



A Hatch Success Story

“We’re Changing Head Start”:

Hatch Technology Helps
An Oklahoma Head Start
Achieve A Perfect Review Score



The Early Education Experts

P.O. Box 11927 > Winston-Salem, NC 27116 > 800.624.7968



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A Perfect Score

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Head Start recently had their triennial on-site monitoring review from the Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Children and Families (ACF), which oversees the Head Start program. The Choctaw Nation system received a perfect score, and was one of very few of the 52 American Indian Program Branch Head Starts reviewed last year to achieve that distinction.

For Hatch, this is significant because the technology in the Choctaw Nation classrooms includes our own TeachSmart and iStartSmart systems, and the use of this technology was specifically singled out as an area of strength in the ACF report. “Teachers used SMART Boards, cameras, computers, and interactive televisions to provide age- and developmentally-appropriate experiences for children to create, explore and broaden their understanding of early mathematics, literacy and the Choctaw language,” the report stated, and added that “the Education Coordinators’ ability to... monitor every aspect of curriculum implementation through the use of technology” (a feature of both TeachSmart and iStartSmart) was especially important to this particular Head Start because it “enhanced their ability to implement strong systems throughout the large geographic service area in 10.5 counties of Oklahoma.”

Counting On Hatch

Adding TeachSmart and iStartSmart to the Choctaw Nation Head Start classrooms has been very good for the program, especially since Hatch provided professional development training that allows the instructors to immediately put the equipment to good use. And knowing how to use the technology also gave the teachers an advantage during the ACF review process. “The report mentioned the technology because they got to see it in action,” Education Coordinator Shawn Cress points out. “It’s not just there hanging on the wall in the classroom. They saw it in use and were very impressed.”

The Choctaw Nation Head Start is a longtime Hatch customer, and their 13 facilities are filled with our classroom and

Hatch sales rep Adam Griffen has traveled to Oklahoma to work with Head Start officials to help them **make the best use of Hatch technology.**

technology products. In particular, the facilities at Atlers, Duarant, Atoka, Wilburton and McAlester utilize our TeachSmart and iStartSmart systems.

In choosing the TeachSmart and iStartSmart systems for these classrooms, Shawn and fellow Education Coordinator Kathleen Wilson took the advice of Hatch representative Adam Griffen, with whom they have worked for many years. “He knows what our program is all about,” Kathleen says. “He knows what we’re trying to accomplish. We put a lot of trust in his expertise.”

Griffen’s involvement with the Choctaw Nation Head Start is typical of a Hatch sales representative and goes beyond simply supplying products. He has traveled to Oklahoma and works closely with Kathleen and Shawn to make the best use of Hatch technology products. “We did the classroom set up plan with him for our new Durant center, and he was very willing to take our suggestions and input and change things around,” Kathleen says. “We appreciate that. He wants to learn. He wants to do what’s best for the program.”

“We’re Changing Head Start”

Having received such comprehensive training and professional development from Hatch, the teachers are able to use the technology in a variety of ways, especially TeachSmart. “It’s amazing to watch the teachers utilize TeachSmart,” Shawn says. “They open it up during learning center time. They use it for reading stories. They use it to get into the internet and teach the kids movement and music. They’re finding every way they can possibly think of to utilize it. And they’re just tapping in.”

Patti Rosenthal is one those teachers. Her class of 16 children at the Durant Head Start contains both a TeachSmart system and four iStartSmart computers, and this combination of the two has been a great benefit to her students. The children use iStartSmart to develop individual skills and advance through scaffolded levels. “They master the skill and it moves them up,” Patti says. She’s then able to use the real time progress monitoring available through iStartSmart to determine how the children need to be divided up for group activities involving TeachSmart. “For instance, some are ready for sounds and some aren’t there yet,” she explains.

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The results are evident, according to Patti. “I think it’s been an incredible aid for us because I’ve seen the improvements in the children. Without this technology we wouldn’t be making the gains that we are.”

Shawn Cress agrees that the use of Hatch technology has had a profound impact. “It’s a new world,” she says. “We’re changing Head Start.”

A Better Foundation Produces A Better Outcome

The children are also fans of the technology, especially iStartSmart. “Our children love the computers,” Education Coordinator Kathleen Wilson says. “We have a lot of three-year-olds but [the computers] are very user friendly, so they’re meeting our needs.”

Both she and teacher Patti Rosenthal say that one especially useful feature on iStartSmart is a built-in camera that allows each child to have his or her own photograph as their log in. “The kids know how to get into the site, so they can learn their name faster and where they need to go faster. The young kids have a lot more success getting in there and being able to manipulate it,” Kathleen says.

The children also enjoy the activities that are part of TeachSmart, according to Patti Rosenthal, and look forward to the part of the day when they can use that technology. “The games are the things they always want to go to first,” she says, referring to the research-based TeachSmart activities that engage the children to make learning fun and enjoyable. “They’ll choose that any time over listening to a story.”

In fact, says Shawn Cress, “the only downside of having this wonderful technology is that when the kids leave us, the public school they go to doesn’t always meet up to that expectation. So the children are getting this wonderful experience for two years and then sometimes when we send them on they don’t continue that.”

Patti Rosenthal was formerly a second grade teacher in those public schools, and she says her former students would have benefited greatly from being exposed to Hatch technology as preschoolers. “As a second grade teacher, most of my students were reading only on the Kindergarten level, and it’s extremely hard in a year to bring

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children that are that low up to where they're supposed to be," she says. "I just think that if those kids had the opportunity to use this kind of technology, they would not have been so far behind."

The Necessity Of Technology

Choctaw Nation Head Start Director Rebecca Hawkins sees the use of such technology as a vital component of Head Start moving forward, and feels that having it in place was a key element in their perfect ACF review. "I think us being able to have the Hatch technology available to our children shows that we're trying to advance the knowledge of the kids in every way possible. I think it also shows the outside world, and the education entities that these children are leaving us and going into, that we are providing the best possible resources available to these children at this point in their lives."

And she adds that, as new facilities are added and older facilities updated, her goal is to make more Hatch technology products available to the kids. "We have another brand new facility that's up and coming at our Wilburton site, and we have high hopes that we'll be able to have these same types of computers there as well," she says.

Of course a lot of that depends on getting the funding. And in that regard working with Hatch is also an advantage. A Hatch representative will often join with a Head Start or other educational system to help write grants and obtain funding to add new technology to their classrooms, and that was the case here with Adam Griffen. "The two grant directors were very involved with him," Ms. Hawkins notes, adding that they are also fortunate to be part of the Choctaw Nation, which highly values education. "The tribe is very generous in support the [Head Start] program," she says. "They do prioritize the children, and education is one of the top priorities our chief has, along with our tribal council, and that's the reason they do what they do as far as the education of our children."

As people who also have the education of children as our top priority, those are words we love to hear.

For more information about Hatch technology products, visit www.HatchEarlyChildhood.com.