

YA' XO CH'OYNE' CH'O YAL T' SIT-TE'  
A MENTORING MODEL FOR THE HOOPA VALLEY TRIBE TO IMPROVE  
THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

### YA' XO CH'OYNE' CH'O YAL T' SIT-TE' A MENTORING MODEL FOR THE HOOPA VALLEY TRIBE TO IMPROVE THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS

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This thesis project details a mentoring model developed for the Hoopa Valley Tribe to improve the academic performance of Native American students. The subject of academic performance of Native American students encompasses many issues and barriers. While the barriers are many, the Hoopa Tribal Learning Center could not examine all of the barriers, therefore a mentoring program was designed to help students navigate through the barriers by providing culturally appropriate, structured mentoring support. The Hoopa Mentoring Program was based on current mentoring research and the historical methodology of the traditional education model of the Hupa people. The program has shown some remarkable improvements in the academic performance of its students. This thesis features some preliminary data of student performance before and after the academic intervention through the mentoring program.

Finally, this project explores each of the program elements and details a step by step process to include all key stakeholders, identify at-risk students, get student buy-in, provide structured support by developing individualized education plans, continued accountability, adaptability, recognition, and ongoing mentoring support.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	ii
LIST OF TABLES .....	v
LIST OF APPENDICES .....	vi
INTRODUCTION .....	1
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	5
Introduction of Research.....	5
Defining Mentoring .....	6
Effective Mentoring Components.....	7
Mentor— Mentee Relationship.....	8
Program Components.....	10
Mentoring Outcomes .....	12
Academic .....	13
Self concept.....	14
Life skills. ....	15
At-Risk Minority Students .....	15
Conclusion .....	18
METHODS .....	19
Foundation—Historical Educational .....	19
Cultural Context: The Education of the Na:tinixwe .....	20
Introduction of the Na:tinixwe.....	20
A brief background .....	21

Passing Knowledge to Children .....	26
Connecting Methodologies .....	30
State of Affairs .....	32
RESULTS .....	42
The Hoopa Tribal Education Mentoring Program .....	42
The Process of Developing the Mentoring Program.....	44
Elements of the Hoopa Mentoring Program .....	45
Infrastructure—The Hoopa Learning Center .....	47
The Three C’s: Communication—Coordination—Consistency .....	50
Identify at-risk students.....	52
Assign a Mentor/Academic Case Worker.....	54
Assessment.....	54
The Student Interview: Student Buy-in .....	55
Develop an Individualized Educational Plan .....	58
Adaptability.....	60
Recognition—Everyone Needs a Cheerleader.....	61
Culture is not an extra subject.....	62
Preliminary Data .....	65
The Hoopa Tribal Mentoring Program Booklet .....	68
CONCLUSION.....	69
REFERENCES .....	71

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. KTJUSD Algebra 1 Data 2008 .....	35
Table 2. KTJUSD English-Language Arts Data 2008.....	36
Table 3. KTJUSD U.S. History Data 2008.....	37
Table 4. KTJUSD Science Data 2008.....	37
Table 5. Hoopa Tribal Members Cohort 2009-2010 .....	40
Table 6. Student Evaluation.....	82
Table 7. Progress Rubric.....	84

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A. Hoopa Tribal Mentoring Booklet ..... 77

## INTRODUCTION

When I first started working in the education department for the Hoopa Valley Tribe, I was asked the question, “Some of the kids come from troubled homes, which can affect their education—what would you do to help these kids?” At that time this wasn’t a question I had researched or deeply pondered, but it is a question that over the years I am learning to answer. Without deeply thinking about what I would say, and without hesitation, an instinctual response came out of my mouth, I said, “I can’t control what goes on in their homes, but I can give them as much support as possible outside of their homes.” Five years later, and now as the Education Director for the Hoopa Valley Tribe, my answer hasn’t changed. And although my considerations and strategies has expanded as my understanding of the barriers of our students has increased—it has been my observation that the kids that successfully get through our educational system, generally have strong support systems—and the kids that fall through the cracks, generally do not have very strong support systems. Of course there are exceptions to every rule, but I found this to be true more often than not. I have also found that to build on the foundation of cultural awareness and culturally appropriate methods significantly improves the relationship with the student and eventual student buy-in to want to improve. If I were to create a formula for this, it would look something like this: (cultural foundation x student + comprehensive support) = educational success.

There are many obstacles and barriers for any student in this day and age; low motivation, disconnectedness, poor study habits, lack of resources, peer pressure,

alcohol/drugs, teen pregnancy, the list goes on and on. For the children that reside on the Hoopa Valley Reservation, the list expands to include; a negative social cycle rooted in historical atrocities (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 2002) compounded with socio-economic hardships (Jenkins, 1999). These contribute to a high incidence of alcoholism and drug addiction (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 2002), and one of the highest incidences of domestic violence compared to the national average (Dept. of Justice). All of this can effect children's educational outcomes. In addition many of the children come from homes with lower percentages of college educated parents who are unable, or unwilling, to help their children navigate through the education process. Furthermore, systemic problems exist within the public education system, which do not adequately account for differing world views and cultural differences. These also contribute to student disconnectedness from the education system (Aragon, 2002; Estrin & Nelson-Barber, 1995), and create further gaps in education achievement. Additionally, the remoteness of the Hoopa Valley Reservation presents physical barriers with limited exposure to the world outside of the reservation, as well as limited access to technology and internet access.

These are all issues that my department addresses with varying strategies and with varying success. However, one thing we have observed—no matter how many barriers there may be; if students can be approached with mutual respect and with cultural sensitivity by someone that can identify and understand the students' needs (emotional, cognitive, academic), and if that person can motivate them to develop a strategy and plan with them to meet their needs, then link them with consistent support—the students have shown remarkable academic improvement, persistence and academic success.



This thesis describes the process and elements of the Hoopa Education mentoring system developed to address the low academic performance of Native American students on the Hoopa Valley Reservation. I originally decided to research and develop a Hoopa mentoring system because published data indicated that the educational outcomes of Native American students in Hoopa are lower than local, state and national outcomes (California Department of Education, 2009). Currently, Hoopa Elementary, the largest public school on the Hoopa Valley Reservation is on California's list of "Persistently Low Performing Schools". This means it is in the lowest five percent in the state (California Department of Education, 2010). There is considerable research linking historical trauma, unresolved grief, higher incidence of alcoholism and drug abuse (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 2002), cultural and socioeconomic barriers (Jenkins, 1999), differing learning styles and lack of motivation (Aragon, 2002, and Estrin & Nelson-Barber, 1995), effects of higher incidence of single parent families, and a host of other variables that can have an effect on the experience and outcomes of Native American students (Jenkins, 1999; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 2002).

Since we often observed the students who overcome these barriers and persist on to college most often have adequate support systems at home, and the students who struggle the most, and eventually drop out, very often do not have adequate support systems at home—it became our strategy to link these struggling students with a culturally sensitive support mechanism that could guide them and support them throughout their educational journey. What we developed was a structured mentoring program.

Due to this structured mentoring program, it has been our great pleasure to see children blossom as they experience academic success. We have seen students with straight F's, with GPA's under 1.0, go up to GPA's as high as 3.5 with in four months. Recently, this program reported eighty percent of their students began as "at risk" students, and at midyear ninety percent of them were all receiving passing grades in their subjects. Because of this program, we have seen children begin to care again and re-engage in the education process, and our greatest joy comes when they begin to believe in themselves. They have so much potential, and they are more than capable of succeeding, they just needed someone to understand them, to believe in them, and to stand by them.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction of Research

Life is filled with many challenges. This ever-changing world can sometimes be difficult to navigate, particularly for youth with limited life experiences. Typically parents provide adolescent youth with support and guidance on becoming young adults. Education is a critical process on their way toward adulthood and can be a determining factor on the life they will have. The guidance youth receive from their parents about education is therefore very important. However, this may not be an option for all youth. In such cases, where are the youth to turn to for support? One strategy that some organizations have implemented is a mentoring program. The subject of mentoring has extensive research documenting positive outcomes for youth, including academic improvement, positive effects on social well being, and personal development (Grossman, 1998; Rhodes, Haight, & Briggs, 1999). Studies have shown that mentoring programs are utilized by many community organizations and school districts to enhance personal and academic outcomes, and as preventative strategies to engage youth and deter them from at-risk behaviors (Foster, 2001).

Mentoring is difficult to categorize into just one venue because it embodies many applications. The varying applications of mentoring programs can include site-based, community-based, adult to youth, peer to peer, cross-age, and professional development such as job shadowing/apprenticeship (Hansen, 2007). Mentoring can be an effective

strategy for job training, increasing academic success, building positive self esteem and self identity, and an effective intervention strategy for at-risk youth (Grossman, 1998; Rhodes, Haight, & Briggs, 1999). Studies also show the focus of mentoring programs has expanded from targeting specific problems such as school drop outs and youth violence, to more complex developmental focuses (Foster, 2001). Several states, as well as national organizations such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, school districts, and community organizations have enacted mentoring programs as strategies to work positively with youth (Foster, 2001).

This literature review will begin by exploring some of the definitions of mentoring, mentoring components, mentor/mentee relationships and conclude by exploring the broad strokes of mentoring related to academic, personal development and preventative mentoring research and potential mentoring outcomes with at-risk youth.

### Defining Mentoring

The term mentoring is first attributed to the Greek Odyssey wherein Mentor was the trusted friend of Odysseus whom Odysseus left in charge in his absence (American Heritage Dictionary, 1992). However, mentoring in practice could probably be traced back to the beginnings of mankind. One definition of mentor is, “a person who gives another person help and advice over a period of time and often also teaches...” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2009). There are several other definitions of mentoring depending on their respective foci describing a relationship in which a more experienced

person, the mentor, provides information, assistance and support, and/or enhances the mentee with insights to strengthen their personal and professional capacities (Murray, 2001; Torres-Guzman, & Goodwin, 1995; Kochran & Trimble, 2000). This mentoring process is typically a one-to-one relationship and should be built on encouragement, mutual respect, and openness (Spencer, 2004). The relationship and outcomes involve three components: the mentor, the mentee, and the mentoring process (Foster, 2001). The mentor can be a myriad of people including teachers, advisors, tutors, professionals in the workplace, friends, or family members (Dubois, 2007).

Mentors can come from many walks of life and utilize their personal experiences and insights to help guide the mentee. Although there are a variety of mentoring programs, there are components that are consistent among successful programs that can have an impact on the quality and effectiveness of the mentoring.

### Effective Mentoring Components

Mentoring program outcomes are determined by a variety of factors including the strength and longevity of the mentoring relationship, the mentor's consistency, the mentoring context, the mentor training program's structure and support, and available resources (Rhodes, Reddy, Roffman, & Grossman, 2005; Sipe, 1996). Though there are many factors and various mentoring programs, it all begins with the mentor and mentee, and more specifically, the relationship that they form.

