



Vernon Grant, PhD  
Center for American Indian and Rural Health Equity  
Health Sciences Building  
2155 analysis Drive  
P.O. Box 173485  
Montana State University  
Bozeman, MT 59717  
Telephone: (406) 531-9310  
E-mail: [vernon.grant@montana.edu](mailto:vernon.grant@montana.edu)

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August 1, 2023

Re: Policy #4240

Dear Superintendent Corrina Guardipee,

I am writing this letter for a couple of different reasons. First, I want to update you on the progress we have made from my previous research. Second, I want to provide enough detail on our current work to make an informed decision on our request.

As you recall, I was working with the 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade during spring 2017. The study was focused on measuring health behaviors in youth. Specifically, we collected data on demographics, screen time, body composition, physical activity, and sleep. We measured physical activity and sleep with an activity monitor the students wore on their wrist for one week. A total of 65 students consented and participated in the study.

The results of this work showed that we had a significant amount of youth overweight and/or obese and that many were not getting adequate nightly sleep. I used this data to write an additional 5 year grant that was funded in March 2020, right at the height of the pandemic. Unfortunately, we could not get started on this work for almost two years.

In the spring of 2021, I wrote a grant to Montana INBRE to fund the first phase of this work. We proposed to work with Blackfeet families with K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade children. In the first phase, we did focus groups with Blackfeet families to learn about the sleep environment. We asked lots of questions about bed time routines, sleep behaviors, sleep problems, and other aspects of sleep. We also conducted interviews with elders throughout the Blackfoot confederacy. We asked them to talk about traditional thoughts on sleep. Our elders told us stories and incorporated the language throughout, which is very important for us to record not only for research, but for future generations to learn and understand.

We analyzed this data and used it to develop a sleep intervention. We hope to recruit 30 Blackfeet families with K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade children to participate in the study. The sleep intervention has several different components. One aspect is text messages. We will send a text message to every family in the morning and in the evening. The morning texts will be in Blackfeet – we will send them Blackfeet words that are linked to a Youtube video where they can not only read but hear how the words are pronounced. Many of our families expressed a desire to learn Blackfeet so we have included the Blackfeet language in every way possible. Evening texts will consist of strategies for families to get more sleep each night. This could be something as simple as suggesting them to turn their cell phones off at least 30 minutes prior to bedtime. We will also give recommended readings from books we purchased from the Blackfeet Heritage Collection via the school district. Our families will receive four books: Pinto Horse Rider; Napi Stories; Roaming Days; and Grass Woman Stories.

Another aspect is a closed Facebook page. Only families enrolled in the study will have access to this page. On this platform we will post clips where elders share stories on traditional thoughts on sleep. Some of the stories aren't related to sleep, but could be listened to at night before bed as a bedtime story. We will also share Blackfeet lullabies and songs.

The intervention will last for 9 weeks. We are anticipating a start date of Mid-September and right now we are in the recruitment phase. The study is approved by the Blackfeet Nation Institutional Review Board.

It is important to understand that we will not be working within the school and will not disrupt classroom instruction. Once we recruit all our families, data will be collected during the evening and/or weekend hours at a location to be determined. The intervention itself will be done through text message and Facebook. Again, texts will be sent before the workday begins and in the evening at a convenient hour—we are thinking around 7pm. Facebook content will also be posted during a time where we are mindful of the workday.

With that in mind, we are requesting permission to recruit families in the K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade at any activities that may be scheduled *prior* to the school year. My team and I are thinking that we could potentially set up a table and visit with families as they show up for the event (whatever that may be). In addition, if we need to present this request before the school board, we can definitely do that. However, I am not in the community and my schedule may not permit me to be physically present. If that is the case, my team can present this request and I am also available through Zoom if that is an option.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns and how we should proceed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vernon Grant", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Vernon Grant, PhD