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Paiute Ice Cutters

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Engaging Native American Learners with Rigor and Cultural Relevance

Paiute Ice Cutters

Date of photo: Late 1800s **Photographer:** Unknown **Shortlink:** <http://wnhpc.com/d/70>

Permanent Link: <http://wnhpc.com/details/acpaiuteicecutters>



Native Americans harvesting ice from Washoe Lake for use in Carson and Virginia City.
<http://wnhpc.com/tags>

[Radioactive waste to be shipped to Nevada site starting in 2014](http://www.lasvegassun.com) www.lasvegassun.com

[Coming soon to Nevada: 403 canisters of nuclear waste. Despite questions and opposition from Nevada's governor, the Department of Energy said it would begin shipping 403 canisters of highly radioactive nuclear waste to Nevada.](#)

REID HINTS DOE MAY BE IN FOR A FIGHT AFTER ALL

Sen. Harry Reid on Wednesday dropped a hint that the Department of Energy might be in for a fight after all as it attempts to ship highly radioactive uranium waste for burial in Nevada.

<http://erj.reviewjournal.com/ct/uz3688753Biz19078880>

They Loved Your G.P.A. Then They Saw Your Tweets.

By NATASHA SINGER More colleges are finding the social media posts of their applicants - and sometimes denying admission as a result.

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan Announces Launch of Digital Promise

<http://ning.it/1bDWVdi>

GrantStation

United States Handball Association: First Ace Grants

The United States Handball Association First Ace Grants provide funding for youth handball programs throughout the United States. Click above to learn more about the funding guidelines and application process.

MATCH International Women's Fund

The MATCH International Women’s Fund is a grantmaking organization that funds women’s rights organizations and social innovations around the world to make lasting changes in the lives of women and girls. Click above to learn more about the funding guidelines and application process..

Environmental Protection Agency: 11th Annual P3 Awards: A National Student Design Competition for Sustainability Focusing on People, Prosperity and the Planet

This program supports efforts to research, develop, and design solutions to real world challenges involving the overall sustainability of human society. The program was developed to foster progress toward sustainability by achieving the mutual goals of improved quality of life for its people, economic prosperity, and protection of the planet, the three pillars of sustainability.

National Funding

Support for Children’s Theatre Productions

Children's Theatre Foundation of America: Aurand Harris Grants Program

The Children's Theatre Foundation of America’s grantmaking focus is on theatre for children and youth, the utilization of drama/theatre in education for children grades K-12, and development opportunities for theatre artists working in the area of children’s theatre in the United States. The Foundation’s Aurand Harris Grants Program supports small and mid-sized nonprofit theatres for premieres of promising new plays for children and youth; the establishment of special production programs of children’s theatre such as a touring program, a children’s theatre playwriting program, or a production related symposium for a new work; assistance in securing scripts, supplies, and equipment for the production of premieres of promising new plays for young

audiences; and performance expenses of U.S. children's theatres to send new plays to regional, national, or international festivals or conventions. Grants range from \$1,000 to \$5,000. The deadline for Request to Submit applications is January 15, 2014. Visit the Foundation's website to learn more about the Aurand Harris Grants Program.

Programs Promoting Education and Equity for Women and Girls Funded

[American Association of University Women: Community Action Grants](#)

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) works to advance educational and professional opportunities for women in the United States. The AAUW Community Action Grants program provides funds to individuals, AAUW organizations, and local community-based nonprofit organizations throughout the country for innovative programs or non-degree research projects that promote education and equity for women and girls. Special consideration is given to projects focused on K-12 and community college girls' and women's achievements in science, technology, engineering, or math. One-year grants of \$2,000 to \$7,000 provide funds for community-based projects that include a clearly defined activity that promotes education and equality for women and girls. Two-year grants of \$5,000 to \$10,000 provide start-up funds for new projects that address the particular needs of the community and develop girls' sense of efficacy through leadership or advocacy opportunities. The application deadline for both types of grants is January 15, 2014. Visit the AAUW website to submit an online application.

Grants Encourage Community Gardening

[Project Orange Thumb](#)

Project Orange Thumb, sponsored by Fiskars, is dedicated to supporting the community garden movement throughout the U.S. and Canada. Support is provided for local projects that will make differences in their communities through unique community garden initiatives while demonstrating how a small group of people can make changes that affect the entire community. Ten winners will receive \$5,000 in cash and Fiskars garden tools to help support their goals of neighborhood beautification and horticulture education, and one applicant will receive a complete garden makeover. Project Orange Thumb is intended to promote new garden spaces and garden expansions. Nonprofit organizations, public schools, and municipalities in the U.S. and Canada are eligible to apply. The application deadline is December 31, 2013. Visit Fiskars.com/projectorangethumb to submit an online application.