### Mentor— Mentee Relationship

The effectiveness of any mentoring program depends upon the relationship that exists between the mentor and the mentee (Sipe, 1996). The first step in developing a good mentoring relationship is trust (Sipe, 1996). A mentor must gain the trust of their mentee before they can have an effect. To develop trust, the mentor must treat the mentee with respect and value their opinions (Sipe, 1996). This requires good listening skills and patience to allow mentee to become comfortable with the mentor (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). The mentor shouldn't come with a set agenda or preconceived ideas, but must develop a platform for open communication which takes time to develop and requires the mentor to allow the process some fluidity to listen and learn about the youth before developing activities and strategies (Sipe, 1996). As the mentor learns about the likes and dislikes of the mentee, they can use this knowledge and incorporate it into positive activities that help the youth and further strengthen the mentoring relationship. The more the mentor can relate to the mentee, the more effective they will become at gaining the trust and respect of the mentee, and the more likely the mentee will accept advice from the mentor (Sipe, 1996).

Good communication between the mentor and mentee is a critical element in the mentoring relationship (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). Mentors must provide consistency with the mentee by not missing meetings or activities (Sipe, 1996). In many cases, it will take additional effort on the part of the mentor to maintain a relationship with the mentee and some research suggests that the mentee will test the mentor to see if they will last (Sipe, 1996). Longevity is also an important component of the mentor/mentee

relationship (Rhodes, Reddy, Roffman & Grossman, 2005). Some research suggests that mentoring relationships that last less than three months can even be more harmful than helpful because it is attributed to drops in the mentees self-worth and perceived scholastic competence (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). The longer the relationship lasts, the stronger the relationship develops and the more effective the mentor is in helping the mentee (Rhodes, Reddy, Roffman & Grossman, 2005). The longevity of the relationship appear to be a critical element in helping youth achieve positive outcomes (Rhodes, Reddy, Roffman & Grossman, 2005).

It is also important that the mentor get to know the families of the mentee, which could aid in developing more trust, longevity, and cohesiveness of the mentoring relationship (Sipe, 1996). The mentor should also know their limits. The mentor should not approach the mentee as though they know it all, but should seek the advice of experts in the appropriate field (Sipe, 1996) if a situation occurs that is beyond the mentors' expertise. In such cases, the mentor can still be effective in supporting the relationship with the mentee by providing consistency and facilitate the appropriate support. Training can help the mentor develop the interpersonal skills needed to be a more effective mentor. Effective mentoring programs include training on roles and responsibilities, strategies for developing effective mentoring relationships, and positive activity building (Dubois, 2007). Thus the mentoring program must be structured, supportive, and have clear goals in order to provide the consistency and support the youth needs (Dubois, 2007).

Thus the mentoring process begins with the mentor/mentee relationship. Research suggests that the quality of the relationship is a big factor for determining the effectiveness of program mentoring. Which leads to the next element of mentoring, the actual components of the mentoring program initiating the mentoring relationship that could have an effect on mentoring outcomes.

### Program Components

Mentoring programs are vast in application and vary from site based programs to community based programs (Hanson, 2007). Some programs have specific focuses geared toward improving academic achievement or having a positive effect on youth development. Other programs focus on the prevention of risky behaviors such as alcohol and drug use or teen pregnancy (Foster, 2001). Some organizations even include mentoring as one component of a comprehensive youth development strategy (Foster, 2001). Research suggests, effective mentoring programs generally include three important elements: 1) screening, 2) orientation and training, 3) support and supervision (Sipe, 1996).

Screening is a process whereby mentor candidates are selected based on the criteria that a particular program develops (DuBois, Halloway, Valentine & Cooper, 2002). Preliminary screenings generally include background checks, reference checks, and an interview with an assessment of the potential mentor (DuBois, Halloway, Valentine & Cooper, 2002). Income can also be a contributing factor because the mentor may need to have more time and/or more disposable income for activities such as the



movies with the mentee (Sipe, 1996). Some programs seek specific candidates that may offer particular expertise such as a teacher, or specialized tradesperson. Whichever program and process is followed, the screening process and criteria are the first critical steps in finding mentors with the best potential to have long lasting and meaningful relationships with their mentee.

Once the mentors are selected, the next step in a successful mentoring program is orientation and training. Mentor training should include realistic expectations concerning the mentoring role (DuBois, Halloway, Valentine & Cooper, 2002). The depth of the orientation varies from program to program. Some programs only have short orientations, while others may take several days covering mentoring strategies, adolescent development, successful interventions and challenges (DuBois, Halloway, Valentine & Cooper, 2002). While time frame and training content vary, most programs acknowledge that orientation and training are an important step in the beginning of the mentoring process (DuBois, Halloway, Valentine & Cooper, 2002).

The third component that programs generally offer is ongoing support and supervision for the mentor, mentee and their activities. This ongoing program supervision of mentors can aid in the consistency of meetings between the mentor and mentee (Sipe, 1996). The mentor relationship has a better chance of growing stronger if they meet frequently (Johnson, 1998). Mentors can often feel frustrated at some point in the process, and programs can provide professional support or support groups for moral support and help the mentor to work toward a healthy strong relationship with their mentee (Sipe, 1996).

Thus, effective mentoring programs begin with a mentor, who as a more experienced person, provides information, assistance and support, and enhances the mentee with insights to strengthen their personal and/or professional capacities (Murray, 1991; Torres-Guzman, & Goodwin, 1995; Kochran & Trimble, 2000). The mentoring outcomes are determined by a variety of factors including the quality, strength and longevity of the mentoring relationship, the mentor's consistency, the mentoring context, the mentor training program structure and support, and available resources (Rhodes, Reddy, Roffman, & Grossman, 2005; DuBois, Halloway, Valentine & Cooper, 2002; Sipe, 1996). Mentoring outcomes vary by application but generally are related to academic improvement, positive effects on social well being, personal development, and for prevention of risky behaviors (Grossman, 1998; Rhodes, Haight, & Briggs, 1999; Jekielek, Moore, Hair & Scarupa, 2002).

### Mentoring Outcomes

Mentoring models range in design, application, support, and consistency (Foster, 2001). Generally these models include outcomes which address academic improvement, social development, prevention of risky behavior, and life skill development (Grossman, 1998; Rhodes & DuBois 2008; Rhodes, Haight, & Briggs, 1999; Jekielek, Moore, Hair & Scarupa, 2002; Zippay, 1995).

### Academic

Mentoring programs have many applications and varying outcomes, overall, comprehensive mentoring programs can have a positive impact on youth (Dubois, 2007). Some programs are site-based such as after school programs which generally focus on an adult to youth relationship (Grossman, 1998). Some mentoring models improve school attendance or improve social and academic skills (Foster, 2001). Other programs showed improvements in attitudes toward reading and increases in the number of books read (Foster, 2001; Tierney & Grossman, 1995).

Mentoring programs have shown positive short-term outcomes such as increases in attendance, improved attitudes toward school, as well as overall increased academic performance (Grossman, 1998; Rhodes, Haight, & Briggs, 1999; Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001). Long-term effects include a higher percentage of high school graduates and higher rates of persistence to higher education (McKinney, Paten & Smith, 1999). Research on mentoring shows increases in academic performance (Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001), better attendance rates (Rhodes & Grossman, 2000), increased positive regard for school (Rhodes & Grossman, 2000), better attitudes about schoolwork (Tierney, Grossman & Resche, 1995), and a reduction in skipping school (Tierney, Grossman & Resche, 1995). Some programs reported improvement in grade point averages, increased attendance in college preparation, and higher college attendance rates (Foster, 2001), as well as positive impacts on classroom behavior and improved reading scores (Foster, 2001). One study found that mentored students were nearly three times

more likely to attend college the first year after high school and participate in more college prep activities (Johnson, 1996).

### Self concept.

Self concept and self esteem are other targeted outcomes of mentoring models. Youth have found positive benefits in personal development due to positive guidance from mentors (Turner & Scherman, 1996; Rhodes, Haight, & Briggs, 1999). A mentor can help the mentees gain personal insights about the ever changing world (Rhodes, Haight, & Briggs, 1999), and how to deal with these changes by serving as a sounding board helping the mentee understand, express, and regulate their emotions (Rhodes, Grossman & Resch, 2000). Thus having a more mature perspective on challenges may be helpful for healthier personal development (Rhodes, Haight, & Briggs, 1999). As self-esteem and self-concept are positively affected, cross age mentoring can help a mentee to have a better understanding of their emotions and control of anger (Osterling & Hines, 2006) and better control of sadness and disappointment (Musgrave, 1997). Mentoring appears to help adolescent youth in developing self-concept (Turner & Scherman, 1996), improved social behavior and self-esteem (Rhodes, Haight, & Briggs, 1999), build stronger relationships with family and peers (Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 1995), and help in perceptions of their own physical appearance and popularity (Turner & Scherman, 1996).

### Life skills.

If an adolescent youth doesn't have adequate support from their immediate environment to help them develop life skills, a mentor can help a mentee in gaining independent living skills, such as finding a job, opening a bank account, saving money, and finishing their education (Osterling & Hines, 2006; Zippay, 1995). Additionally, youth who have had mentors have higher employment rates compared to their parents and are less likely to receive public assistance (MkKinney, Paten, & Smith, 1999). Also, mentoring relationships when coupled with professional development have had positive impacts—for example, young teen mothers reported that their mentors helped them increase their social networks and aided in their ability to obtain a job (Zippay, 1995).

### At-Risk Minority Students

Students with fewer resources who attend poorer schools and are termed at-risk due to personal or environmental circumstances may benefit the most from additional mentoring support (Foster, 2001; Rhodes, 1994). Mentoring programs help youth avoid risky behaviors characterized by poverty, crime, and violence, (Foster, 2001). Youth with at-risk backgrounds who form relationships with a mentor also have more resiliency (Rhodes, 1994). Issues such as alcohol use, drug use, school absence, violence, and misdemeanors decrease (Jekielek, Moore, Hair, & Scarupa, 2002; Tierney, Grossman & Resche, 1995). Mentored children are 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs, 27% less likely to begin using alcohol, 53% less likely to skip school, and 33% less likely to hit someone (Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 1995). Mentees show a 1%-4% reduction in

unlawful offenses committing fewer misdemeanors and felonies (Jekielek, Moore, Hair & Scarupa, 2002). Thus, mentoring programs can result not only in an increase of positive behaviors but the research seems to suggest that mentoring programs can also prevent risky behaviors.

