

## Early Childhood Education Instructor Chosen to Present at National Head Start Conference

**Feb. 11, 2010** (New Hartford, N.Y.) – For Lisa Gambacorta, early childhood education instructor at the Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES Career and Technical Education Center, creating new ways to help children learn is not just exciting, it is her passion.

Gambacorta, who has been an instructor with BOCES since 2003, will use that enthusiasm to make a presentation titled “Cultivating Success through Creative Expression” at the 39th National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Conference in Washington, D.C. from Feb. 23-26. Early childhood educators Liz Morat and Vikki Smithson will be presenting along with Gambacorta.

“The three of us developed this training because, to us, early education is not just a job, it’s a calling,” explained Gambacorta, who presented a workshop, “Forgotten Spirit: Returning to a Holistic Model of Education,” with Morat and Smithson at last year’s Head Start conference. “We are all committed to making a real difference.”

“Holistic education is critical if you want to ensure that every child grows up to realize their full potential,” said Gambacorta, “Many major institutions are adopting wellness policies that promote healthy diet, exercise and stress management in response to this newly emerging trend.”

Gambacorta’s major focus is to explore innovative practices that will ensure opportunities for children to express themselves creatively and to provide daily opportunities for children to reflect, relax and reduce stress.

In the laboratory nursery school at BOCES, Gambacorta integrates yoga into the preschool curriculum. Children begin each day with a centering yoga pose. “The children love it,” said Gambacorta. “Picking a card from the Yoga Deck is one of their favorite jobs. I’ve seen attention spans increase, behavioral problems decrease and the emotional climate of the classroom is warm and nurturing. There is a real sense of community.”

Gambacorta also incorporates yoga into music and storytelling throughout the daily nursery school routine. “Engaging children in music and percussion is another wonderful vehicle for creative expression,” she explained. “It helps children express feelings and manage stress. When engaged, they are truly in the moment.”



The emphasis of this year's presentation will be placed on the importance of creative expression and how it naturally enhances all areas of learning. Participants will gain an understanding of the holistic model of education as it was originally identified by theorists, and learn how to incorporate yoga and drumming into their teaching practice. They also will have opportunities to experience these practices, making the session highly interactive.

"I am passionate about teaching," Gambacorta said. "There is no room for anything less than best practice. The ultimate goal of education should be to help students grow into healthy adults who have a strong sense of identity, purpose and meaning. Early childhood is a time when these foundations are established."

"Ms. G has high expectations for her students," said Becky Richards, a senior from the Whitesboro Central School District. "We used to think she was hard on us, but now we realize how important the job of a teacher really is. You might be the one person who makes the difference in the life of a child."

The National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association was created as a response to the needs of migrant farm worker families. In most states, local childcare resources are not available when migrants come into a community, especially for infants and children. Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs serve almost 37,000 migrant children and nearly 2,500 seasonal children annually and operate in 40 states in every region of the country.

Gambacorta worked as a Head Start teacher and was the education and special services coordinator for a local Head Start program prior to joining the Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES. Along with Morat and Smithson, Gambacorta is the co-founder of Holistic Childcare Solutions, an organization that provides training to early childhood education programs. She has presented twice at the local Childcare Coordinating Council trainings. She received her bachelor's degree in child life psychology from Utica College and holds a New York state permanent teaching certificate in human services and family studies.

The Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES is recognized as a community partner to Head Start because some of Gambacorta's early childhood education students complete internships at local Head Start sites.

