

# Working with First Nations Students with IEPs

## WI FACETS Webinar

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WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF  
**Public Instruction**  
Jill K. Underly, PhD, State Superintendent

# Why are we here?



**Purpose: to help build linkages across race and culture to help improve the achievement of all students, and to reduce the incorrect identification of American Indian students as having a disability when they really have a difference.**

# Why are we here?

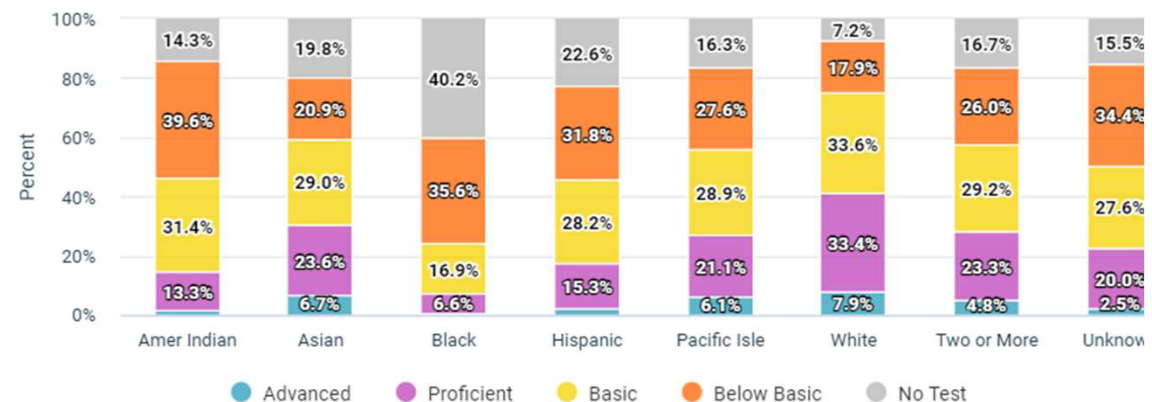
Even though American Indian Students are provided the same mainstream curriculum and educational experiences, they still don't always end up being as academically successful as their non-native peers.

Forward Performance Category by Race/Ethnicity (2020-21)



Test subject: English Language Arts

This graph displays the percentage of students in each performance category on the Forward or DLM (alternate) assessment during the selected year's administration. The Forward assessment is administered to students in grades 3-8 for ELA and Mathematics, 4 and 8 for Science and 4, 8 and 10 for Social Studies. While the DLM assessment is administered to students in grades 3-11, only DLM results for students in grades 3-8,10 are included here. The graph also displays the percentage of students who are indicated as not completing either



# Why are we here?

To help share some important information that will help create common understandings and community.



# Topics

- Misconceptions and Stereotypes
- Sovereignty
- Respect
- Trust
- Native Nations of Wisconsin