Since students termed at-risk due to personal or environmental circumstances benefit the most from additional mentoring support (Foster, 2001; Rhodes, 1994), many Native American students are potential beneficiaries. Minority students only make up 28% of the U.S. postsecondary population, and American Indian students only make up 1% of the 28% (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). In 2006, 27 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native individuals lived in poverty compared to 13 percent of the general population. Reservation poverty is even higher at 36 percent. Compared with 1999 the American Indian/Alaska Native poverty rate on reservations has increased. A higher percentage of American Indians/Alaska Natives suffer from the effects of poverty. For Native Americans 16 and over, 12 percent were unemployed in 2007 compared to the percentages of Whites at 4 percent, Hispanics at 6 percent, and Asian/Pacific Islanders at 3 percent. In 2006, some 21 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native children between the ages of 12 and 17 reported the use of alcohol in the past month compared to 11 percent of Black and 8 percent of Asian children who did so. A larger percentage (66%) of American Indian/Alaska Native 8th-grade students reported absences from school in the preceding month than 8th-grade students of any other race/ethnicity in 2007 (36 to 57 percent). In 2006, some 14 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native children were served by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which was a higher

percentage than the percentage of children in all racial/ethnic groups. In comparison, 9 percent of the general population was served under IDEA. In 2006, a smaller percentage of American Indian/Alaska Native students (75 percent) reported receiving a high school diploma than White (91 percent) and Asian/Pacific Islander students (93 percent), (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

Additionally, Native American students are the least likely ethnicity to enroll in college (Shotton, Oosahwe, & Cintrón, 2007). According to the National Center for educational statistics, at 35.5% the Native American high school drop out rate is almost double of the national average and only 11% of Native American students receive Bachelors degrees. Little research exists specifically linking Native American students with mentoring programs, however one study reported that Native American participants reported improved feelings in areas of depression, suicide, and the desire to run away (Garringer, 2005). This program also reported that 71% of the participants felt that their relationships with adults improved, 68% felt that there was a reduction in delinquent behavior and 58% felt that drug and alcohol abuse had been reduced (Garringer, 2005). Native American students also benefited from mentoring programs in overcoming barriers to college success (Shotton, Oosahwe, & Cintrón, 2007).

Mentoring appears to have some merit in helping adolescent youth in the areas of academic improvement, social development, and the prevention of risky behavior in support of life skill development (Grossman, 1998; Rhodes, DuBois 2008; Rhodes, Haight, & Briggs, 1999; Jekielek, Moore, Hair & Scarupa, 2002; Zippay, 1995). The research also links positive outcomes for at-risk students when successful mentoring

strategies are used (Foster, 2001; Rhodes, 1994; Jekielek, Moore, Hair, & Scarupa, 2002). Thus Native American students could benefit from a type of mentoring model. More research is needed linking current mentoring models with Native American students with regard to cultural barriers, geographic barriers, social development, academic improvement and persistence, as well as the prevention of risky behaviors.

### Conclusion

The challenges the youth of our nation face are great, the choices are many, and the research on mentoring appears to suggest that mentoring programs that follow best practice guidelines can have a positive effect on helping youth with various issues when the mentor establishes a meaningful relationship with the mentee. This relationship must be built on mutual respect, trust and consistency. Mentoring programs can be a part of a much larger strategy for helping youth or can be specific to issues such as academic improvement, social development, and prevention. There are many variations of mentoring models, ranging from peer-to-peer models to adult-to-youth models, but programs that provide orientations, training and supportive follow up appear to have a positive impact on adolescent youth. These positive impacts also appear to be more helpful for minority and at-risk youth, which include the Native American population. The next section will examine the possible cultural implications, current data, and the components of what a structured mentoring program for a Native American population should consist of.



## METHODS

### Foundation—Historical Educational

As I considered the research on mentoring and the possible outcomes it could have in our community, I asked myself some poignant questions; what would the contents of a Hupa mentoring program consist of to improve the academic performance of Native American students? To answer that question, I had to ask a more precise question; would a mentoring program fit the communities' values, traditions, and cultural psyche? The local public educational system itself hasn't proved to work for the majority of Native American students, due to several contributing factors, one of which is that the educational system hasn't fully embraced the heritage of Native Americans, nor understood where these students come from and what that means. In other words, these students are Hupa and they live on the same land their ancestors have lived on since time immemorial. The traditions, values, and customs of our people are still a part of their identity and lives. They come from a rich society that was based on spiritual balance, respect, and a strict moral code. It established a society that flourished for generations upon generations. This society had an educational system that perpetuated that society. So what was this educational system? Could we possibly learn from it? Can we implement some of those elements today? And would a mentoring program work on the Hoopa Reservation? So who are these Hupa people, or as they call themselves "Na:tinixwe" pronounced (Noh-tin-a-whey), and what was their educational system?

## Cultural Context: The Education of the Na:tinixwe

### Introduction of the Na:tinixwe

In the mountains of northern California, where the Trinity River flows, there exists the Hoopa Valley Reservation, the land of the Na:tinixwe people. They are a people rich in tradition and culture, whose teachings have kept them together in harmony and balance since time immemorial. The time honored customs and traditions that defined who the Na:tinixwe were and are, was given to them by the creator and passed down from one generation to the next by oral tradition. Their system existed not just for the necessary purposes of survival, but included the greater purpose of living a respectful life in balance with their fellow man, with the land, with the world and with the creator over all of it.

Their educational system was not an institution that was clearly defined from September to June with weekends off and a few holiday breaks. It was a part of their daily lives and was a journey that never ended. Their educational system was an every day, every week, and every year-round school that provided them with teachers, mentors, specialized craft people, religious leaders and elders. They did not learn static precepts that had no relevance to their lives, but gained insight and knowledge that helped define their very being. From the time they were babies their lessons began and grew as they grew. It was this time tested method that empowered them with the knowledge to master many subjects including; philosophy, oratory skills, religious practices, history, dance, music, and language. Many were fluent in two or three languages. They were also masters

of the sciences including; medicine, herbology, anatomy, biology, astronomy and engineering. Other educational practices included economics, commerce and trade, leadership, diplomacy, negotiating skills, combat (when necessary), athletics, and all of the finely honed hunting, fishing, gathering, weaving, craftsman and agricultural skills necessary for daily survival. Finally, they had knowledge in the healing and spiritual realm, some of which modern science today still cannot explain.

### A brief background

In order to fully realize the educational system of the Na:tinixwe, it is important to explore the world through their eyes. As the Na:tinixwe were a deeply religious people, it is helpful to understand their beliefs as they directly translate into their mind set and motivations, the way they defined their social structure and the educational system that perpetuated and sustained their society.

The Na:tinixwe occupied the land known as Na:tini-xw meaning “where the trail leads back”, now referred to as the Hoopa Valley Reservation. The word “Hoopa” was the name the Yurok people called them, and when the first “white explorers” came to the area and spoke with the Yurok people, the Yurok mentioned another people—the “Hoopah” that lived further up the river (Nelson pg 3). So the name Hoopa was how the white explorers came to know the Hupa. But the Hupa called themselves the Na:tinixwe meaning “those of the valley”. There is another name some Hupa people call themselves, Qu-in-yat’inxan, which means “acorn eaters”. The Na:tinixwe spoke the Na:tinixwe:-Mixine:we’ (“Hupa language”) which is considered an Athabaskan language.

The term Hoopa is often used. However there is a distinction in the use of the words, “Hupa” and “Hoopa”. These are not typographical errors, the word “Hupa” refers to the “people”, and “Hoopa” refers to the actual town.

The Na:tinixwe had 12 villages along the Trinity river named; Tse:-na:l'a:-ding, Xonsah-ding, Dahk'isxa:n-q'it, K'inchwiwh-q'it, Che'indiq'ot-ding, Mis-q'it, Ta'k'imil-ding, Tolt'ats'-ding, Me'dil-ding, Xowung-q'it, Diysh-ta:ng'a:-ding, and Xahslin-ding. Some villages had only a few Xontah's “houses”, while others had many Xontah's. The Xontah's were built from cedar wood, stripped into planks, described as “twenty-foot-square structure built partially underground. Its smooth cedar-plank walls stood four feet above the ground at the sides and rose to a six or seven feet at the highest point on the ends. A simple house had a two section roof of cedar planks supported by a single ridgepole; a more elaborate one...had a three-part roof held up by two ridgepoles...the Hupa cut a small round doorway. This door helped to keep bears out of the Xontah...[the Xontah] was the main dwelling, the place where the family ate and the women and young children slept. There the people stored their tools, supplies, clothing, and belongings.” (Nelson pg. 8) Their homes were designed to keep in heat during the cold months, while allowing smoke out from the fire and simultaneously keeping out the rain. In the summer it could stay cool and sometimes the roof was removed for a ceremonial Brush Dance. Additionally each family had a Taikyuw “sweathouse” which the men used to meditate, pray, or work on regalia or even to sleep in at night. The sweathouse was a structure also made from cedar but was sealed with clay and could stay warm through the night, without a fire (Nelson pg. 8). There was also a separate hut for the women to use during

their menstrual cycle called a Min'ch (Hupa pg. 62). Careful protocols were observed in the building of these dwellings including the way they faced, as well as their uses.

The social structure was rooted in the Na:tinixwe's deep spiritual beliefs. It was these beliefs that were grossly misunderstood by the "whiteman" and deemed barbaric. Pliny E. Goddard visited the Hoopa Valley in the late 1800's and recorded as much as they allowed. In his anthropological book entitled *The Life and Culture of the Hupa*, Goddard stated, "It is largely this undercurrent of deep religious feeling that makes the life and deeds of the Indian seem so strange to the whiteman" (Norton pg. 6). It is important to note that although the Na:tinixwe had very distinct ceremonial practices, (many of which they shared with their neighboring tribes) they did not just observe the strict moral codes necessary for the dances during the dance ceremonies alone, but implemented a strict moral code based on respect, prayer and giving thanks each day of their lives. It was these morals and values that translated into a social structure that was so deeply rooted in maintaining a balanced life, that it required no military, no police force and no prisons. A social structure that respected the environment and all of nature's creatures; a social structure that did not rape the land or take more than was needed; a social structure that could interact and trade with neighboring tribes without trying to conquer their territory; a social structure that could live in peace and balance for thousands upon thousands of years. And when disputes arose (within a village, between villages or even with other tribes), a mediation process was customary to make reconciliation and payment for losses incurred.

As payment was mentioned, a brief explanation must be given in order to appreciate this intricate part of their society. Payment was based on a currency mainly measured (figuratively and literally) with Xo'ji-nahdiyaw "true money" called Dentalium (Norton pg. 7). Dentalium originally came from the Nu-cha-nulth people who dwelled on Vancouver Island. The Dentalium considered valuable had to be at least 1 7/8 inches long and even more rare and valuable if it was 2 1/2 inches long (Nelson pg. 18). A strand of Dentalium was measured in 25 inch increments and could purchase a canoe, or be used as part of a dowry for a wife. Other forms of payment could also include regalia, obsidian, canoes, and in some cases indentured servitude. Payment is an important concept to understand because it is directly tied to maintaining balance and making things right. As it was customary to make reconciliation after an offense, it was a great deterrent and made people really think about consequences before committing an offense. Even wars were averted due to this system, because a village or family may not want to risk a large payment over an all out battle and the deaths that may occur. So they would try to make it right and/or talk it out before it led to open battle. It was also necessary to make things "right" between people before the ceremonies so as not to disrupt the "medicine" of the ceremonies. This concept of reconciliation and payment system coupled with their spiritual beliefs of maintaining balance in one's life and with the world, are integral social norms that framed their society and kept balance, and peace.

