially the parents. Educate the parents to be able to reinforce what we are teaching in the classroom.

Carol Robson: As we progressed, we understood that your education staff must communicate with your parent involvement staff, that your health staff has to be involved -- not just on the initial screening -- because there are so many pieces that interact for that holistic approach. I think that's the strongest foundation for Head Start.

Joyce Huggins: When we finally got those series of Rainbow booklets that talked about the various aspects of the program, people had a much better idea of what we were trying to say, which was it is very important whether the child has good nutrition, whether the child has adequate dental care, whether there's anybody giving inoculations, whether there's anybody taking care of the allergies of this young child. And the purpose of all of that comes together when the parents finally get some understanding of what it is to raise a young child.

Frankie Hoover Gibson: Head Start says that we not only need you for your child we need you for you and the program needs you to strengthen everything we're doing. That was the mission, and also there were teeth in the law that said, you know, local programs, you've got a lot of flexibility but there are some givens, and one of them is that parents will be equal partners at the table.

Amanda Bryans: So one day we were interviewing for a part-time bus monitor which is one of the jobs that you didn't need a lot of credentials to be eligible for. And we interviewed a woman who was probably only -- I think she was 21 years old and she didn't make eye contact with me during the whole interview. I asked her why she wanted the job and she said "Because my mother said I can't lie on the couch watching my stories all day anymore."

"She told me I got to get out and do something." I asked her what strengths she had and she said as far as she could tell she didn't have any strengths. And she meant it. I asked her about weaknesses and she said she really didn't want to work. So eventually the interview ended and it was painful for me.

And we had these little checklists. We were supposed to make it objective and nobody discussed anything until we all filled out our little score forms. So I had about close to zero on my score form at the end and then it's finally time to talk, and I said, "Well, she's not qualified." And the parents said, "We think we should hire her." And they all had scores, you know, in the eighties. And I said, "Well, what did you see?" And they said, "Well, she's somebody who needs a chance and she seems like somebody who could be caring with children and we just think that she seemed good."

So we did hire her and it became immediately clear she was unusual because she would go out and do the bus runs and then she would spend the time in the middle of the day volunteering in the classroom. Most of the bus monitors would

go off and they'd go home and take care of their personal business and that kind of thing. But every single day, she spent the middle of the day volunteering in the classroom. The other thing was the kids really liked her.

Right from the start, even before we'd done all our great training about child development, children were very tuned in to her and enjoyed her and she seemed to enjoy them. And she smiled all the time when she was with them. She hadn't even made eye contact with me but with the children, she was talking and smiling and they liked her. Gradually through that year, she did participate in lots of training and she got really good. And within a year or two, she became a teacher assistant and she got her CDA, and then she went to college and she became a teacher.

And I have to say, she's one of the most talented teachers of young children I've ever seen in my life. She's just great. And, again, if Head Start didn't have the parent governance built into its requirements -- into its regulations -- its legislative foundation -- that wouldn't have happened.

Carol Brunson Day: Head Start has contributed a tremendous amount to the professional growth and development of the personnel in this field.

A combination of, I guess, really starting from the supplementary training initiatives that were part of the founding of the Head Start program carried through to the founding of the CDA program and the work that has been done to support staff to receive credentials, to move up the career ladder and to develop solid career skills in early childhood education has just been a tremendous model in the field that has been emulated in many state funded programs, in privately funded programs, and all across the profession. It's just had a huge impact.

Peter Pizzolongo: I think of my experiences in the Head Start Training and Technical Assistance network in the 1980s. I see that as something that really was a significant contribution to Head Start and to the field of early childhood and family support programs. No other part of the early childhood services system has such an involved training and technical assistance network. The training and technical assistance providers, my colleagues, were truly a group of stellar early childhood specialists and always trying innovative ways of helping staff to improve their performance.

And something else that was interesting about the training network is the members of this network were just as committed to the mission of project Head Start as were the staff and the families. So it truly became another extended part of that total Head Start family.

Don Bolce: We put stuff in the legislation that said that one quarter of any new money had to go into quality improvement. So you couldn't just expand the program without also strengthening it. We also put something in the legislation that said 2 percent of the total money has got to go for training and technical assistance so that we could continue to strengthen the program, provide training to new people, to continue the kind of innovation that had always been a part of Head Start.

Hank Aguirre: You have to understand what Head Start is about. Not only is it an early childhood education program but it's also a way of providing monies, resources, programs to local areas.

Eric Locklear: Head Start fits beautifully into that inherent heart of tribal communities and it does so in a way that honors the language the customs, the foods, the traditions, the myths of each of our tribes. And I think when Indian people and Alaska native people found that that opportunity existed for them, they latched onto it. It gave stability to their communities and stability to their way of life.

Ray Collins: One of the challenges that we faced in the early seventies was converting Head Start to a what was then thought of as a full-year program primarily 8 to 9 months in duration and providing much more intensive and enriched experiences for the children participating in the program.

Lilian Sugarman: First the change from the summer program to a full-year program but still being center-based and then going into the home-based program. And I remember in 1987 that Dollie Wolverton and I worked on the home-based institute and that also changed things for Head Start because that was the beginning of annual institutes for all of the different components. And that was an opportunity for people to really understand that Head Start was something

that happened across the country.

Marci Massei: In 1982, our agency had a number of families coming from Southeast Asia on a secondary migration. And I was very concerned that our agency would be out of compliance with standards because there was nobody in our agency or in our profession that spoke Hmong, Mien, Khmer, or Vietnamese. So I wrote a letter to the regional office. "What do I do? Do we continue out of compliance? Give me some direction to go." So I got invited to the regional office.

A lovely discussion with everyone there and it had to be Mary Lewis' brilliance that helped us think through what is the lifestyle of these families? "Was there anyone learning to speak English?" she asked. "Yes. The fathers of the family. No, the mothers can't come and volunteer because it's not part of the cultural pattern. So we don't have volunteers that can come because the fathers at this stage are saying the mothers stay at home." So Mary says, "Well, what do these dads do all day?" And I said, "They're at school learning English."

And she says, "What time do they get out of school?" And I said, "5:30." She says, "Then start your classes then." And so in 1983, our agency started the first evening Head Starts. Subsequent to this, different Head Start programs started doing this. And we found that we didn't do it only with our Southeast Asian families. It became very popular. Guess what. I thought we were going to have a problem with teachers wanting to teach at night. They loved it. The families loved it. How did we meet the performance standards? We put up flood lights for the outdoor playground.

Carmen Bovell-Chester: Head Start has really set the tone for child development across the nation because whatever Head Start does, whatever Head Start requires, whatever Head Start implements, soon it becomes the status quo for early childhood education nationally and internationally because since I've been at the Bureau I've hosted-- along with other Bureau staff-- individuals from several other nations, several countries who are interested in the Head Start model and want to learn more about it so that they can replicate it in their own countries.

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