Fire Control Initiatives Supported Worldwide **[FM Global Fire Prevention Grant Program](#)**

The FM Global Fire Prevention Grant Program supports a wide array of fire prevention, preparedness, and control efforts throughout the U.S. and internationally. Funded projects include pre-fire planning for commercial, industrial, and institutional facilities; fire and arson prevention and investigation; and fire prevention education and training programs. Fire departments and brigades, as well as national, state, regional, local, and community organizations are eligible to apply. Requests may be submitted at any time and are reviewed quarterly. Visit the FM Global website to review the frequently asked questions and request a grant application form.

Regional Funding

Funds for Colorado School Playgrounds

[Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund: School Play Yard Initiative](#)

The Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund (GOCO) helps preserve, protect, enhance, and manage

the state's wildlife, park, river, trail, and open space heritage. GOCO's School Play Yard Initiative aims to improve the health and wellness of Colorado's youth and families by creating or enhancing playgrounds to encourage more outdoor physical activity and learning. Grants of up to \$100,000 are provided for playground projects that include a play element and an outdoor education element. School Play Yard projects must be proposed through a partnership between a local government and a school or school district. The application deadline is January 17, 2014. Visit the GOCO website to learn more about the initiative and download the application instructions.

Grants Enhance Massachusetts Healthcare Delivery

[Massachusetts Medical Society and Alliance Charitable Foundation: Community Action and Care for the Medically Uninsured/Underinsured](#)

The Massachusetts Medical Society and Alliance Charitable Foundation is dedicated to addressing issues that affect the health, benefit, and welfare of communities throughout Massachusetts. The Foundation's Community Action and Care for the Medically Uninsured/Underinsured initiative supports physician-led volunteer initiatives to provide free care to uninsured/underinsured patients and increased access to care for the medically underserved. Grants are provided to established organizations with proven track records working with interdisciplinary groups that address healthcare issues and where strong physician involvement exists. Proposals for new programs/projects are preferred over repeat requests. (A repeat application for funding should specifically document how the new project differs, if it does, from past requests.) Multi-year grants are possible for start-up programs. Letters of Inquiry must be submitted by January 15, 2014. Selected organizations will be invited to submit full proposals, which are due March 1, 2014. Visit the Foundation's website to download the application guidelines and forms.

Support for Senior Services in Texas

[Isla Carroll Turner Friendship Trust](#)

The Isla Carroll Turner Friendship Trust provides support for nonprofit organizations throughout the state of Texas that provide services to the elderly. Types of programs considered for funding include health centers, recreation programs, retirement services, Alzheimer's initiatives, meal delivery programs, nursing facilities, etc. Support is also provided for primary caregiver education programs focusing on the elderly and nursing scholarships for students specializing in gerontology. Grants generally range from \$5,000 to \$50,000. Grant funds must be used within the state for the benefit of those age 60 years of age and above or those born with Down's syndrome age 47 years and above. All application forms and supporting documents must be received by the office by no later than 5 pm on January 31, 2014 to be considered. Application guidelines and forms are available on the Trust's website, including a list of required supporting documents. (Interested applicants may contact Patricia Stilley, Executive Director, or Jeannie Arnold, Executive Assistant, at 713-237-1117 with any questions.)

Initiatives to Strengthen Oregon Communities Funded

[Jubitz Family Foundation](#)

The Jubitz Family Foundation supports nonprofit organizations in Oregon that strive to strengthen families, respect the natural environment, and foster peace. The Foundation's specific areas of interest include early childhood development and education, with an emphasis on children at-risk; environmental stewardship, with an emphasis on rivers and their watershed ecosystems; and peacemaking activities, with an emphasis on teaching peace and conflict

resolution. Grants generally range from \$2,000 to \$10,000. The deadlines for letters of inquiry are January 1 and July 1, 2014. Visit the Foundation's website to learn more about the application process.

Federal Funding

Grants for Firefighters Available

[Department of Homeland Security](#)

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program provides support to help fire departments, nonaffiliated emergency medical service organizations, and state fire training academies protect the public, train emergency personnel, and foster interoperability and support community resilience, as well as enhance the safety of the public and provide a continuum of support for emergency responders regarding fire, medical, and all hazard events. The application deadline is December 6, 2013.