Spirituality was at the core of who the Na:tinixwe were and are. At the center of their spirituality are their ceremonial dances. To adequately explain the core beliefs of each dance would require volumes of books for each ceremony to explain the strict

protocols necessary for each participating member, the medicines prepared, the songs, the regalia necessary, and the significance of each ceremonial site. So this is a very brief explanation of the dance ceremonies. The major ceremonies were; the Xonsil-ch'idilye "White Deerskin Dance" (which was for giving thanks for the good things, in order to keep and restore things as they were intended, a renewing) (George Sr. 2009), this White Deerskin dance also included the Ta;'altul "Boat Dance" (George Sr. 2009), next the Xay-chi'idilye sometimes called T'unq'-ch'idilye "Jump Dance" (which was a renewing and balancing of the world by driving away the bad and letting in the good) (George Sr. 2009), the Xon'-na'we "Brush Dance" (a healing dance for a sick child or a blessing for that child), the Ch'iltul "Kicking Dance" (performed to inaugurate a medicine person), the Ch'ilwa:l "Flower Dance" (a ceremony for transitioning a young girl to womanhood) (L. George 2009), K'itse "War Dance" (to prepare spiritually, mentally and physically for war, some say asking for luck, safety or bravery), as well some festivals including the No'k'ingxa:n "Acorn Feast" (L. George 2009) and a reported fish festival. The mention of these dances is for two purposes. First, to give a perspective on the deep religious roots of the people in order to gain the insight of their mind set that dictated their motives and propelled their actions. This insight into their core beliefs makes it easier to understand their educational system. Second, to demonstrate the complexity of their social structure and society. This helps us to understand the necessary components of their educational system, a system that allowed them to maintain their society for thousands upon thousands of years.

### Passing Knowledge to Children

To begin with, the Na:tinixwe believed that a child would do things “when they were able to do them” (Nelson pg. 13). They were not categorized or pushed into a system that said they must reach a certain standard by a certain age. When they were ready, they would learn a given lesson, and when they learned that lesson, they could move on to more lessons. Generally, when a baby was born, it was carried along with the mother as she did her daily chores and activities. This was an important developmental stage where children acquired the observational skills necessary for the next stage of learning, the modeling stage. In their toddler years, they were entrusted with the grandparents while their parents did their daily activities. During this time the children were given the freedom to enjoy their childhood and play games. They listened to the stories about their people, beliefs, and way of life. It was a time to develop a further sense of belonging and to learn respect for their elders. Somewhere between the ages of 7 to 10, their next stage of education began and they would go with their parents during the day. In this setting they would learn side by side with their parents through observation and hands on learning. As their skills developed, they continued to grow and master those skills throughout their lifetime.

Young boys would learn valuable hunting and fishing skills as well as the protocols associated with these tasks. The approach to their task, and their mind set was important. The extent of this knowledge was immense and included an understanding of many species of fish and animals. They fished for salmon, steelhead, trout, eel and sturgeon. Fishing required an understanding of the seasons of the year. They also learned



various skills for catching fish, including; spearing, bow and arrow, netting, how to build fish dams and even catching fish with their bare hands. They learned how to read the water, what areas to fish, and how to navigate their canoes through the waters. They learned the skills necessary to make a net strong enough to catch and hold a fighting twenty pound salmon. They needed to know where they were allowed to fish and once they caught the fish, how to properly prepare the fish. They learned how to clean the fish and what each part was used for. For example, the snout of a sturgeon was saved and boiled to be used as glue for their bows. Another necessary skill was how to preserve the fish by smoking it in order to preserve them to last through the winter. They had no refrigerator so they had to prepare their meat to last for months without a cooling system. Thus it was important to know how to strip the fish, what wood to use, keeping the coals hot without creating a big fire and so on. Before they went hunting or fishing, they started the day off by bathing at sunrise, they had a light breakfast, and started the daily task off prayerfully.

Hunting is another skill that required years of shadowing and mentoring to master. The young boys were taught how to hunt rabbits, squirrels, grouse, and smaller game, and as they grew older they were taught how to hunt and kill deer and elk. They also needed to know how to defend themselves from possible bear or mountain lion attacks. They needed to learn how to approach the various animals, how to get the human scent off of themselves, how to identify animal tracks, how to identify animal trails, what weapons to use, what disguises to use and so on. The Na:tinixwe were such skillful hunters that when they were disguised in deer hides and mimicked deer movements to get

a closer shot, it was reported that they had to wear spikes on the back of their necks to protect them in case a mountain lion mistook them for a deer and attacked (Nelson pg. 16). Of course once an animal was killed, an understanding of anatomy was necessary to know how to use each part. Aside from the obvious need for the animal's meat, the sinew for example, from the back of a deer was used for their bows. The brains of the deer was used to treat the hide and make it more workable and soft, the horns could be used to make spoons and other tools, and the marrow could be used with dyes to make paint (Nelson pg. 16). Each part had a particular purpose and nothing was wasted.

Another aspect of a young boy's education included mentoring/apprenticeship. If a young boy showed an interest and aptitude for a certain trade, they would learn from an expert in that trade. Making canoes for example was an art form and required specialized knowledge. The design of the canoe had purpose and meaning. Picking the tree to make a canoe, splitting it, burning it out, curing it, utilizing the necessary carving tools, balancing the canoe and much more are just some of the skills needed to make a canoe. Bow making was another skill that required specialized knowledge and skill. Some may have had the aptitude to become a medicine man and would learn from an existing medicine man or woman. In addition to survival skills the young boys would learn all of the other social skills they needed including; dance protocols, songs, making regalia, oral history, and as they got older, social protocols, spiritual insights, and marriage protocols.

Young girls likewise had myriad skills to master. They would go with the women and learn proper etiquette and protocols for preparing food, cooking and for all aspects of their society. A vast knowledge of food preparation for the various foods was essential.

Their day began at sunrise and they were expected to bathe and start making breakfast while the men bathed. Depending on the time of year, they went on to the appropriate chores for that season. In the spring for example, “the young girls went with the women to gather the first plants. As they worked, the women taught the girls where the family had the right to gather plants, when each plant ripened, how it was used, and how it should be prepared. The bulbs, roots, stems, leaves, branches, fruits, and nuts of many plants could be made into food, medicine, tools, and clothing...a young girl had to learn about dozens of plants and their uses.” (Nelson pg. 14) Each season brought on a different variety of plants, in the spring and summer she learned about dozens of berries, in the fall it was acorn picking season among others.

Aside from picking and gathering food materials, an in depth knowledge of basketry was also a necessary skill. What plants and reeds to use, where to gather them, when to pick them, how to prepare them, how to dye them, and then of course the intricate weaving methods to make a basket. Some of the baskets were woven so tight, they could hold water. The variety of baskets ranged from “fish traps, to cradles, mills, seed-beaters, hats, cooking dishes, winnowing trays, plates, bowls, and containers for carrying and storing food.” (Nelson pg. 14) Another crucial skill was making clothing. All of the intricacies of preparation and making the clothing took many hours of painstaking patience. Like the boys, the young girls could also get involved in medicine if they showed an aptitude. They would be paired with the appropriate person to guide them along this journey.

Beyond just survival skills, many other subject areas were taught and eventually mastered. Many evenings were spent discussing the traditions of their people, where they came from, what they represent, and their place in the world. The skills mentioned above are just a glimpse of the knowledge passed on from one generation to the next generation. To adequately represent the entirety of the skills learned would take volumes. The intention of mentioning some of the skills taught is to illustrate the basic structure of the Hupa educational system. It was a system based on observation, modeling, oral tradition and mentoring. They watched carefully and learned by doing with careful instruction from experts in their villages. It was a time tested educational system that proved to be a sustaining element of their survival. Day after day, year after year, generation after generation, they taught and learned by this method. They learned what was necessary for their survival—physically, mentally and spiritually. All of which was interwoven. To learn one element required context and learning elements of other principles. In all cases it was meaningful to their everyday lives. This system was instilled in the Hupa for countless generations.

### Connecting Methodologies

Upon researching the Hupa and gaining more insight into their society and education system, it became apparent that the children received continual support throughout their education—which is a form of mentoring. They always had someone explaining what to do, how to do it, how to approach it, what kind of mind set they

should have and why it was important. This helped build their character, gave them a sense of belonging and kept their society in balance.

With this knowledge, I began to make a connection. The data shows a higher incidence of single parent families among Native populations today, which translated into less structured support compared to the traditional structure. Thus the children have less mentors teaching and guiding them. Could it be that this mentoring component was in fact one of the missing links? Because the family structure was fractured. Key pieces of knowledge from their previous structure was not being passed on and in some cases, had disappeared. For the youth, without this, a sense of purpose was missing, a sense of belonging was weakened. And the traditional approach that developed their character as they knew it was taken away and replaced with public education. All of the necessary components that were traditionally in place to keep the Hupa society in balance were now out of balance. And because the traditional support systems and the mentoring components are not in place today the way they once were, the children are not receiving as much support, and as a result they become more vulnerable to failure in the challenges they face. They become more susceptible to disengaging from their struggles because they do not have someone giving them the guidance and encouragement they need to work through their challenges. They don't gain the same sense of purpose and belonging and become more susceptible to lethargy and lack of motivation.

Not only did I find that the current research on mentoring seemed to suggest that it could be an effective intervention strategy, when I compared it with the traditional educational model of the Hupa, I found that mentoring and modeling was one of the main

education components the Hupa people traditionally utilized. This was a key element missing in the lives of many of the Hupa children in today's modern society.

The next question to ask was: How are the Native American children performing in the current education model on the Hoopa Reservation? I had parents and community members telling me that the kids in Hoopa were struggling in the public schools, but what did that mean? What was the data saying? I needed to explore the data.

### State of Affairs

In Indian education there are many considerations when looking at factors that could affect student academic performance. These include: positive and negative historical legacies, cultural differences, sociological problems, psychological insights, systemic, methodological considerations, socio-economic factors, the seclusion and remoteness of rural areas, the lack of resources, incompatible curricula, unreliable assessments, and even variations in teachers and/or administrators can affect how students perform. However, before I could even begin to consider and address these issues, I needed to know the current education state of affairs for the Native children on the Hoopa Valley Reservation.

There were many questions I had before I could begin the next stage of how to address such educational dilemmas as: How are they performing in school compared to Non-Native children in the area? How are they performing compared to other children in the state? What percentages of our students are at grade level? Is there data regarding contributing factors such as attendance, discipline, special education and so on? These are

all question I felt I needed to answer to help give me a basis for the current state of affairs and ultimately help me establish a baseline of data that I could use to develop a comprehensive strategy to address their needs.

The two schools I selected to research were the Hoopa Elementary and Hoopa High Schools. Although there are other schools in the area, these are the two main schools with the largest student populations on or near the Hoopa Valley Reservation. They are both public schools under the Klamath Trinity Joint Unified School District (KTJUSD). Hoopa Elementary has 435 students, 94% of which are Native American. Hoopa High School has 246 students, 83% of which are Native American. Due to the severe socio-economic conditions on the reservation, both schools are 100% free and reduced lunch.

In terms of the academic performance of the schools, Hoopa High School has only met their AYP rating once in the past five years (CDE, 2010). Hoopa Elementary has only met their growth target once in the past ten years (CDE, 2010). Hoopa Elementary recently was placed on California's list as a "Persistently Low Performing School" which means it is in the lowest 5% in the state (CDE, 2010). Hoopa Elementary has been a low performing school for the past nine years.

