



# Native American Gifted Talented Issues

Reviews of current literature available on Gifted and Talented Native American students shows that studies have historically tended to treat all Native American children as one population. Thus, negating the fact that there are many different cultural groups within the Native American population. In fact, there are currently 574 Federally recognized tribes.

One issue plaguing Native American children attending dominant-culture schools includes the inability to find strong cultural contexts in their classes. This may limit the ability to develop positive school environments that student resiliency and achievement. Providing Native American students opportunities to participate in programs encouraging engagement of their native language, cultures, and traditions could be beneficial in providing cultural context.

Six fundamental elements for culturally relevant education with Native American Cultures:

1. The Recognition and use of Native American languages for bilingual instruction or as a first or second language.
2. Contextually based pedagogy stressing the cultural characteristics and values of the community.
3. Pedagogical strategies that combine the traditional culture with contemporary techniques, allowing for opportunities to observe, practice, and demonstrate skills.

4. A culturally developed curriculum recognizing the spirituality of the traditional culture of visual arts, legends, and oral histories in a contemporary context.
5. Strong Native American participation and collaboration with parents, elders, community leaders and other tribal resources.
6. The understanding and use of the social and political mores of the community.

According to studies, one of the most pronounced barriers that Native American youth faced with becoming involved in gifted and talented programs is with regards to fear of feeling disconnected from their community. This seems to particularly affect Diné youth, who, for this fear, may choose not to participate in educational opportunities for scholarships. A study detailing the experiences of gifted Diné youth involved in a summer residential program found that the fear of disconnection may have caused some youth to disengage from the program and not welcome opportunities and social involvement within the program.

One of the states that has addressed the under-identification of gifted and talented Native American students has been Oklahoma. Oklahoma received a \$3.2 million Jacob K. Javits foundation grant and has used the funds to focus on identification of underserved groups. Teachers receive training in recognizing giftedness and how to design more effective lesson plans. In addition, teachers are immersed in Indigenous culture and look for giftedness in students that could go unrecognized in traditional gifted and talented programs.

## Resources:

1. Gentry, M., & Fugate, C. M. (2012). Gifted native American students: Underperforming, under-identified, and overlooked. *Psychology in the Schools*, 49(7), 631–646. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21624>
2. Korth, R. (2020). *How Oklahoma's identification of gifted Native students could serve as a national model* | StateImpact Oklahoma. NPR.
3. Wu, J., & Gentry, M. (2014). Summer residential program experiences as perceived by gifted Diné Youth. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 53(2), 66–84. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jaie.2014.a798531>