Funds Available to Expand Financial Services in Native Communities

[Department of the Treasury](#)

The Native American Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Assistance Program provides support to overcome barriers to financial services in Native communities. The program seeks to increase the access to credit, capital, and financial services through the creation and expansion of CDFIs primarily serving Native communities. The application deadline is December 23, 2013.

Program Works to Conserve Midwestern Birds

[Fish and Wildlife Service](#)

The Migratory Bird Joint Ventures, Midwest Region program provides support to implement effective science-based bird conservation projects in the Midwest. The application deadline is January 3, 2014.

Humanities Translation Efforts Supported

[National Endowment for the Humanities](#)

The Scholarly Editions and Translations program supports the preparation of editions and translations of pre-existing texts and documents of value to the humanities that are currently inaccessible or available in inadequate editions. Grants typically support editions and translations of significant literary, philosophical, and historical materials, but other types of work, such as musical notation, are also eligible. The application deadline is January 7, 2014.

Engaging Native American Learners with Rigor and Cultural Relevance

By Abner Oakes, senior program associate, and Traci Maday, program associate,

The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement

www.centerforcsri.org

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Historically, education outcomes for Native American youth have fallen far short when compared with the outcomes of their peers. In 2007, the National Indian Education Study from the National Center for Education Statistics reported that "overall, the average reading scores for American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) fourth- and eighth-graders showed no significant change since" the last report in 2005 "and were lower than the scores for non-AI/AN students in 2007" (Moran, Rampey, Dion, & Donahue, 2008, p. 1). Similar findings are noted for mathematics scores for fourth and eighth graders, as they "showed no significant change since 2005 and their scores were lower than the scores for non-AI/AN students in 2007" (Moran et al., 2008, p. 1).

A heightened focus on data and disaggregating achievement outcomes of various student populations has revitalized efforts to address the needs of struggling students. However, educators have the additional challenge of overcoming

the troubled legacy of interaction between public schooling and Native American communities. Although individual experiences vary, Native people have often felt disenfranchised from an education system that does not seem to understand their cultural perspectives and priorities.

Federal involvement in Indian education can be traced back to the earliest years of the United States, when the federal government agreed in treaty provisions to supply not only schools and teachers but also textbooks and materials in Native languages.

Currently, the federal government administers several programs that aim to address the “unique educational and culturally related academic needs” (Title VII, Part A, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 2002) of Native American students. But what does this mean for today’s teachers and learners? Unfortunately, the drive to significantly raise student achievement can overshadow or take attention away from efforts to make education more relevant and engaging for Native American students.

Fortunately, growing evidence shows that academic rigor and culturally relevant practices are mutually compatible.

In this Issue Brief, The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement identifies strategies that foster Native American student engagement and improved academic achievement. We begin by examining the distribution of Native students and then we explore three areas that are identified in the literature as promising strategies for improving educational outcomes for Native students:

- Instructional practices
- Curriculum content
- School climate

Looking at the numbers

Nationally, Native American youth comprise about 1 percent of the elementary and secondary public school student population, including Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools (Fleury DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008, p. 42). BIE schools can be operated by the BIE or by tribes. BIE-funded schools serve about 8 percent of the Grades K–12 tribal school population nationwide (Fleury DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008, p. 42), while more than 90 percent of all Native American students nationwide attend regular public schools. Native students attend schools in all 50 states and territories, yet more than half of the Native student population is concentrated in just 11 states. In some regions, the concentration of Native people rises above 25 percent of the population, even though tribal lands or reservations may be located hours away from the school district. Many Native students attend rural schools, but there also are sizable populations of Native students in urban districts, and the numbers are growing. Of the 10 largest U.S. cities, New York City, Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Chicago have the highest population of American Indian people (National Urban Indian Family Coalition, n.d., p. 8).

The distribution of Native American people and their relatively small population numbers can obscure achievement gaps, particularly when the population does not meet minimum state levels for disaggregation under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001. A high degree of transiency and a dropout rate of approximately 50 percent further confound the issue of identifying the achievement gap. When already small populations dwindle, their achievement may go unreported, or what is reported may be flawed. In addition, schools and districts may experience difficulty in maintaining accurate records for students who transfer, move, or drop out of school.

identifying culturally relevant strategies

Native American cultural expressions and lifestyles are diverse and varied, comprising more than 500 tribal and cultural groups with as many unique languages and traditions. However, the teachers of Native students can be very different than their students. In fact, nearly “80 percent of AI/AN students overall were taught by teachers who identified themselves as White,” and “nearly 90 percent of AI/AN students overall had teachers who provided instruction entirely in English” (Moran & Rampey, 2008, p. 1).