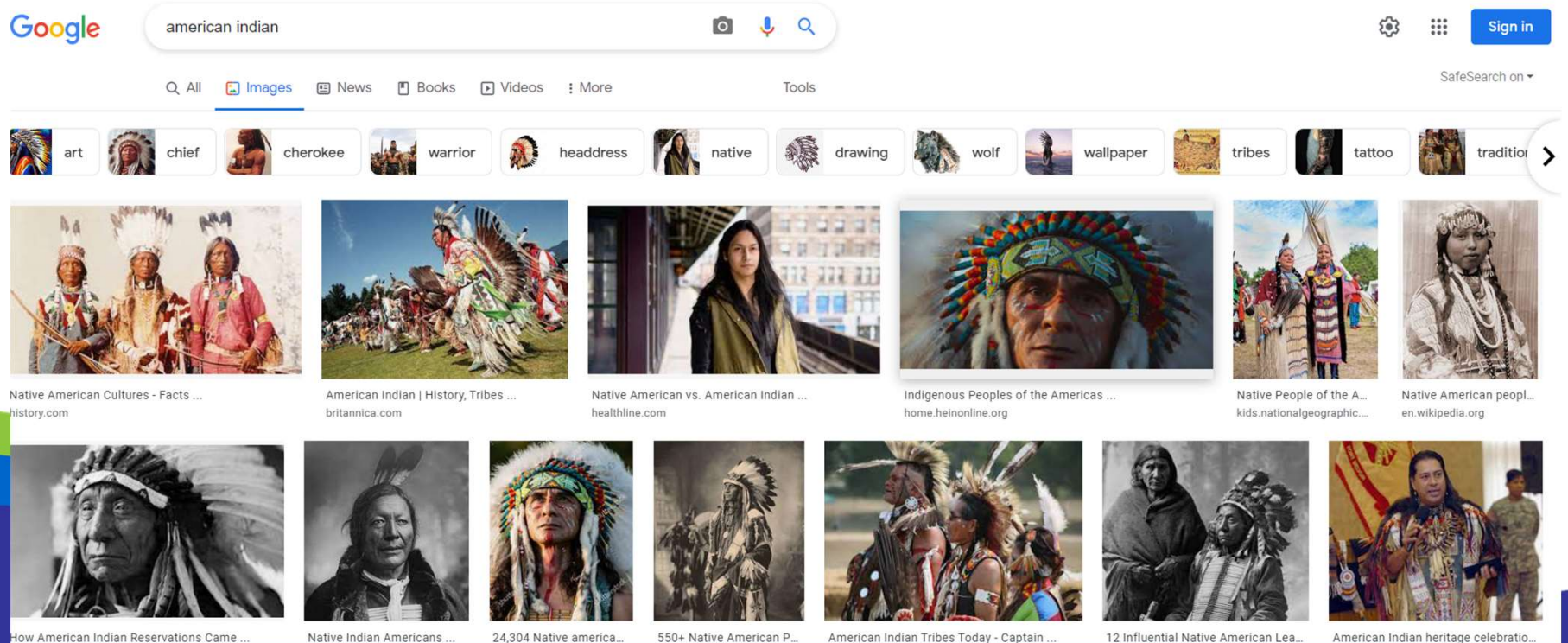
# Common Misconceptions and Stereotypes

- All American Indians live on reservations
- All Native people receive stipends (per caps) from their tribal governments from their casinos
- All First Nations students get free college educations
- There is one “Native American Culture”
- All indigenous people are deeply connected to the environment and animals
- All American Indians know each other.



# Example

Enter the words American Indian into a search engine and what do you get when it comes to images?



# Black images - what is different?



Black American



Sign in

Q All News **Images** Videos Shopping More

Tools

SafeSearch on



For Black Americans, Race is Central to ...  
pewresearch.org



The Black American Experience: Here Is ...  
news.gallup.com



How African American culture bred ...  
news.harvard.edu



Facts About the U.S. Black Population ...  
pewresearch.org



July Fourth and early Black Americans ...  
news.cornell.edu






# **Subconsciously, we develop biases**

**We get our biases when we learn about a group or topic without any real-life connections. We jump to conclusions based on what we think we know, and what we were taught.**

**When it comes to students, those biases can impact how we interpret their actions.**



# How can we fight stereotypes and biases?

- Get to know the families
  - Get to know the community
  - Work on learning more about your students rather than assuming something about their lives and themselves
  - Get to know yourself and how you think about different groups of people - you might be surprised
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# What is Sovereignty?

Here is another topic where there are misconceptions. Unlike any other racial or ethnic group, American Indian students are often citizens of sovereign Indigenous nations.



# Why is it important to recognize sovereignty?

- It is a factor in the lives of your indigenous students
- Impacts the way you may interact with tribal leaders and government agencies
- Grounds us in the here and now



# Respect

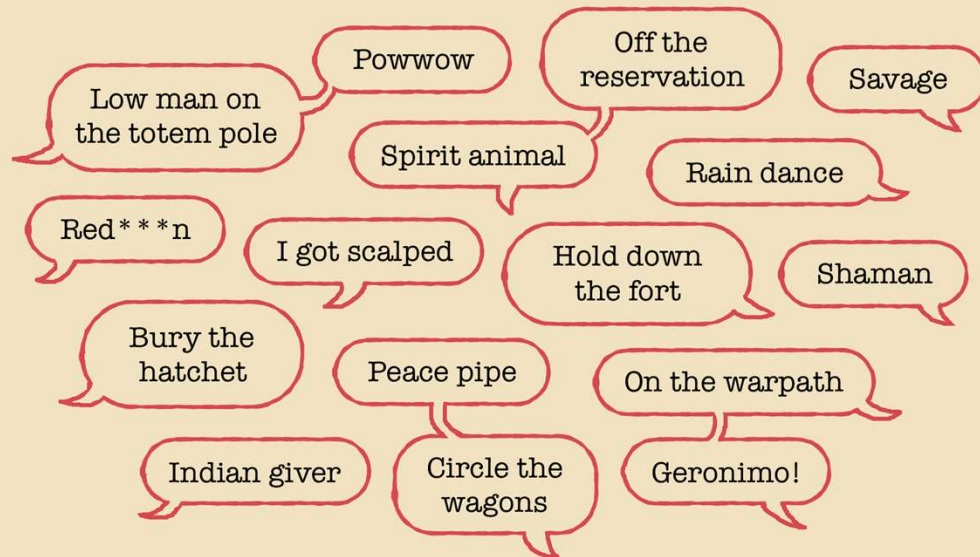
It is important to understand that tribal nations are sovereign entities and as such have an elevated status. Understanding and sharing will promote respect.

That is not how many indigenous communities have been treated in the past.

That is not how many American Indian adults were treated.