I began researching the report cards of these schools on the California Department of Education's website. I also collected data from the Klamath Trinity Joint Unified School District (KTJUSD) Indian Policies and Procedures Task Force Report. This report is part of the collaboration between the KTJUSD and local tribes. This collaboration is mandated based on Federal Impact Aid dollars. The KTJUSD receives federal funding

for Native American students because a majority of the school districts students live on non-taxable federal trust lands known as tribal land and therefore do not have the same land tax base as other schools throughout the state. The KTJUSD has adopted Indian Policies and Procedures that specify an annual report on the performance of the Native American population. In their report I found data that confirmed that Native American students were not performing at satisfactory levels. Some of the highlights included:

- 85% of the Native American students were not performing at grade level in Algebra 1 in high school.
- 76% of the Native American students were not performing at grade level in English Language Arts.
- 69% of the Native American students were not performing at grade level in U.S. History in high school.
- Over 75% Of Native American students were not performing at grade level in science.
- Only 3% of Native American students were on the college UC and CSU track in high school.
- The suspensions at Hoopa Elementary were 173—which is at a rate of 25% of the entire student population. Out of the 173 suspension, 165 of them were Native American students. The suspensions at Hoopa High were 88—which is at a rate of 24% of the entire student population. Out of the 88 suspensions, 72 of them were Native American students.



The data also showed that while the Native American student academic performance was not good, non-Native students in the same schools with the same teachers using the same textbooks were performing better than the Native American students. The following graphs illustrate the variance between the local Native and non-Native students in the Klamath Trinity Joint Unified School in four of the core subjects, Math, English, History and Science.

Table 1. KTJUSD Algebra 1 Data 2008

<b>Algebra 1</b>	<b>Non-NA Students</b>	<b>Native American Students</b>
<b>Advanced</b>	13%	4%
<b>Proficient</b>	20%	11%
<b>Basic</b>	33%	45%
<b>Below Basic</b>	33%	31%
<b>Far Below Basic</b>	0%	9%

Table 1 illustrates that when combining Advanced and Proficient test scores, 33% of the non-Native students were performing at grade level in algebra 1 compared to 15% of the Native American students performing at grade level in algebra 1.

Table 2. KTJUSD English-Language Arts Data 2008

<b>English-Language Arts</b>	<b>Non-NA Students</b>	<b>Native American Students</b>
<b>Advanced</b>	17%	6%
<b>Proficient</b>	28%	18%
<b>Basic</b>	30%	35%
<b>Below Basic</b>	15%	24%
<b>Far Below Basic</b>	10%	17%

Table 2 illustrates that when combining Advanced and Proficient test scores, 45% of the non-Native students were performing at grade level in English Language Arts compared to 24% of the Native American students performing at grade level in English Language Arts.

Table 3. KTJUSD U.S. History Data 2008

<b>U.S. History</b>	<b>Non-NA Students</b>	<b>Native American Students</b>
<b>Advanced</b>	36%	6%
<b>Proficient</b>	9%	25%
<b>Basic</b>	27%	22%
<b>Below Basic</b>	18%	28%
<b>Far Below Basic</b>	9%	19%

Table 3 illustrates that when combining Advanced and Proficient test scores, 45% of the non-Native students were performing at grade level in US History compared to 31% of the Native American students performing at grade level in US History.

Table 4. KTJUSD Science Data 2008

<b>Science</b>	<b>Non-NA Students</b>	<b>Native American Students</b>
<b>Advanced</b>	27%	13%
<b>Proficient</b>	37%	23%
<b>Basic</b>	27%	28%
<b>Below Basic</b>	0%	19%
<b>Far Below Basic</b>	9%	17%

Table 4 illustrates that when combining Advanced and Proficient test scores, 64% of the non-Native students were performing at grade level in Science compared to 33% of the Native American students performing at grade level in Science.

In almost every subject and grade level, data on Native American students in Hoopa illustrated what I was told and suspected—Native American students in KTJUSD were not performing well in the schools. The comparisons between non-native students and Native students attending the same schools showed significant gaps in their academic performance.

I gathered more data specific to Hupa Tribal members and it confirmed what the other data showed—Hupa Tribal members were also not performing well in the local public schools and were slightly lower than the average of other Native American students in Hoopa. The data shows that the majority of the students in each grade are not at grade level as illustrated below. Some of the highlights are:

- On average, nearly 75% of the Hupa students are not performing at grade level.
- In the sixth grade, nearly 95% of the students did not test at grade level.
- Other findings demonstrate that in 2009 the 2nd grade Hupa Tribal members improved by 4% the following year in the 3rd grade.
- Whereas the 2009 5th grade cohort of Hupa Tribal members class declined by 36% meaning 66% were not performing at grade level the following year in the 6th grade.

Table 5 illustrates data collected on a cohort of Hupa Tribal members' progress in English-Language Arts from the California STAR test. Column 1 is the cohort of 2009 to compare with column 4 which illustrates the same cohort a year later in 2010 and their contrast in results that following year illustrated in column 6.

Table 5. Hoopa Tribal Members Cohort 2009-2010

<b>Cohort 2009</b>	<b># of Students</b>	<b>% Not performing at grade level</b>	<b>Cohort 2010 from 2009</b>	<b>% Not performing at grade level</b>	<b>% (Increase) or [decrease]</b>
<b>P</b>	65	NA	K	NA	
<b>K</b>	11	NA	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	NA	
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Grade</b>	12	NA	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	65%	
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Grade</b>	27	80%	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	76%	(4%)
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Grade</b>	24	81%	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	77%	(4%)
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	30	72%	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	72%	(0%) same
<b>5<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	23	30%	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	66%	[36%]
<b>6<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	26	94%	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	72%	(22%)
<b>7<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	30	68%	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	75%	[7%]
<b>8<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	26	76%	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade		In Progress
<b>9<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	24	69%	10 <sup>th</sup> Grade		In Progress
<b>10<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	19	86%	11 <sup>th</sup> Grade		In Progress
<b>11<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	13	67%	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade		In Progress
<b>12<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	19	NA			

Gathering the data gave a clearer picture of the academic state of affairs for the Native American students in the public schools. This was a key step in beginning to understand the variables that affect their academic outcomes, and is the first step toward developing strategies that will address the various issues and close the achievement gap.

However, although there are many issues that potentially can affect the academic outcomes of our students, and there are varying strategies for each issue, the focus of this thesis project is mentoring. The justification for this particular focus is that, although we cannot account for all of the variables that affect their academic outcomes, we can provide much needed support to help overcome the lack of mentoring. At this point, I needed to ask myself some questions: What have I learned? What does the research suggest? Does mentoring fit with the traditional values of the Hupa people? How can I take all of this information and develop a program that could have a positive effect on the academic outcomes of the Native American children on the Hoopa Valley Reservation? These questions are addressed in the following chapter which explains the Hoopa Tribal Mentoring Program that I developed to try to answer these questions.

## RESULTS

### The Hoopa Tribal Education Mentoring Program

Along this journey of exploring the past education of the Hupa people, current research, data, and mentoring programs. We developed a program that provided the background and cultural sensitivity/knowledge coupled with mentoring support for Hupa students I have condensed into this formula: Cultural Sensitivity x Student + Mentor Support = Improved Academic Success.

There are many barriers that can affect the academic success of Native American students on the Hoopa Valley Reservation, sometimes it can be one or more of the following: low and/or no support systems at home, inconsistent life styles such as poor diet, sleep patterns, poor study habits, lack of resources, no sense of belonging or connection with the school or teacher, low self-esteem, low motivation for school, peer pressure, learning disabilities, insensitive and/or incompatible curricula and teaching methodologies, just to name a few. However, in spite of these many obstacles, there have been some outstanding students who performed very well in the public school system on the Hoopa Valley Reservation and went on to some of the top colleges in the Nation. In fact, Hoopa High School has more Gates Millennium Scholarship recipients than any other high school in the nearest three counties. Recently, three Hoopa Tribal members graduated from Stanford University with honors. These students faced the same challenges and barriers as other students from the Hoopa Valley Reservation faced. They



took the same classes, used the same text books, and had the same teachers, yet they succeeded where others did not. Although there are many personal characteristics that contributed to their success, there was one common element among all of the students that succeeded—they had good support mechanisms at home. Each of them had involved parents, or an immediate family member that took an active role in their education. They had someone that cared enough about them to make their education a priority, to give them guidance, encouragement, structure, advocate for them and even discipline them when needed. These support figures attended teacher conferences, sought the additional help of experts, went to college motivation meetings and continually monitored their child's progress. The students were not left on their own to fend for themselves. They had someone with them, helping them, guiding them along the way. This falls directly in line with the methodology of the traditional Hoopa education system as explored in the previous chapter. From their youth, the Hupa children were carefully monitored, their immediate family members were directly involved, and they were always linked with an expert in a particular field that mentored them. In a sense, it truly was a system that could have been called, "No Child Left Behind".

So based on the research on mentoring, based on the resources of the Hoopa Learning Center, and based on the cultural perspective of the Hupa teaching methodology, the question became: What would an intervention model to improve the academic performance of Native American students consist of? A key consideration when designing an intervention model for Native American students on the Hoopa Valley Reservation, was to take into consideration not only the academic elements needed, but

equally important to build this process with cultural context. The resources of the Hoopa Learning Center, and the tutoring program the center implemented were also a consideration. Based on these criteria, a mentoring model tailored to the Hoopa community made a lot of sense.

While there is considerable research on “mentoring” models and outcomes as is discussed in the Literature Review. There isn’t any research regarding specific academic interventions for Hoopa Tribal members. After much discussion with local tutors, teachers, educators, parents, and students, it was determined that each student would benefit from a process that included an individualized education plan. It was also determined that each plan needed to be simple enough that the students could follow it, that it could help organize the student, keep them on track and be fluid enough to adapt to changing circumstances, have accountability, and most importantly, a mentor to help guide the student throughout this process.

#### The Process of Developing the Mentoring Program

As mentioned, after the initial research, the process of developing a mentoring model started to take shape after gathering input about the issues and the achievement gaps from the main stakeholders. After several meetings with the key stakeholders in the community such as educators, parents, and cultural experts, commonalities began to surface. These involved the need to fill gaps by encouraging more structure and support, enhancing parental involvement, identifying at risk students, performing assessments, getting student buy-in, providing consistency, clear communications, advocacy,

adaptability and accountability. A system that included a process to work with the students and the need for a student education plan combined with a mentor program began to take form.

First, there were logistical questions that needed to be addressed: an intake process, contact information, parent permission slips to access student records, transportation approval, medical emergencies, authorized guardianships, and so on. Next we identified the following elements this program would be built on. These included providing a cultural foundation, having clear communication between all stakeholders, identifying at risk students, assessing each student and developing an individualized plan based on that assessment, clearly defining strategies for academic interventions, (including special considerations, if any), motivating the students to want to improve and stay committed to the process, developing student responsibility and positive self-concepts, setting small goals while working toward larger goals, developing good study habits and organizational skills, integrating individualized learning modules via technology components, providing ongoing support and accountability, getting more parent/guardian participation, recognition of student successes, adapting the student plan (if needed) throughout the student's progress, and finally, creating a process to measure these successes. The following outline contains the elements of the program that we developed.