Although cultural differences often exist between teachers and students who are culturally or linguistically diverse, a multitude of strategies exist that can be used to create supportive relationships for learning to occur.

A report by the U.S. Department of Education includes the following:

- Schools that adjust their curriculum to accommodate the variety of cultures served are more successful than schools that do not.
- The perspective [Native or non-Native] from which a school’s curriculum is presented can significantly influence Native students’ attitudes toward the school, schooling in

general, and academic performance.

- Schools that respect and support a student's language and culture are significantly more successful in educating those students.
- The historical and practical knowledge base of the community served must be valued and function as a starting point for schooling. (Indian Nations At Risk Task Force, 1991, p. 16).

Instructional Practice

Researchers have worked for years to define culturally relevant instruction and connect it to increased student achievement for Native youth. Jerry Lipka (1994) writes that "research from the 1928 Meriam Report to the 1991 Indian Nations at Risk study indicates that increased local autonomy and actively valuing elders' knowledge will strengthen indigenous schools" (p. 14). Robert Calfee and his coauthors (1981) frame the issue by boldly asking: "Whose responsibility is it to build bridges between the culture of a community and the culture of a school?" (p. 4). A number of theoretical models have emerged that identify congruence between home and community life, with what is learned in the school as a key component for effective instruction and learning (Demmert & Towner, 2003, p. 8). Demmert and Towner (2003) define culturally responsive pedagogy as "strategies [that] are congruent with the traditional cultural as well as contemporary ways of knowing and learning," and "that stress traditional cultural characteristics and adult-child interactions" (p. 10).

The Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP) program is one example of the use of culturally congruent instruction. A reading program designed for and adapted to the cultural needs and abilities of young Hawaiian children, it was developed by researchers who paid special attention to the home environments of these young children. For example, peer learning centers were set up in classrooms when it was noticed that Hawaiian children typically turn for assistance to their peers and older siblings rather than to adults. In addition, researchers observed family interactions and noted a mode of communication in which family members take turns narrating parts of a story, referred to as talk story. KEEP's developers successfully adapted this practice into the program, so that children engage in the cooperative production of responses, co-narrating stories during which turn-taking is negotiated among peers. Equal rights are exercised during this practice and are applied to teacher and students.

Today Kamehameha Schools (KS) continues to deliver on its mission of developing students who are "equipped with the skills they need to succeed in the endeavors of their choosing and prepared to practice and perpetuate the Hawaiian values and traditions" (Kamehameha Schools, 2000, p. 19). "KEEP is important as an example of a deliberate attempt to take account of the cultural backgrounds and abilities developed in the community and design an instructional program which is both culturally congruent with community practices and manageable in the public schools"(Calfee et al, 1981, p. 1).

Curriculum content

Curriculum content can be just as important as pedagogy for engaging Native youth.

In case studies and ethnographic studies involving Native youth, students have frequently reported feeling bored or that schooling has no relevance to their lives outside of school (Coladarci, 1983; Swisher & Hoisch, 1992). When teachers tap into students' prior knowledge, experiences, and community values, they "hook" students and act as a bridge between the academic world and home life. Two aspects of curriculum content are particularly relevant for engaging Native learners: infuse culturally relevant content across the curriculum and ensure that the content is accurate and free of bias and stereotype.

Schools can incorporate contemporary and historical content about Native American people, perspectives, and issues into courses. Many states have recognized the need to incorporate such content into classrooms, not just for Native youth but for the benefit of all learners. Montana's Indian Education for All Act is an example of such an initiative. Alaska, Wisconsin, and Arizona also have curriculum standards that include historical and contemporary content about Native American people and cultures.

