

AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION

SUMMER 2019 | BRIEF 1

WHO IS THIS LEARNER?

American Indian students represent 13.5% of the Oklahoma student population. There is no simple characterization of a “typical” American Indian student. More than 70% of school districts are located within one of the 39 sovereign Tribal Nations.

American Indian students are likely to have multiple tribal affiliations (i.e., Choctaw, Comanche and Pawnee). Federal law only recognizes American Indian people for citizenship and enrollment in one Tribal Nation despite multiple affiliations.

Click [here](#) to view a map of the 39 Oklahoma Tribal Jurisdictions.

WHY IT MATTERS

- There are approximately 130,000 American Indian students enrolled in Oklahoma public schools.
- 92% of Oklahoma American Indian students are enrolled in public schools, while only 8% are enrolled in Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools.
- 8.7% of American Indian children in Oklahoma are age 5 and under.
- 46% of American Indian students attend rural schools.
- Nearly 50% of 4th- and 8th-grade American Indian students have never been exposed to their own Native language in local school curriculum.
- Oklahoma American Indian students consistently outperform their American Indian peers in other states.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Create an authentic relationship. Learn about tribal affiliations, including the one in which your students are citizens.
- Give your American Indian students time to reflect during time-sensitive tasks. For shy students, consider pre-planning so the student can take on a leadership role.
- Be sure to share praise with students' parents and grandparents. Learn about students' home life to identify their cultural role models.
- Support the cultural identities of American Indian students by appropriately addressing them. All American Indian peoples are not the same. Embrace uniqueness.

Source: [Effective Strategies to Engage Native American Students](#)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How many different American Indian affiliations do I currently teach?
- How do I know who/what tribal educational programs are available to my school district from the local Tribal Nation?
- How am I empowering American Indian students by strengthening their cultural identity without making them feel pressured to be a cultural expert?
- When using visual representations of American Indian identities, do I make the mistake of using old "static" representations versus more contemporary ones?

ATTENDING TO EQUITY

To adequately serve American Indian students with culturally responsive and equitable instruction, consider using the following resources below:

- Native Knowledge: Culture Is Not a Costume
Source: [OKC Public Schools, Native American Student Services](#)
- Make Native American Heritage Month a Success
Source: [OSDE, EngageOK Teachers Newsletter October 2018](#)
- Reclaiming Native Truth: Guide for Allies
Source: [Illuminative Project, Nonprofit Corporation](#)

OFFICE OF AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION
(405) 522-5311
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