



THE DEVELOPMENTAL LANGUAGE PROCESS

Language for Success

A quarterly report by Sealaska Heritage Institute on materials development for improved student achievement

What's New...



TOP: The process includes games to make learning fun. In this activity, a ball is thrown onto the sheet. The student closest to the hole where the ball falls through must say a sentence using a vocabulary word. LEFT: Jim MacDiarmid.

SHI staff and Developmental Language Process (DLP) creator Jim MacDiarmid provided training on the process and an introduction to the curriculum units at the statewide Literacy Conference in October.

Almost eighty people attended the training, which spanned two days in Juneau at a local high school.

Jim says often times students struggle in school because the “language of learning” doesn’t go into long-term memory. He recalled an incident when students were tested

on the term “congruent.” Almost all of the students failed to define that word, even though the teacher had taught it to them.

“But it wasn’t a math problem, it was a language problem,” Jim said. “The term ‘congruent’ had not entered into their long-term memory.”

The problem is academic terms are taught in an abstract way and we assume kids are absorbing them. They’re not, Jim says. The DLP is a process that helps instill the language of learning into long-term memory.

About this project

In 2009, Sealaska Heritage Institute received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education called *Replacing Thing-a-ma-jig: Language For Success*.

This newsletter is designed to share the developments of this grant with parents, teachers, and anyone interested in the progress of the project.

The first objective is to develop materials that will improve students’ academic success in science, math, and social studies. The second objective is to develop materials for the teaching of Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian languages and cultures.

The project will reach about four-hundred sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students in four communities over three years.

The project is based on the book *Replacing Thing-a-ma-jig: The Developmental Language Process (DLP)*—which lays out the method that will be used to develop the materials.

The Process has a proven track record of accelerating academic achievement and has proven effective for Native language instruction.

SHI tests DLP materials at summer camp

Students show significant improvement on tests



TOP: Latseen Leadership Academy students at the 2011 camp in Juneau. ABOVE: Camp veterans Maka Monture and Harley Holter provided leadership as high school mentors.

PHOTOS BY JORDAN GIBSON

SHI in July sponsored its annual Latseen Leadership Academy for students in grades 6-8.

This year's camp in Juneau drew forty-eight students from Southeast Alaska and as far away as Fairbanks, Sand Point, and Oregon.

At the eight-day camp, the institute used the Developmental Language Process materials and gave pre- and post tests to assess the effectiveness of the materials.

The results were significant:

students improved their post-test scores in Tlingit by 53%. They showed 13% improvement in math and 26% improvement in science.

“The test scores show the DLP method is working. Students are learning the content and retaining it,” said Joshua Ream, SHI curriculum specialist.

The DLP materials are designed to increase students' vocabulary in each of the content areas. The vocabulary words are



The academy included instruction on how to make ceremonial vests.



Students also made carved and shaped copper bracelets.



Meals were made at the camp--a rustic retreat owned by the Boy Scouts.

selected from the State Academic Standards, and the words are incorporated into activities to make learning fun.

The students also met new people, worked in teams, and built skills and confidence.

Students learned how to process fish for the smokehouse, sew ceremonial vests, and make copper jewelry.

In addition to scheduled activities and classes, the students and staff spent every evening sharing songs, dances and stories.

Latseen Coordinator Sarah Dybdahl said this year's academy had an especially positive atmosphere.

This was reflected in the feedback we received from students and parents.

"Thank you again for welcoming my son to Juneau. Living in Sand Point and having limited knowledge myself, it's not often I have the opportunity to expose him to our Tlingit culture," wrote one parent.

"My daughter had a wonderful time and she liked it so much that she wants to go again next year," wrote another parent.

SHI welcomes new curriculum specialist

SHI's Education Department in September welcomed Curriculum Specialist Joshua Ream.

Joshua is pursuing an interdisciplinary doctoral degree in Applied Ecological Anthropology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and is a fellow of the National Science Foundation's Resilience and Adaptation Program (RAP).

Joshua's research attempts to identify alternative sources of biological information for the research and management of non-game species in Alaska using local knowledge, traditional knowledge and citizen science to complement standard western science

techniques.

Much of his work is cross-cultural and he works closely with the Kiks.ádi Clan of the Stikine K̄wáan to acknowledge the cultural ecosystem services provided by non-game species, especially amphibians (frogs and salamanders).

He is an advocate for public outreach and education and hopes that integrating cultural knowledge into K-12 curriculum will benefit educators, students, and parents alike.



LEFT: SHI's new curriculum specialist, Joshua Ream. RIGHT: Outgoing specialist Ryan Hamilton.

He succeeds outgoing Curriculum Specialist Ryan Hamilton, who has moved to Oregon to be with his family.

October 2011

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Sealaska Heritage Institute

A Native nonprofit founded in 1980 by Sealaska Corporation to perpetuate and enhance Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian cultures.

www.sealaskaheritage.org
www.alaskanativeartists.com

This newsletter was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Alaska Native Education Program for the project *Replacing Thing-a-ma-jig: Language for Success*.

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From the president

2011 has been a sad time for Tlingit people. We have lost so many of our Elders and fluent speakers.

As we all remember them and participate in their memorial services, we hear speeches given by Elders and by young people.

These traditional Tlingit speeches give comfort to the bereaved families and clans.

Hearing young people speak reminds us that they are stepping into leadership roles in our traditional ceremonies.

At Sealaska Heritage Institute, we draw on the knowledge of Elders and fluent speakers to develop our materials.

Any curriculum that we can develop that will strengthen the younger generation in academic

areas and traditional ceremonies is an investment in our survival as a people.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosita Worl".

ROSITA WORL, Ph.D. (*Yeidiklasòkw; Kaa hani*)
PRESIDENT, SEALASKA HERITAGE INSTITUTE