An example of culturally relevant content is the work that the Albuquerque-based Native American Materials Development Center (NAMDC) did with the Rough Rock Demonstration School in northern Arizona (now Rough Rock Community School). In 1980, the Rough Rock school board received a federal grant to "create a permanent, sequential bi-lingual curriculum in Navajo studies for Grades K-9, (McCarty, Wallace, Lynch, & Benally, 1991, p. 46), and critical to that work was the infusion into the curriculum of "key Navajo values, especially k'e, meaning kinship, clanship, and 'right and respectful relations with others and with nature'" (McCarty et al., 1991, p. 46). Working closely with the Rough Rock community— central to this effort was a survey of Rough Rock parents, teachers, and students—the NAMDC curriculum built on concepts, ideas, and problem-solving abilities in the context of culturally relevant

experiences and topics while also promoting competency in English and Navajo. The curriculum was organized around concepts relevant to k'e, and Rough Rock students responded positively to it, as "the materials presented familiar scenes and cultural-linguistic content that tapped students' background and experiences, motivating them to express their ideas and actively engage in the lessons" (McCarty et al., 1991, p. 50). Today the Rough Rock Community School continues to serve students by setting high standards for success while grounding youth in the cultural values and perspectives of the Navajo people.

Another strategy is to ensure that the content is accurate and free from bias and stereotype. As Greg Matson, Hoopa Valley tribal education director, stated, "There is a lot of misinformation out there about Native American cultures, and we must continue to correct the wrongs that teachers have experienced in their own education."

School and district staff can review existing materials for bias, stereotype, and accuracy and adopt new culturally respectful materials to ensure content is relevant for Native learners and appropriate for all students. This requires that they are knowledgeable about the content themselves. Ongoing professional development and self-reflection can help to expand and deepen educators' understanding of Native American people and cultures. It also is appropriate and helpful to engage Native American family and community members in reviewing materials and identifying topics for professional development. In their book *Through Indian Eyes: The Native Experience in Books for Children*, Slapin and Seale (1998) identify 24 criteria with reflective questions that can be used to review materials. Listed here is a sample of those questions:

• **Look at Lifestyles.**

Are Native peoples discussed in the past tense only, supporting the "vanished Indian" myth? Is the continuity of cultures represented with values, religions, morals, an outgrowth of the past, and connected to the present?

• **Look for Distortions of History.**

Are Native heroes only the people who, in some way or another, are believed to have aided Europeans in the conquest of their own people?

Are Native heroes those who are admired because of what they have done for their own people?

• **Look for the Effects on a Child's Self-Image.**

Is there anything in the story that would embarrass or hurt a Native child?

Are there one or more positive role models with whom a Native child can identify? (Slapin, Seale, & Gonzales Ten Fingers, 1998)

school climate

Discussions of school climate often revolve around discipline, absenteeism, and family engagement. School climate also may include the domains of student engagement and high expectations for academic achievement. Compared with their peers in low-density schools, a higher percentage of Native American eighth graders at high-density schools (defined as schools having 25 percent or greater of American Indian students) had administrators who indicated serious problems with student absenteeism, student tardiness, lack of family involvement, student misbehavior in class, drug or alcohol use by students, and low expectations (Moran & Rampey, 2008, p. 25).

Jon Reyhner (1992) lists seven factors that contribute to Native youth disengagement and eventual dropping out. These include large impersonal schools; teachers and counselors untrained in the unique characteristics, history, culture, and societies of Native people; passive teaching methods; inappropriate curriculum with biased, stereotypical, or inaccurate material about Native people and communities; culturally biased tests and inappropriate testing of limited English proficient students; tracked classes with less rigorous curriculum; and lack of parent involvement (Reyhner, 1992).

Schools can work to address these issues and find ways to meet students' needs. For example, practices such as positive behavior supports have shown to be effective in lowering discipline incidents and helping students to learn expected behaviors in school. Yet, the lack of family engagement, absenteeism, discipline, and low expectations are complex issues. They may be rooted in a legacy of distrust between Native and non-Native communities, persistent deep poverty, and differing worldviews or cultural expressions. One single program, strategy, or staff position is not enough to undo this history. Schools and districts can benefit students by committing to a multilayered approach—building relationships with students and families, gathering and acting on perception data that provides insight into the thoughts and experiences of students and community members, communicating a belief in the abilities of learners, and providing needed supports to reach high levels of achievement.

Focusing on school climate, Reyhner (1992) concluded that “if students interact with caring, supportive adults, if students are allowed to explore and learn about the world they live in, including learning about their rich Indian heritage, if they are allowed to develop problem solving skills, if they are given frequent opportunities to read and write and to do mathematics and science in meaningful situations, and if they are encouraged to help improve the world they live in through community service, it is likely that Indian students will feel good about themselves and will be successful in life” (p. n.a.).

additional Examples of Practice

The examples that follow describe three schools that have had success in serving Native American learners.² Tribal and school staffs have shared their insights and experiences with regard to implementing strategies to support higher levels of Native American student achievement.

