New Resource: Supporting Native Students Experiencing Foster Care

Five Guiding Practices for Schools

The Office of Native Education (ONE) is pleased to share a newly published resource, Supporting Native Students Experiencing Foster Care: Five Guiding Practices for Schools, developed through OSPI's Native Student Success Program.

> Begin with relationships. Grow from there.
>
> Honor Tribal sovereignty. See the whole student. Build with community.

Native students experiencing foster care may navigate multiple systems, relationships, and responsibilities involving schools, families, caregivers, Tribal Nations, and community partners. Supporting students requires more than understanding policies and procedures. It also requires knowing who students are, honoring their identities and connections, and working together to ensure they receive the support, rights, and protections they deserve.

This introductory resource offers five guiding practices to help schools and partners begin that work:

- **Begin with Relationships:** Build trust with students, families, caregivers, Tribal representatives, and community partners.
- **Honor Tribal Sovereignty:** Recognize Tribes as sovereign governments and approach collaboration with respect for their authority, histories, and priorities.
- **Recognize and Honor Every Student's Unique Story:** Understand each student's identity and connections to family, Tribe, culture, and community without making assumptions.
- **Help the Right People Connect:** Strengthen communication and coordination among the people responsible for supporting each student.
- **Keep Leading with Relationships:** Use every interaction as an opportunity to strengthen trust, belonging, safety, and connection.

The resource complements existing state and federal foster care requirements and OSPI guidance. It is designed as a practical starting point for schools, districts, agencies, caregivers, and Tribal partners.

Co-Created Through Relationships and Shared Expertise

The development of this resource reflects the same relationship-centered practices it encourages.

Originating within the Native Student Success Program, the resource was developed through conversations, reflection, feedback, revisions, and member checking with colleagues and community partners who brought different areas of expertise.

We extend our appreciation to the **OSPI Foster Care Program** for contributing knowledge of foster care policy, implementation, and systems guidance; the **ONE Tribal Consultation Program** for strengthening attention to Tribal sovereignty, government-to-government relationships, and community engagement; and **Treehouse Educational Advocacy** for sharing expertise in student-centered advocacy, navigating systems, and removing barriers to educational success.

Together, these contributions helped shape a resource that connects existing responsibilities with meaningful relationships and practical considerations for supporting Native students.

This publication also represents an important first step in developing practical resources through the Native Student Success Program. The collaborative process offers a foundation for future materials addressing other experiences and systems that Native students navigate, including housing instability and the impacts of incarceration.

Explore and Share the Resource

The resource is now available on OSPI's **Native Student Success webpage**, in the right-hand callout box titled **Foster Care Guidance**.

Supporting Native Students Experiencing Foster Care: Five Guiding Practices for Schools (PDF)

We encourage educators, school and district leaders, Tribal education departments, foster care liaisons, caregivers, and community partners to explore and share this resource.

We also welcome feedback as it is put into practice. This is a living resource that can continue to grow through shared learning, reflection, and experience.

Begin with relationships. Grow from there.

Honor Tribal sovereignty. See the whole student. Build with community.