

Native Student Success—From Listening to Framework Building

By Bawaajigekwe Boulley, Native Student Success Program Supervisor,
Office of Native Education

This year, we invited Native students, educators, families, and community partners across Washington to share their insights on what Native Student Success truly means. Through surveys, interviews, and listening sessions, we gathered hundreds of responses—each one helping shape the future of our work together.

Here is what we have heard:

- ♦ *Native Student Success is holistic.*

Success means thriving—not just academically—but emotionally, culturally, spiritually, and socially.

- ♦ *Promising practices are already happening.*

From tribal partnerships to cultural programming, mentorship, and land-based learning, powerful models of Native student success already exist in our communities.

- ♦ *Barriers persist.*

Lack of trust in school systems, limited access to Native staff or curriculum, and challenges around data visibility and belonging continue to impact Native students across the state.

These collective voices are guiding the development of a **Native Student Success (NSS) Framework** for Washington State. This framework will not be a one-size-fits-all policy, but rather an **adaptive, community-informed guide** shaped by the leadership of Native people. As part of this work, I have shared early ideas with the **Washington State Native American Education Advisory Committee (WSNAEAC)**—a statewide body of 21 tribal-nominated leaders who provide essential consultation to OSPI on Native education. Their guidance, along with tribal consultations, community insights, and agency priorities, is central to this process.

What Could a Statewide NSS Framework Look Like?

If OSPI/ONE were to develop such a framework, it would likely:

- **Honor Tribal Sovereignty** – Centering the priorities, knowledge, and needs expressed by tribal nations, Native educators, and students.
- **Be Community-Driven** – Built through genuine consultation and designed to reflect the diversity of Native experiences and contexts.
- **Serve as a Tool, Not a Template** – Allowing districts and communities to tailor approaches to local needs while offering statewide guidance.
- **Offer Practical and Systemic Solutions** – Providing both day-to-day strategies and long-term policy recommendations across all levels of education.
- **Include Holistic Accountability** – Tracking both academic indicators *and* culturally grounded measures of success such as language revitalization, identity, and belonging.



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Ultimately, this NSS Framework is not separate from our broader efforts—it is an **organizing structure** that brings together key initiatives already underway within the Office of Native Education, including:

- Government-to-Government and Tribal Consultations
- Tribal Language Revitalization
- Native Educator Cultivation
- Career and Technical Education Pathways
- Policy and Legislation (such as the Since Time Immemorial mandate)

Office Hours: Let Us Connect

I hold virtual office hours every **Friday at 10:00 a.m.** If you are a student, family member, educator, or community partner and want to connect, share feedback, or process together, I invite you to email me for the Zoom link: bawaajigekwe.boulley@k12.wa.us. We are building this work together, and I would love to hear from you.

Native Student Success Spotlight

Each month, we will shine a light on a story, student, educator, or program contributing to Native Student Success.

This month, we are celebrating **Educator Alison McCartan** at **River Ridge High School**. She shared a powerful student-led project. Educator McCartan wrote to ONE:

"I wanted to pass along a project my Civics students put together to help raise awareness about the right to regalia at graduation. This came together in a couple of weeks when our seniors realized that we could use some more educational resources around graduation regalia. They pulled together several seniors and then a number of volunteers from our other Native Studies classes. I thought you might be interested to see it!"

Educator McCartan and Students—we are so happy and grateful you shared! Keep up the good work, and keep shining bright. We are proud of you!

Watch the student-created video here: [Right to Regalia Graduation Awareness Video](#)
We love seeing students lead with purpose and pride—keep those spotlights coming!

Want to Nominate Someone for the Native Student Success Spotlight?

Do you know a student, educator, program, or community member doing something amazing to support Native Student Success? I would love to feature them in an upcoming newsletter!

To submit a spotlight, simply email me at bawaajigekwe.boulley@k12.wa.us with the following:

- **Your name**
- **School, district, or organization**
- **Who you are nominating (name + role)**
- **A few sentences about what they are doing and why it matters**