Carol James
Seba Dalkai FACE Program
Parent Essay Winner

Hello! My name is Carol James and my son is Kyle. We are from the Navajo Tribe known as the Diné people. Kyle is the youngest of our five children. He has one sister in college, and two sisters and one brother in high school. There is a ten year gap between him and his siblings. Kyle is now four years old. We enrolled in the FACE program at Seba Dalkai, Arizona, three years ago. We travel ten miles one way to get to school. During the winter months these dirt roads get very muddy and it gets difficult to travel, but we are dedicated to making the trip in as much as possible.

We remember the wonderful home visits with the FACE parent educators. When we received home-based visits, my parents would listen in on Kyle’s lessons as the teacher would coach me to work with my son. She showed me how to exercise his small and large muscles using homemade manipulative learning toys. We produced homemade color-chart books and saved cereal boxes for additional ideas for book-making. These book-making projects add up to start our own little library at home. These recycling lessons helped Kyle to name pictures and practice sounding letters out. Kyle gave his teacher the name “Rice” during one of our sessions and this is the time he was just beginning to learn how to talk. This is the name she has come to be known by. The nickname “Rice” for his teacher was the result of the word association he made from a home visit demonstrating the pouring of rice into a funnel which was part of a coordination exercise lesson. By the time she made her next home visit Kyle could only say, “Rice” to her instead of “teacher.” We all thought this was an excellent word association strategy. The point is that he remembered his teacher through the anticipated home visits, not just playing with rice, but other memorable learning play sessions.

As time went on, we made the transition into the center-based classroom. In the light of the new anticipation, I took Kyle to class before he turned three years of age which made him the youngest student in his class. Kyle immediately enjoyed play time during PACT Time. He played with the building blocks, dinosaur figurines, and play dough modeling clay. When it came time for Circle Time he did not like to participate because of his shyness; he would hide from me or hide behind classroom furniture.

Our second year, I noticed huge changes in him. He is now able to print his name, recognizes and names the primary colors, draws pictures on the chalk board, and uses headphone sets to listen to his favorite story, The Three Billy Goats Gruff. He would repeat the troll by chanting, “Trap, Trap, Trap!” The daily Circle Time sessions are enjoyable because he is participating and sitting quietly (almost) to listen to his teacher read a book. He loves it when I read his favorites books, Dinosaurs and Spiders or Super Heroes. We continue these shared-book readings at home and I see his progress within the program as becoming a talented kid.

I myself go to the adult education classroom. Our teacher keeps us very busy with unique arts and crafts projects. I never knew so much mathematics was involved in one “simple” project as the Native Southwest canvas vase which I made with earthtone yarns. I even completed a “novelty” project of creating different art pieces such as a cardboard painting and a sock doll made with yarns. Our teacher is working with us on dialogic reading through Read Together – Catch A Dream. Each week I do feel “I catch” something new, teaching my child and myself by using the techniques from reading and successfully engaging my child on using the PEER reading process.
figurine to welcome the fall season; in simple terms, a scarecrow which now sits on my front porch where it receives many compliments. This project was made from all recycled materials with 2x4 lumber scrapped from the Southwest Fair parade; the FACE program entered a float for the purpose of recruitment. We also made some child-sized pillows for naptime to let our children know we are not too far away during our adventures in learning in the FACE classroom. Lastly, my family did mention they did not know I was so creative and talented. I surprised them.

Our teacher is working with us on dialogic reading through *Read Together - Catch A Dream*. Each week I do feel "I catch" something new, teaching my child and myself by using the techniques from reading and successfully engaging my child on using the PEER reading process. I still forget the last step "R," but my teacher encourages me that even adults and graduate students still forget to use the review step which stands for "R." This encouragement only makes me want to work harder to be successful with my child.

By the end of the day, I look forward to our culinary class. We are able to plan menus and prepare difficult dishes. I learned some new recipes, such as the chocolate cake from scratch and homemade whipping cream. Now, I cook for my family better at home and at the same time learn how to involve the whole family.

For myself, I am learning to use the computer. Before, I used to shy away from using any form of technology and now my teacher has a typing program setup called *Mavis Typing*. Now I tease the class that I have an appointment with Mavis and I would begin my lessons using a computer to learn how to use the keyboard. For the future, I look forward to working with technology using the *RealeBooks* computer program since the courage to try has awakened in me. I also have learned to set long-term and short-term goals for myself that include a second goal which is to take a cosmetology class in the near future.

Now, you are wondering why I am in the center-based program. It is because I want to be able to see and take part in my son’s learning. I witness his development everyday as he learns new words. This makes me feel good. Everyday I feel like I am learning something new from my child and my teacher. Thus, I am thankful to be in the FACE program. It is better then staying home wondering what my child is doing in school. Here in the FACE program I am a part of his life daily. I cherish the memories that the FACE program is building between my child and myself because that is all I will have when he grows up and leaves the nest. But I will always be thankful for this opportunity to give the gift of time and give of ourselves in developing literacy skills.