

School of Education
Visiting Minority Scholars Lecture Series

***Community Based Design of Science Learning
Environments in an Urban Indian Community:
Building on Socio-cultural Dynamics of
Epistemology, Knowledge, and Knowledge
Organization***

Megan Bang

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Director of Education, American Indian Center, Chicago

Tuesday, November 18, 2008 – 12:30-2:00 p.m.
Room 259 Educational Sciences Building

Megan Bang is Director of Education at the American Indian Center in Chicago, and a senior researcher at TERC in Cambridge, MA. She received her Ph.D. in learning sciences from Northwestern University. Her research explores the relations among epistemology, practice, and cognition in school and community settings for American Indian students. The long-term goal of her research and development is to improve science learning and school achievement for Native-American children.



Dr. Bang's presentation is concerned with the question of why science goes from being the best school subject for young Native-American children in Wisconsin, to being the worst as they progress through the school years. Prior studies indicate that Native children begin school with an advanced understanding of biology compared to their non-Native peers. However, standardized test results in the later years show that this benefit does not result in high levels of school achievement. Dr. Bang explores the hypothesis that there is discord Native-American students' cultural ways of knowing biology and the cultural ways of knowing in school science, and that this discord is at the heart of student disengagement and underachievement. A central feature of this discord is the lack of explicit connections across contexts in which students learn science. She is currently working on design interventions that aim to address these issues.

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