#### Elements of the Hoopa Mentoring Program

1. Identify at-risk students

2. Consistency/Communication/Advocacy with all stakeholders
3. Assign a mentor “Academic Case Worker”
4. Connection with the student, build relationship with cultural context
5. Assessment
6. Student buy-in and commitment
7. Parent support and participation
8. Develop an individualized educational plan that includes:
  - Student buy in/commitment
  - Specific Goal/s
  - Targeted areas of improvement
  - Identify special considerations (if any).
  - Clear strategies to address their need, including developing good study habits and organizational skills.
  - Frequency. A specific schedule detailing sessions.
  - Accountability of the student with ongoing progress reports on student performance, attendance, homework, grades, and standardized test scores.
  - Adaptability. The plans are designed in a format that allows the students to attain their goals, and set new ones as they progress.
9. Integration of technology by utilizing individualized learning modules.
10. Activities to include field trips, including cultural activities.

11. Recognition.

- Acknowledgments of successes
- Small rewards/incentives for reaching specific benchmarks

Infrastructure—The Hoopa Learning Center

After the elements and structure of a Hoopa mentoring program had been developed, implementation became the next critical point. How and where to implement the program were the next logical pieces to answer. Due to the Hoopa Learning Center's existing relationship with the school district, the infrastructure of the program, its staff, close proximity to the school, and cultural activities, the Hoopa Tribal Learning Center (HTLC) was a good candidate to implement this mentoring intervention. The HTLC program is within the Hoopa Education Department. Prior to this new mentoring program, the Hoopa Tribal Learning Center's (HTLC) staff operated primarily as teachers' aides. They worked within classrooms with whatever students the teacher assigned to them for the day. They provided much needed support for teachers, but unfortunately little data existed demonstrating their effectiveness. This new Hoopa Mentoring Program would provide more comprehensive and focused support for the students and provide data and outcome accountability.

The following is a brief description of the program. The Hoopa Learning Center is managed by a manager with minimum BA and three years experience in the education field. The HTLC generally has 4-6 full time mentors on staff. Each mentor (whom the program calls an "Academic Case Worker"), has a case load of 10-25 students depending

on their experience, skill set, and the organization of the mentor. There is no hard set student to mentor ratio number because the connection with the student is the most important component. If a mentor can successfully manage 17 students, then that is their case load, if they can manage more, then they will. The manager of the program and the mentor make that determination. In every case, the center has more referrals than available staff, so there is no shortage of students that want to participate in the program. Each mentor generally has an AA degree or is working toward their degree, or they are working toward their Bachelor's degree. The mentors are Native Americans and live in the immediate area.

When hired each mentor already had some training and experience in working with Native American children. Upon hiring, each mentor needed to pass a criminal background check, pass a TB test and adhere to the Tribe's drug and alcohol policy, which means that they must pass drug and alcohol tests, and are subject to random drug testing. Once hired, additional training is provided for each mentor at the learning center. This training includes understanding the legalities of working with students, professionalism, their responsibility as a mentor, recognizing and understanding warning signs of distress, developing rapport, interviewing students, developing education plans, and shadowing an existing mentor for a week. There are also specialized trainings throughout the year that include interventions, crisis intervention and subject specialized trainings.

A critical element of the training for the mentors is spent on making the distinction between their role as a mentor, and that of a friend or certified counselor. The

mentor must learn their boundaries and develop trust with the student and support them, but not cross that boundary as a friend at the expense of being a professional. The mentors must also know their limitations and when to get other professionals involved with more serious issues, while at the same time maintaining the trust of their students. The safety of the student is always paramount. If students reveal some very serious issues that they may not want to face or receive help for, it is the responsibility of the mentor to be the adult and act in the best of the student, even if it is an uncomfortable situation.

The next step is matching the mentors with the students. The manager makes the determination of which mentor would be most appropriate for a particular student. Sometimes this is based on a student's or parent's request. Usually it is determined based on the mentors skill set and the needs of the student. For example, student Robert X may be a high school student that needs immediate intervention with Algebra. The manager would assign the mentor with a strong background in math that specializes in working with high school students. Another student, Sally Y, may be a middle school student in the 5th grade that struggles in all subjects and the direct link may be her low attendance that leads to this low performance. In this case, the manager would assign the mentor that specializes in working with middle school students and include strategies in her plan to improve her attendance.

Based on the infrastructure and resources of the Learning Center, and after the elements of the mentoring process have been identified, the three C's (communication, coordination and consistency) must be addressed to establish an environment that will

allow this process to be implemented between the Hoopa Tribal Education Department's Learning Center and the Klamath Trinity Joint Unified School District,.

### The Three C's: Communication—Coordination—Consistency

Before the process could begin, the relationship and coordination between the Hoopa Tribal Education Department (HTED) and the Klamath Trinity Joint Unified School District (KTJUSD) needed to be established. Over the years the two organizations have had an on-again, off-again relationship. But generally speaking, the two organizations have developed trust and a mutual respect based on their roles within the educational process. It is this relationship that provides a platform where the school teachers and administrators, meet regularly with the Hoopa Tribal Education Director and the HTLC staff to address various educational concerns. In some cases, these meetings follow a formal process with an agenda and minutes. However, these meetings most often take place on an as needed basis. The mentors have the liberty to speak with teachers, outreach consultants, administrators, parents, and of course the students in order to provide ongoing support, help develop the education plan, and monitor the student's progress. The goal of each mentor is to start the process by creating a line of communication with all stakeholders, and to coordinate these efforts in order to have a positive effect on the student.

The mentor helps facilitate the process with the student and with the stakeholders. At times, the mentor will even advocate for the students when the situation arises. Establishing communication, identifying need, identifying available resources and



developing a relationship with the student are the paramount elements and responsibilities of the academic case workers (mentors).

By keeping these lines of communication open and coordinating everyone's efforts, the center provides some consistency for the student. Consistency is one of the key elements that will help the student begin to move forward and stay with the process. This coordination of efforts also helps leverage the teachers' time, because the mentors can carry on a lesson that the teacher covered. This also avoids the students receiving mixed messages from the school and the HTLC staff.

Additionally, it provides an opportunity for more accountability. For example, the center has had cases where the student gave false information to the mentor/academic case worker about homework assigned. The intent of the student was to get out of doing their homework. However, when the academic case workers are in constant contact with the teachers, it makes it more difficult for the student to play one against another or to deny what school work was assigned. The more open the communication is, the easier it is to keep the stakeholders informed, and coordinate their efforts. It also allows them to leverage resources. All of this provides a consistent process for the student that leads to improved academic performance.

Consistency is a vital component particularly if the student has a home environment that doesn't provide them with consistency regarding their schooling. If this is the case, sometimes consistency is a new habit the students have to learn. As the old saying goes, "old habits are hard to break." And although the Learning Center cannot

control what goes on in the home, it can provide consistency and support outside of the home.

Once the logistics were ironed out and the partnerships and communication established, the next step was to identify who to help and how to identify them? Particularly since the center has limited staffing and resources and could not help all of the students that needed additional help and support.

#### Identify at-risk students

The next step was to identify which students were most at risk and therefore needed the most help. This process included both the Hoopa Tribal Learning Center Program (HTLC) and the Klamath Trinity Joint Unified School District. The two main schools served by the HTLC are the Hoopa Elementary School and the Hoopa High School. Each school has an outreach consultant that works with teachers and school counselors on a daily basis. The teachers refer students to the outreach consultant, and the outreach consultant conducts the first preliminary evaluation of the students based on the recommendations of the teacher. The outreach consultant sets up a meeting with the student's parent/guardians with the HTLC program coordinator. Sometimes, this meeting is an informal meeting to inform the student and parents of the school's concerns regarding the student. Sometimes this meeting is a more formal Student Support Team (SST) meeting. The SST includes a school counselor, primary teachers, a HTLC coordinator and at times a school administrator.

The outreach consultant may develop various strategies to help the student. One of those strategies is to refer the student to participate in the Hoopa Tribal Mentoring Program conducted by the Hoopa Tribal Learning Center (HTLC). Once the HTLC receives the referral, another meeting is set up with the student and parents at the HTLC.

The HTLC also accepts referrals from teachers, and parents directly. Some students may not progress to the stage of needing an intervention from the schools' outreach consultant, but a teacher or parent can still request to enroll the student in the Hoopa Tribal Learning Center's Mentoring Program.

After the first meeting, the HTLC coordinator evaluates the information provided in the meeting using a rubric in order to determine the "at risk" level of the student. A sample of this rubric is contained in the mentoring handbook. See Appendix p. 74. Students that score high on the rubric will receive the most support. These students generally have low skill sets, poor grades, low standardized test scores, usually have poor attendance, and may have behavioral challenges. In these cases, a schedule is developed that usually includes additional support and/or tutoring in school, as well as weekly tutoring sessions after school. Students who score low on the rubric, generally only receive after school support once or twice a week. And in some cases, some students may only receive support a few times per month if they are termed a "maintenance" student. Maintenance students generally are performing at grade level and get adequate grades, and sometimes just need a little contact with their mentor and ways to monitor their progress in order to intervene if it is necessary to get the student back on track.

### Assign a Mentor/Academic Case Worker

The key to this entire process is the mentor/academic case worker. They are directly responsible for coordinating and implementing each element of this process. The mentor must also establish a relationship with the student and, in fact, the success or failure of helping the student will, in part, be a direct result of their ability to make a personal connection with the student and their family, and the mentor's ability to motivate the student. Other elements include consistency with the student, as well as communication, coordination with the teachers, organization and follow up. Each mentor must keep an active file on each student and must gather ongoing data such as progress reports, attendance and standardized test scores. And of course, this process must acknowledge and be built upon a foundation of the Hoopa culture to help develop a connection with the student. The mentor begins the process by understanding as much as possible about the student.

### Assessment

Before the mentor can begin to work with the student, they must first understand as much about the student as possible. Particularly the skill set of the student. Therefore an assessment of the student is necessary. The assessments currently used vary depending on the student and where the referral came from. Most often it begins with the teachers' input and the teachers often refer to their experiences with that particular student based on their current grades and standardized test results. Other assessment tools used depend on the student. For some students, an assessment called Dibles is used, for others the

assessments provided by the Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE) are used. Additionally, the Hoopa Tribal Learning Center (HTLC) gathers feedback on what grade level the student is at in reading, writing and mathematics. This information is used to develop specific lesson plans for academic interventions based on each students' needs. The mentor needs to have as clear of a picture as possible in order to help the student. Another crucial piece of the evaluation and assessment process is the interview with the student.

The first interview/discussion between the mentor and student is critical. The student interview and its approach is the most important piece in developing the right foundation because it not only provides the mentor with the information needed to develop an effective education plan for the student, but if conducted properly, it also elicits the most critical element from the student, their buy-in. Additionally, this interview fosters personal responsibility and enhances trust between the student and mentor.

