

**Middle School to Dental School™  
Pilot Introduced at 28th Annual SAID Conference**

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Seattle, Washington (June 23, 2018). The Middle School to Dental School™ Mentoring Initiative, targeting 5th to 8th grade students was introduced at The Society of American Indian Dentists (SAID) Washington, DC Summit on June 11th. Today the initiative was presented through a lecture at the University of Washington, as part of the 28th Annual SAID Conference, to teach mentors how to deliver the program.

The SAID considers the pilot program to be aligned with their 2017 through 2019 focus, “Pathway to Platforms for Oral Health Progress.” The Children’s Oral Health Institute,” who developed the model agrees. The goal is to help establish relationships that will encourage youth to begin thinking about careers in dentistry and medicine as early as 5th grade.

The lecture given by Dr. Winifred J. Booker, Director of Development for The Children's Oral Health Institute and SAID's 6th President, discussed the goals of developing the Program Partnership Template (PPT). She discussed ways of identifying exciting resources for the development of relationships between dental schools, student dentists and middle schools during the hour long lecture.

A clinic coat mockup was displayed with the Middle School to Dental School logo on the back. It reads, "I Can Become a Dentist," printed on the image of an apple. The front pocket has the image of a patient in a dental chair. The pockets are filled with gloves, a mask, goggles, and a plastic syringe. A stethoscope is draped around the collar. Of course, a toothbrush, toothpaste and dental floss are part of the ensemble provided to students. This presentation of the Doctor of Dental Medicine "uniform" is designed to inspire belief in possibilities and to encourage dreams of a future in the profession.

Volunteers earn continuing education credits while encouraging children and youth to consider the many career opportunities within the profession of dental medicine. Commitment to this initiative may contribute to the expansion of dental professionals in communities where the need is greatest.

Dr. Felicia Y. Fontenot SAID Board Member and Chair of the SAID Student Dentists Mentoring Committee has stated that she believes, "The Middle School to Dental School™ Mentoring Initiative has promise and American Indian and Alaskan Native communities could begin to realize favorable outcomes in the future." Contact the SAID at [www.thesaidonline.org](http://www.thesaidonline.org). Learn more about The Middle School to Dental School™ Mentoring Initiative by visiting The Children's Oral Health Institute at [www.mycohi.org](http://www.mycohi.org)