



Indian education policies in five Northwest Region states



Summary



NATIONAL CENTER FOR
EDUCATION EVALUATION
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Institute of Education Sciences
U.S. Department of Education



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Indian education policies in five Northwest Region states

The most comprehensive effort to date to study Indian education policies, the report categorizes the Indian education policies of the five Northwest Region states based on 13 key policies identified in the literature and describes the legal methods used to adopt them.

This study examines state policies that govern the education of American Indian and Alaska Native (referred to collectively as Native American) students in the five Northwest Region states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. This investigation is the most comprehensive effort to date to study Indian education policies. The study focuses on three dimensions of Indian education policies:

- Identification of key Indian education policies in the literature.
- Adoption of key Indian education policies by the five Northwest Region states.
- Specific mechanisms states have employed to adopt Indian education policies.

The goal of the study is to provide state policymakers and organizations representing Native Americans with a comprehensive summary and analysis of state-level policy initiatives.

The study identifies 13 key policies from the literature on Indian education over the period 1991–2008. Each state's Indian education policies were compiled and compared with the 13 key policies to determine whether any policies were common to all five Northwest Region states and to identify the approaches that states have taken to adopt Indian education policies. The study also examines the frequency of policy adoption mechanisms, such as statutes, regulations, and executive orders.

In the data collection phase the researchers conducted Internet and library searches for Indian education–related literature over the past 18 years and searched state education agency and legislative web sites to identify Indian education statutes, regulations, and other policy adoption mechanisms. The searches were followed by interviews with key informants in each state education agency. Two researchers independently analyzed state policies to determine whether a state either had a particular key policy or did not.

Six of the key policies had been adopted by all five states: adopting academic standards to teach students about the history and culture of America's indigenous peoples, including Native American culture and history as part of the academic curriculum, involving Native Americans on advisory boards, promoting Native

American languages through certification of teachers who speak Native American languages, allowing students to learn their native language as a part of their education program, and providing scholarships or tuition assistance for college-bound Native American students.

The study found that the five states had different approaches to adopting Indian education policies. Of the nine policy mechanisms states used to adopt Indian education policy, state statutes were the most common, followed by

regulations. Use of the state constitution, official publications, and administrative actions by state officials were the least used mechanisms for adopting Indian education policies.

The study revealed that state policymakers in search of ways to address the education needs of Native American children have a variety of choices in both policy approaches and adoption mechanisms.

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