#### The Student Interview: Student Buy-in

Getting student buy-in and motivating the student are critical elements of this process. We have observed that we can talk “at” the student about what they should do until we are blue in the face—but unless that student wants to improve, we really cannot effectively help them. Therefore, it is our job to get them to “want” to improve. This is an important concept worth repeating—**WE MUST GET THEM TO WANT TO IMPROVE**. If the interview is conducted properly, it should not be a process whereby we

are telling them what they should do. We already know what they should do, their teachers know what they should do, the outreach consultant knows what they should do, their parents know what they should do, and the student knows what he or she should do. But all of these people knowing, is only part of the solution, the real trick is getting the student to want to engage and buy-in. Therefore, we have to get the student to want to improve.

The process begins with a safe environment and an open non-judgmental conversation with the student. We developed a questionnaire that we follow in our interview with the student that is just as important as the education plan itself. This questionnaire elicits responses from the student by asking them to consider what is affecting their academic performance, how they feel about this, what they think would help them do better, and of course the main ingredient—a commitment that they want to do better. This is the foundation that the education plans are built on. It includes many components: developing a relationship between the mentor and student, getting the student to buy in to the process and thereby commit to the program, getting the student to take ownership of their education, helping them to identify their strengths and weaknesses, helping the student to identify barriers and how to overcome those barriers, and, most importantly, getting the student to say how they will improve. This questionnaire is included in the mentoring handbook, Appendix p. 75.

If the process has been followed correctly, at the end of the interview, the student has told us that they want to improve, that they have a clear goal set and have identified what they need to work on. They have also identified what challenges and barriers they

may face and how they will overcome those challenges. Finally, that they will commit to this process and do what it takes to complete their plan.

After the student interview is complete a follow up with their parent/s or guardian/s is included. This is done separately to allow the student to feel more in control and to have the freedom to speak openly and honestly. When parents are a part of the initial interview they sometimes inadvertently interfere with the listening process of the interview or pass judgments on their child without realizing they could cause the student to disengage from this process. They can also take the focus away from the mentor developing a relationship and trust with the student. This however, does not imply that parent input and support is not needed, far from it. However, through much trial and error, we have found that it is better to conduct the first interview with just the student. Afterward, we approach the parent and discuss how they can be involved and help support this process.

A follow-up document to the questionnaire is a student contract. At the end of the interview we restate what we think they have told us. Once they agree, we reiterate that this is **THEIR** plan, and we will help and support them to complete **THEIR** plan. The key at this stage is getting the student to commit to the plan by signing the contract. Again, the process leading to this point is crucial. It should be very natural for the student to want to commit and sign the contract because it is their plan, and they have already told us what they want to do. So after they agree and sign the contract we reinforce that by signing the contract. It is treated as a binding contract and the student agrees to complete the plan, and the mentor also signs the contract and agrees to support the student. This is

in line with cultural practices. When they give their word, they must follow through or risk offending the person they've given their word to.

There is also a place for the parent/guardian to sign the contract which we discuss with the parent at the second meeting with all of the stakeholders including the student, parent, mentor and teacher if possible. If a parent meeting is not possible in the near future, we have the student take it to their parent/guardian and have them sign the form and return it to us. We usually give them a deadline to get it in because we have found that if we leave it open ended, we don't get the contract back for weeks, months, or sometimes not at all, and we lose the power of the contract. We keep a copy of the student contract on file and have it readily available to refer to when we need to motivate the student and remind them what and why they are doing this.

The interview, the individualized education plan and contract all happen about the same time. Sometimes the plan needs a few more days to develop, but it is based on the interview and input from the student. There is of course some help and guidance from the mentor to make sure the critical elements needed to help the student are included.

Usually, however, the students are more than honest and know what they need to do to improve.

### Develop an Individualized Educational Plan

Once the mentor is assigned to the student and after the mentor has gathered any additional information they need from the school or teacher, and the interview has been



conducted with the student, the mentor develops an education plan for the student. This plan includes the following elements:

- a. Student buy-in/commitment formalized by the contract.
- b. Specific Goal/s
- c. Target areas for improvement
- d. Identification of special considerations (if any).
- e. Clear strategies to address student need, including developing good study habits and organizational skills.
- f. A specific schedule for the mentor and student.
- g. Accountability with ongoing progress reports on student performance, attendance, homework, grades, star testing results, etc.
- h. Adaptability. The plans are designed in a format that allows them to attain their goals, and set new ones as they progress.
- i. Integration of Technology, utilizing individualized learning modules.
- j. Recognition.
- i. Acknowledgments of successes
- k. Small rewards/incentives for reaching specific benchmarks

The format is simple enough so that the students could develop and follow it, yet function in a way that gives us the information we need. Once the process is underway and the mentor works with the students on an ongoing basis, there is always a point where the student either completes or needs to modify their plan.

### Adaptability

We can never forget that we are dealing with people, and the nature of dealing with people is that things are always in constant motion and change, particularly for students with limited life experiences. Therefore, this process needs to be structured enough to provide the student with the consistency they need, yet fluid enough to account for modifications if needed. For example, in some cases, the education plans go exactly as drafted, the students improve, and then the plan needs to be upgraded to account for the new goal. The student may have decided that they wanted to change their math grade from a D to a C. Once they accomplish this, the new goal may be to raise it up to a B or even an A. In other cases, there are elements that the mentors cannot predict and the need to modify a plan is critical for meeting the student's needs at that moment. In one case, a student was struggling in school and having severe behavioral issues. The student was referred to the learning center and followed all of the right steps and developed a plan. But as the mentor began working with the student, the mentor noticed that the student had difficulty writing. This frustrated the student and the student did not want to do his work. After several sessions of trying to help the student, the mentor began to suspect that the problem was more than just student motivation. The mentor sought the expertise of the school district's special education counselor. It was eventually determined that the student had a slight learning disability and needed additional help in developing his fine motor skills. After gaining this knowledge, the student's education plan was modified to focus on more activities developing his fine motor skills, as well as emphasizing oral learning methodologies. As a result, the student started to see success, gain confidence,

and the behavioral issues decreased dramatically. In another more severe instance, a student was doing very well and showing vast improvements. Then one week, the student stopped coming to the center. The student started missing school, and when the mentor saw the student, the student seemed non-committal, didn't seem to care, and didn't want to give any reasons for her change in attitude. Initially, this puzzled the mentor, and the mentor approached the guardian. The guardian informed the mentor that a close member of the student's family had been killed in a car accident. This of course changes everything. The entire approach needed to be changed to support the student, to be there for her and to give her time to deal with the loss. In this case, the mentor took on more of an advocacy role on behalf of the student with the teachers and school. In each of these examples, the process provided structure, yet was adapted in order to help and support each student.

In tandem with the adaptability of the plans and support, is another important component of support—recognition.

#### Recognition—Everyone Needs a Cheerleader

A few years ago a motivational speaker came to Hoopa and spoke with our staff and students. He said something to our staff that we have not forgotten. He said, “Everyone needs a cheerleader.” He impressed upon us how important it is that everyone needs to feel that they are important and that someone believes in them enough to cheer them on and that they need to be recognized for their accomplishments. The last critical element of the mentoring program is recognition. This also ties in with the traditional

values of the Hupa people. Each member belonged and was validated. For us, the student-mentor relationship started with our mentors believing in the student and helping them to see what the students sometimes could not yet see in themselves. As the student completes their plan and reaches their various milestones, it is important to recognize their accomplishments. Along with the accomplishments students develop a sense of pride and self worth. We have found that it is even more powerful if students are recognized by the community. Therefore we developed an end-of-the-year awards party wherein each student is recognized for their accomplishments and presented with an award and prize. The prizes are based on the number of tickets a student earns. They earn these tickets by completing their plans and by increasing their letter grades. It is not uncommon for excited students to come through the doors waiving their report cards showing how well they did.

Although the focus of this process appears to be primarily academic, the cultural element is the foundational piece upon which this is built. It is important to infuse students' cultural identity and activities throughout this process. In our environment, this is a natural element of the center, not an extra thing we try to "put on".

### Culture is not an extra subject

The student's cultural heritage is more than just a topic—it is a way of life. In many cases, their cultural beliefs are the center of their world. In some cases, our understanding and acknowledgement of the intricacies of their culture and beliefs is the only way we can gain trust and mutual respect with the student. The process described

above with the interview is the beginning of this process, but real and meaningful trust takes time. In these cases cultural activities conducted with the students not only provide an opportunity to connect with the student in a non-academic setting, but also provide a much needed perspective on and balance with the world around us.

The cultural activities may not necessarily be as measurable as achievements focused on quantitatively driven data, but they nevertheless help in many ways. The activities can provide a platform for the students to express their culture or to learn more about their culture. It helps gain them a sense of belonging and connectedness, and helps to reaffirm their self-concepts and identities while providing them with perspective and balance with the world around them. It is difficult to quantify, but it is noticeably beneficial when included in the process, and there is a noticeable void when their local cultural heritage is not included and validated.

The Hoopa Tribal Learning Center (HTLC) hosts a variety of cultural activities throughout the year. The activities vary depending on the age of the students and their gender. Cultural knowledge of activities and protocols is essential. While there are many activities that are gender neutral, it is important to understand which activities are specific to girls and which are specific for boys. For example, one of the activities the center conducts is a Sticks Club. The sticks game is a traditional game between two opposing teams. It is a combination of hockey, wrestling, football, and lacrosse. It is a very physical game and cultural protocol dictates that girls are not allowed to play. On the other hand, basketry is a time honored tradition that the Hupa people are world renown for. Basket making is only appropriate for girls to do, with the exception of an eel basket

which a boy could make. Other activities that the center conducts are traditional beading, traditional and contemporary arts, a summer youth cultural camp, Hupa language classes, a talking circle, and a youth leadership group. The students have a lot of input in deciding and helping to implement these various activities. One year, the students wanted to host an Elders dinner. They raised money, cooked and served the food, and presented a gift to each elder at the dinner. The HTLC will often bring in guest speakers, cultural experts, and elders at varying intervals for talks or presentations to the students throughout the year. The center focuses on maintaining a strong connection between the next generation and their elders.

There are other activities that the center conducts that may not necessarily accentuate cultural ties but still provide opportunities for building trust. These activities are often tied to extrinsic rewards for student performance. For example, a trip to the movies, pizza night, or a field trip are all activities that the mentor and student participate in. Additionally, the center has taken students on college tours and to special motivational functions. The center strives to provide real world experiences for the students in connection with the goals of the program.

The Hoopa Mentoring Program provides mentors that focus on developing meaningful relationships with the students based on the local culture. This has been integrated with a structured intervention process, outlined in a detailed education plan based on the student's goals. This in turn is fused with ongoing support and guidance. With all of these elements combined, the Native American students enrolled in the Hoopa Mentoring Program have shown improvements in their academic performance. The

following section will include some preliminary data gathered about the students enrolled in the program over the past two years.