Zuni Public School District, Zuni, New Mexico

Established in 1980 by Zuni tribal members to meet the needs of their children, the Zuni Public School District is the nation’s first Indian-controlled independent public school system. Located about 15 miles east of the New Mexico and Arizona border on the Zuni Pueblo, it operates five schools, with a total population of about 1,500 students. Dr. Richard Yzenbaard, the high school’s principal, knows that “there’s no magic pill” when working with Native young people “and that it takes a hard-working staff that cares about kids. The reason for our success,” continued Dr. Yzenbaard, “is that we take a multidisciplinary approach to this work. It’s not just one class, as all departments support the approach.”

With few exceptions, all Zuni High School students take Zuni language and culture classes their freshman year. Students also are exposed to Zuni perspectives, traditions, and culture in other subject areas. For example, in one of the high school social studies classes, students interview tribal citizens and develop a book from those interviews. A science class investigates traditional agricultural methods practiced by the Zuni people, and members of the school’s art department collaborate with Phoenix’s Heard Museum to develop projects that reflect traditional and modern expressions of Zuni art.

Although only some of the classroom teachers are Zuni, 100 percent of the school’s support staff and instructional assistants are Zuni. “They are a great resource for helping teachers navigate the cultural norms and practices of the Zuni people,” said Dr. Yzenbaard. “Conversations are ongoing throughout the year; they take place daily.”

As for its success, Zuni High School is making significant strides: for 2009 it attained adequate yearly progress (AYP) in reading and experienced a 94.8 percent jump in mathematics achievement. Dr. Yzenbaard attributes this success to many factors, but a key change was the move to a 4x4 block schedule where students attend fewer classes for longer periods on alternating days.

“We were able to increase the number of contact hours per credit,” he commented, “and it allowed the staff to focus more time on addressing student learning needs and providing appropriate interventions.” The schedule has given his teachers more time with students to build that trust. “This past year we have really focused on strengthening student relationships,” commented Dr. Yzenbaard. “It begins with relationships. You then bring in the relevance and the rigor, but you won’t get anywhere without the relationships.”

Denver (Colorado) Public Schools

As of October 1, 2008, Denver Public Schools had slightly more than 75,000 students in 152 schools, and 1.11 percent or 835 of those students were identified as American Indian. The system offers study in 10 languages, including Lakota.

Rose Marie McGuire, the program manager for the Department of Indian Education at Denver Public Schools, spoke of that system’s Indian language program, but this program is nestled in the system’s American Indian focus schools, of which there are six. Back in 1994, Ms. McGuire was a member of the district’s American Indian Advisory Council, and she and her colleagues went to the school board and presented a plan to begin these focus schools, which are similar to magnet schools. “We needed to provide better services [to the district’s American Indian students],” said Ms. McGuire. During the 15-year tenure of the focus schools, the programs have changed significantly, with fewer paraprofessionals and

more teachers qualified to teach upper-level mathematics, for example, but the importance of mentors and their knowledge of special education policy in the buildings has not changed, creating a climate of challenge and care, high academic standards, and varied and intensive support.

Adding rigorous content to the supportive climate of one of the focus high schools is the district's lone Lakota language class, taught by Gracie RedShirt-Tyon, whose mother, a fluent speaker, taught her. "About four or five years ago," commented Ms. McGuire, "we wanted to have language introduced at East High School," a focus school that made AYP in mathematics and reading in 2008. Ms. McGuire went on to say that the Department of Indian Education, other school district personnel, and local Lakota tribal elders met to discuss the idea and plan the program. A private foundation funded the first year of the program, and, as a result of its success with students, their enthusiasm for it, and the numbers that enrolled, the district then picked up the cost of the class. "There are about 70 percent American Indian students in the class," commented Ms. McGuire. "For the non-Native students, they obviously gain a great deal of understanding about Native culture, such as the importance of kinship."

At the moment, Denver's focus schools serve about 25 percent of that system's Native American population, and the Department of Indian Education looks forward to serving even more young Native students. "In the elementary focus schools, we are particularly pleased with the more structured manner that we can engage Native parents," said Ms. McGuire, with a person at each school who is specifically charged with being a liaison to Native American parents. She added, "Attendance has improved due to this practice and person." Ms. McGuire ended by praising the strong relationship that she has with other district-level personnel and looks forward to continued success for the Lakota language and Indian focus schools in Denver Public Schools.

