



Date: January 4, 2008
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Institute established at Wayne State University to empower African-American Children

Wayne State University and the College of Education (COE) announce the launching of the Institute for the Study of the African-American Child (ISAAC), an institute designed to empower African-American children through research, dissemination of information, training, community service to parents, and clinical services to children. ISAAC is affiliated with the College of Education's Teacher Education Division and is funded entirely through private support and corporate contributions.

Janice E. Hale, ISAAC founding director and WSU professor of early childhood education, said the mission of the institute goes beyond identifying problems. "ISAAC will identify factors that contribute to the African-American academic achievement gap, and offer strategies and support solutions to help narrow and close that gap in order to propel African-American children to their rightful position of excellence and leadership in the world," Hale said.

"ISAAC's mission requires understanding African-American child development and its underpinnings, and many contexts and influences that impact upon the manner in which that development unfolds. The focal point of the institute is to formulate best practices for working with African-American children in school and in the community," Hale said.

The institute will offer services through five interrelated areas including research, community services, clinical services, training and social policy. Highlights of a few events, achievements and planned activities for each area are:

Research

- Creation of a community of scholars.
- Round Table on African American Education (Wayne State University, July 19, 2008).
- Conference on Research Direction (CORD) (Hilton Oceanfront Resort, Hilton Head Island, S.C., May 3-6, 2009).

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(2) ISAAC Launch

Community Services

- Tutoring: Network with sponsors and other community organizations to increase the availability of sliding fee scale tutoring in the community.
- Network of African-American social and mental health professionals: Provide lists of African-American mental health professionals in communities across the nation and make those lists available to African-American parents through its Web site.
- Achievement gap suburban/private school consultations: Offer consultation to those schools to analyze the environment; identify practices and strategies that can enhance school efficacy for African-American students; and offer in-service training to faculty and staff.

Clinical Services

- Education advocates: Counselors who will confer with parents whose children are having difficulty in school.
- Hoop Dreams – Athletic advisers

Training

- Summer Institute – Best Practices with African-American children: Classroom teachers can complete a concentrated series of courses in which they study the learning styles of African-American children, strategies for nurturing self-discipline and complementary classroom teaching strategies.
- Wayne State University course offerings: Develop a sequence of courses in the area of teaching the African-American child at the graduate level at Wayne State University.
- Visions for Children Preschool Teacher Training Network: Once the Visions for Children Curriculum has been prepared for publication and disseminated, training will be offered for teachers in early childhood education programs who are using the curriculum.

Social Policy

- Education Watch: Monitor developments in education and evaluate them in terms of their impact on African-American children
- Public Policy Lecture Series (Wayne State University, May 8, 2010)

A fundraiser to support ISAAC initiatives will be held on Friday, July 18, 2008 at the Marriott Detroit at the Renaissance Center. For further information about ISAAC, visit www.coe.wayne.edu/ISAAC, or call (313) 577-0902.

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Wayne State University is a premier institution of higher education offering more than 350 academic programs through 11 schools and colleges to more than 33,000 students.