### Preliminary Data

The data collected on the performance of the Native American students enrolled in the Hoopa Mentoring Program has showed some interesting preliminary results. The Hoopa Learning Center is currently serving 94 students in K-12 grades. All of whom are Native American students living on or near the Hoopa Valley Reservation. The majority of these students were identified as “at-risk” when they entered the program. This means they generally had failing grades in one or more subjects. At midyear for the 2009-2010 school year preliminary results showed the following:

- 93% of these at-risk student improved and earned passing grades of A’s, B’s and C’s, in one or more subjects.
- 43% of these students improved by one letter grade in one or more subjects.
- 37% improved by two letter grades in one or more subjects.
- 13% maintained a C grade.
- 7% showed little to no improvement.

These numbers improved by 4% compared to the data collected in the 2008-2009 school year, where 89% of the students improved to passing grades. In each year, there are reports of some students improving dramatically. One particular student whom I will name Stevie L. didn’t seem to care about school and it wasn’t uncommon for him to get

in trouble in class and sent to the principal's office before he was referred to the program. When in class, Stevie was often disruptive and very seldom did any work. This had gone on for months, and in spite of the teachers' many attempts to get Stevie to do his work, Stevie would not respond. Stevie's overall GPA was .7 when he was referred to this program. Although it was challenging to get Stevie to completely buy into the program, he eventually started to respond to his plan. In Stevie's case, he was very intelligent and didn't need to develop his basic skills. For Stevie, it was more about motivation and putting in the time to develop good study habits. Stevie's plan mostly focused on organizational skills, developing better study habits, (including setting time aside each night for homework), and studying for tests. As he started to do his homework, and turned it in, Stevie started to see success and his grades improved. As he improved, Stevie received praise, recognition and tickets for the end of the year awards party. Stevie began to experience what it felt like to be successful and get positive praise for his intelligence. Within three months, Stevie's overall GPA went from a .7 to a 3.4 for all of his subjects. Stevie has never looked back and continues to excel in school. This was a success for Stevie. Other successful cases may not be as dramatic but meet each student's need.

In another case I will call Neal, struggled in school. Neal was in a grade that, due to the district's policies, moved him to a separate day school. Neal seemed to do as little work as possible. It should also be noted that in Neal's case, he had a diagnosed learning disability. And although the mentors do not have the expertise to fully implement Neal's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), they provided Neal with a consistent place to go



after school. Neal's plan was not based on improving his grades. Neal had difficulty staying focused on and completing his work, so Neal's education plan was to finish one assignment a day. With a little help, encouragement, patience and sometimes innocent bribery, Neal started completing one assignment a day. This was a great success for Neal. He received the same praise and recognition that Stevie did. The goal in each case was to meet each students' needs and to help him experience success.

For some students, just getting them to improve their attendance, or not to disrupt the class could also be considered a success. The results aren't always quantitative. Sometimes the evidence of success is that the students keep coming to the center. They are brutally honest and if they didn't like it, they wouldn't come.

This approach, combined with the structured education plans and consistent ongoing support, seems to help students improve their academic outcomes and gain a stronger sense of self-identity. The preliminary data seems to support this. The program still needs more time to evaluate the long term results. However, preliminary findings suggest that, overall, the local Native American students are responding to the Hoopa Mentoring Program. Time will tell if this intervention will have long term effects on educational outcomes of these students such as increased graduation rates, increased college persistence and a decrease in participation in risky behaviors. We hope that this mentoring program will continue to show short its term benefits and the eventual long-term benefits will pay off as well.

## The Hoopa Tribal Mentoring Program Booklet

The materials containing all of the elements described in this thesis project are included at the end as Appendix A on page 77.

## CONCLUSION

The subject of closing the achievement gap for Native American students is complex. Often educators discuss policy, funding, resources, curriculum, assessments, teacher training, cultural awareness, socio-economic barriers and a host of other variables. While there are many reasons why Native American students are not performing as well as other ethnicities, the solution boils down to a few core concepts. Due to the limited resources our Learning Center has, it was necessary to get down to the core elements in order to help the students navigate the barriers they face. When I began this project, I had observed that the students that did well tended to come from homes that provided them with very good support and, conversely, the students that did not do well and eventually dropped out of school, generally came from homes that did not provide them with consistent support. Therefore, in our case, the answer was to provide them with support that they could relate to and buy into to help them succeed. By researching mentoring, looking at various models and analyzing their components, I found the research suggested that mentoring programs can be an effective intervention program for at-risk minority youth. Additionally, I took into account that our Learning Center is on the Hoopa Valley Reservation and serves predominantly Native American students. Therefore, we needed to provide this support in a way that was consistent with the culture and our traditional education system. As I explored the traditional educational model of the Hupa people, it seemed to be in agreement with the research on mentoring, which I realized, was in fact, a type of mentoring system. Thus, it became necessary to

design a model that took into account each student's needs, and provide them with consistency to motivate them to want to improve, and to acknowledge their accomplishments. The result was the Hoopa Mentoring Model currently implemented at the Hoopa Learning Center. The program is on its third year and based on the design described in this thesis project. The data gathered on the students enrolled in this program seems to show a remarkable improvement in the students' academic performance, as well as a decrease in behavioral issues at school. The program still needs more time and will undoubtedly go through revisions. However, the core principle of providing consistent mentoring support, in spite of the many barriers the students face appears to be a critical element that many Native American educators and policy makers may find useful. While there are many issues for the Hoopa Tribal Learning Center to consider, at this point in time, their efforts to provide consistent, individual support within a culturally enriching environment appears to be a successful strategy. Finally, I'd like to add that this project has become some of the most meaningful and rewarding work I have ever been a part of. To see that sparkle in a student's eyes and watch them blossom and believe in themselves, is what education is all about, and is the greatest way that I know of to honor our heritage. I tell our youth that as Native American people, many of their ancestors struggled so they could be here today. They are our greatest resource and it has been an honor to contribute in some way to the health and well-being of the future of our heritage.

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Appendix A. Hoopa Tribal Mentoring Booklet

YA' XO CH'OYNE' CH'O YAL T' SIT-TE'

A MENTORING MODEL FOR THE HOOPA VALLEY TRIBE



*Prelude: This Hoopa Mentoring Program booklet is respectfully and lovingly dedicated to our ancestors for making a way for us to be here today. We honor their sacrifices by living healthy balanced lives and continuing the legacy they left for us.*

Program Description: The Hoopa Tribal Education Mentoring Program is focused on providing Native American students with consistent, structured support based on the core values and culture of the Hupa people to meet the individual students needs in the areas academic improvement and personal development. This program provides initial assessment of the students needs, develops an individualized education plan for each student, provides them with ongoing support, guidance and advocacy, continually monitors their progress, and acknowledges their accomplishments, all wrapped in a culturally enriching environment.

“A child will learn when they are ready”, Hupa Saying.

HUPA LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND LEARNING CENTER

On Loop Road  
P.O. Box 426  
Hoopa CA, 95546  
PH: (530) 625-4320

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

D.O.B. \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Student is in as of Fall 20\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Tribal Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Physical Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized person/people to pick up student at the center:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check how you would like your child to be transported from the Hupa center.

High School Bus \_\_\_ Activity Bus\_\_\_ Parent pick-up \_\_\_ Center transport van \_

Other: (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### HUPA LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND LEARNING CENTER

On Loop Road

P.O. Box 426

Hoopla CA, 95546

PH: (530) 625-4320

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School Attending: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby authorize the Hupa Language, Culture, and Learning Center (HLCLC) to have access to my child's school records for the purpose of better serving my child in the program. I also authorize the HLCLC to attend any educational meetings pertaining to my child such as a teacher conference, IEP meeting or other meetings related to my child's academic performance.

I understand that this information will remain confidential and will only be used for the purpose of academic tutoring and mentoring as provided by the HLCLC.

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

By signing below I also authorize the HLCLC to use images of my child or the child in my custody for activity documentation or for promotional purposes.

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check here if you **DO NOT** want photos of your child, or the child in your custody to be used as stated above\_\_.

## Hupa Language, Culture and Learning Center

**EMERGENCY contact information and Release Form**

Emergency Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Does your child have any allergies or special medical conditions? If so, please list them.

\_\_\_\_\_

Does your child take any medication or have any limitations we should be aware of?

\_\_\_\_\_

In the event of an emergency, I authorize the Hupa Language, Culture and Learning Center's staff to call 911 for serious injuries/medical problems, or to take my child to the appropriate medical facility and have my child treated for injuries or minor medical problems. In the event of any injuries the emergency contact person will be contacted by HLCLC staff.

By signing below I understand, acknowledge, and agree that the Hupa Language, Culture and Learning Center, the Hoopa Valley Tribe, Hoopa Valley Tribal Council, and Hoopa Tribal employees, officers, agents, or volunteers, **shall not** be liable for any injuries sustained at the program or while participating in the centers program activities or camps.

**Physician information**

Name of Primary Care Physician: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Medical Insurance Information**

Name of Policy Holder: \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Policy Number \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: This rubric is used to determine “at-risk” level of a student. This information helps determine the needs of the student for the education plan and the frequency/schedule the mentors develop within the plan. If the student scores 6 or more points because they meet six of the characteristics described they usually have a plan that includes “in-school” support and after school support 4-5 per week. As the need decreases, the schedules can range from intervals of 2-3 times per week to 1-2 times per month.

Table 6. Student Evaluation

Student At-Risk Rubric					
Characteristics	High Need	At Risk	Moderate	Low	Score
Points	6+	4-5+	2-3+	1	
IEP/540 Plan					
Low Grades					
Attendance Issues					
Skill Set					
Low Motivation					
Study Habits					
Behavioral Issues					
Low Standardized Test Scores					
Challenging Home Environment					
Total					



### STUDENT INTERVIEW AND CONTRACT

How are you doing in school? (Attendance, Homework, Grades, Morale)

---

Are you happy with these results? \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you think this is happening? \_\_\_\_\_

---

Do you think you could do better? \_\_\_\_\_

What kind of grades do you think you could get? \_\_\_\_\_

What could you do to improve? \_\_\_\_\_

---

What do you think would be a good goal to set? \_\_\_\_\_

---

What challenges can you think of that may prevent you from accomplishing your goal?

---

How could you overcome these challenges?

---

I will commit to helping you reach your goal/s, but you must commit to putting in the work to reach your goal/s and work through any challenges.

Are you willing to do this? \_\_\_\_\_. Okay, this is a binding contract by signing it you are committed to finishing your plan, and I am committed to being there to support you.

---

Student Signature

---

Academic Case Worker Signature

---

Parent/Guardian Signature

HOOPA TRIBAL STUDENT EDUCATION PLAN (SEP)

Academic Case Worker \_\_\_\_\_

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject/s: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessment: \_\_\_\_\_

Identified areas for Improvement: \_\_\_\_\_

Goal/s and Target Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Strategy/ies: \_\_\_\_\_

Schedule: \_\_\_\_\_

Table 7. Progress Rubric

Subject/s	Progress Report	Report Card	Progress Report	Report Card	Progress Report	Report Card	Progress Report	Report Card

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_