Klamath-Trinity Joint Unified School District, Hoopa, California

Greg Masten sits outside the Klamath-Trinity Joint Unified School District but works intimately with those in it on issues related to Native American students. "We work very closely with the school district," said Mr. Masten, who is education director for the Hoopa Valley Tribe in northern California. And no doubt Mr. Masten's involvement is critical: The two largest schools in this rural district, which is about 40 miles south of the California and Oregon border, are Hoopa Elementary and Hoopa High School. Both schools reside on the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation, the largest reservation in California, and both schools have a majority population of Native students, with Hoopa Elementary at more than 90 percent and Hoopa High at more than 75 percent.

With the large proportion of Native young people at both schools, it makes sense that there is an all-encompassing approach to culturally relevant curriculum—that "cultural relevance in itself is not the solution," commented Mr. Masten, "but rather a part of the whole. I believe that effective strategies must include the family, the community, that they must address social and emotional needs and include mentoring, cognitive transitions, more hands on learning, an anti-drug message, and exposure to the wider world— all in balance with cultural values."

As at Denver Public Schools, Klamath-Trinity schools offer Native language instruction. At the elementary schools, where the school is situated determines what language is studied—for example, the school on Karuk ceremonial land has its students study that language—and the high school offers three levels of language classes—in Hoopa, Yurok, and Karuk. In fact, these language courses meet the foreign language requirements for what is called the "A–G" college preparatory coursework for California's university systems. Both Mr. Masten and the school district did small studies of students taking a Native language, and both showed a significantly higher rate of interest in college for students who took four years of Native language compared with those who studied Spanish or no language.

In fact, a college-going culture is stressed at Klamath-Trinity, according to Margo Robbins, the district's director of Indian Education and Native Language program, and Doug Oliveira, the superintendent of Klamath-Trinity Joint Unified School District. "We take our students on extended college tours," said Ms. Robbins, "wanting to open their eyes to this possibility."

"The nearest California state university is about an hour away," commented Mr. Oliveira, "and the junior college campus is 90 minutes away, but we also travel some five or seven hours to visit other campuses," such as the University of California at Berkeley, for example, where a former Hoopa High student leads the campus tour.

The district's language study program is just part of its comprehensive approach to Native American students and their improved achievement. "The school district works closely with all three tribes," said Ms.

Robbins, “to ensure that additional services, if need be, are available to students. Our Indian education program has its own tutors that service any students in Grades K–4 that are having difficulties academically. We meet with tribal representatives regularly to develop data-driven strategies that will best address student needs.”

Recently, Mr. Masten, Ms. Robbins, Mr. Oliveira, and other district personnel formed a curriculum committee, one that went subject by subject, standard by standard, and injected cultural relevance throughout the entire scope and sequence for Klamath-Trinity’s K–8 grade levels. “The strategy,” said Mr. Masten, “is to weave it into the very fabric of the educational process for each grade, to include all subjects. We tried to make it as teacher friendly as possible, citing each standard in each module.” Another resource is the district’s Indian education building that houses a library of culturally relevant curriculum and materials, “all of which is available to teachers across the district. [The collection is] a wonderful resource,” said Ms. Robbins. Faculty members involved with this work used it as their required professional development time and even received college credit from Humboldt State University.

Lastly, the Klamath-Trinity’s curricular rigor continues through the district’s college-connection program, which allows students at the high school to take college-transferable courses at the Hoopa tribal campus of College of the Redwoods. “The high school and our campus have aligned the fifth and sixth periods of the students that qualify, to come to our campus,” commented Mr. Masten. “Students can gain up to 33 units of college course work when they graduate from high school.” conclusion

The practices discussed here can benefit Native American learners, but they also hold potential for enriching the experience of non-Native learners. Schools and districts can employ a variety of strategies to foster a respectful and engaging learning environment that will support Native learners in both their academic achievement and their cultural sense of self. “Research and experience in Native serving schools indicate that Native language and culture and high-quality instruction in content areas are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are complementary and equally important elements for enhancing the knowledge and academic achievement of Native children” (National Indian Education Association, n.d., p. 2). Educators need not choose between high levels of achievement and culturally relevant practices; in fact, such practices, when interwoven, are supportive of teaching and learning. references

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