Language is a vessel of cultural stories, values, and norms—and in the United States, everyday language perpetuates the oppression of Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples exist and deserve respect; they are not historical artifacts, caricatures, or mascots. Practice this truth by questioning the origins and impact of your words.

**RADICAL**  
www.copyeditor.com

Read the whole post

Words matter.  
Language can  
perpetuate  
oppression or  
support  
liberation.



### INSTEAD OF...

Let's have a powow about this

This is my spirit animal

They went on the war path

They went off the reservation

Lowest man on the totem pole

This is my totem

Circle the wagons

Do a rain dance

Too many chiefs, not enough Indians

Find your tribe

Indian giver

### USE...

Let's meet about this

This is my daemon/familiar

They're dedicated to this

They're acting on their own

Lowest rung on the ladder

This is something I identify with

Let's get ahead of this

Hope for rain

Too many bosses, not enough staff

Find your people

Settler/colonizer giver

# Boarding Schools and Assimilation

Taken from families

Punished for speaking their language

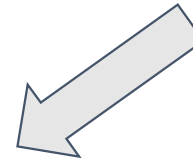
Punished for practicing their culture

Required to do menial work for little or no compensation.



**Result -  
disconnected  
from their  
families and  
communities**

**Distrust of  
education**



# Loss of Trust



Education was used as a weapon to “manage” American Indians. Some children of the boarding schools grew up to be parents who did not consider public education to be a positive.

# Disconnection from Education

**What Native American students are taught in school may contradict what they were taught in their homes and communities**





# Impact on Indigenous students

American Indian students  
don't see themselves reflected  
in the materials used, or even  
in the values promoted.

As a result, they may  
disengage in the  
educational  
environment and  
during instruction

# How can we re-engage students?

Teachers make standards-based content and curricula accessible to students and teach in a way that students can understand. To do this, teachers must **incorporate relatable aspects** of students' daily lives into the curriculum. Such familiar aspects include language (which may include jargon or slang), prior knowledge, and extracurricular interests such as music and sports.

•From Create Success! <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/111022/chapters/Culturally-Responsive-Instruction.aspx>



# Why Culture Matters...

**Culture permeates every aspect of our being as people. As a general rule, we must take advantage of any opportunities to talk about cultures while modeling culturally responsive practices for our student.**

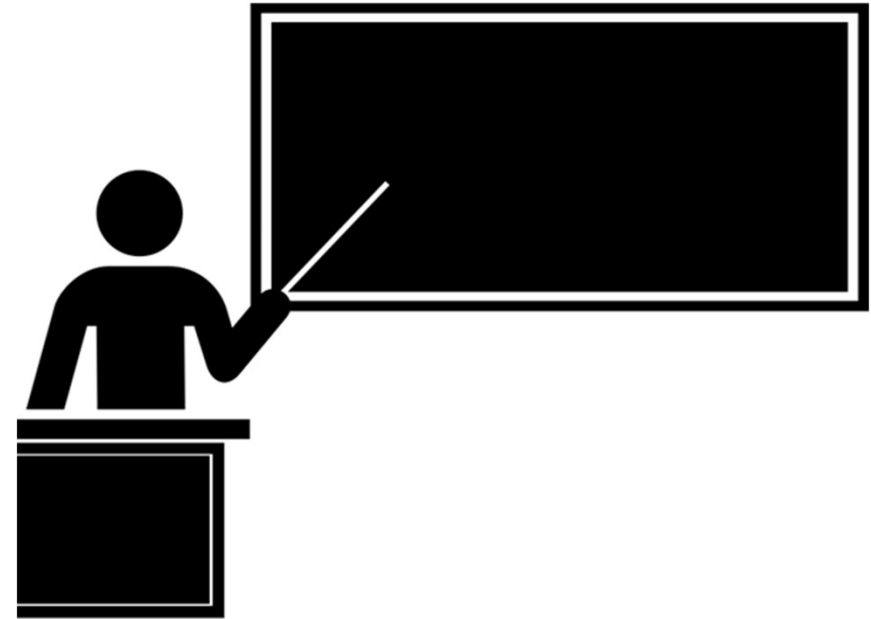


# Teaching Culturally

- “(You) don't need a different teaching method or curriculum for students based on race. I teach the entire class in a way that all of my students can relate to and understand, using aspects of their cultures with which I am comfortable.”

- From Create Success!

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/111022/chapters/Culturally-Responsive-Instruction.aspx>



# What helps educators better understand a student?

- Using multiple measures (like the multiple photos taken before the best selfie) to understand the student – so using American Indian students' family members to learn more about the student outside of the classroom.
- When possible, involving the student in deciding how to best demonstrate learning
- Using multiple methods to assess learning
- Employing universal design strategies






# Ways to Help Educators Better Understand...

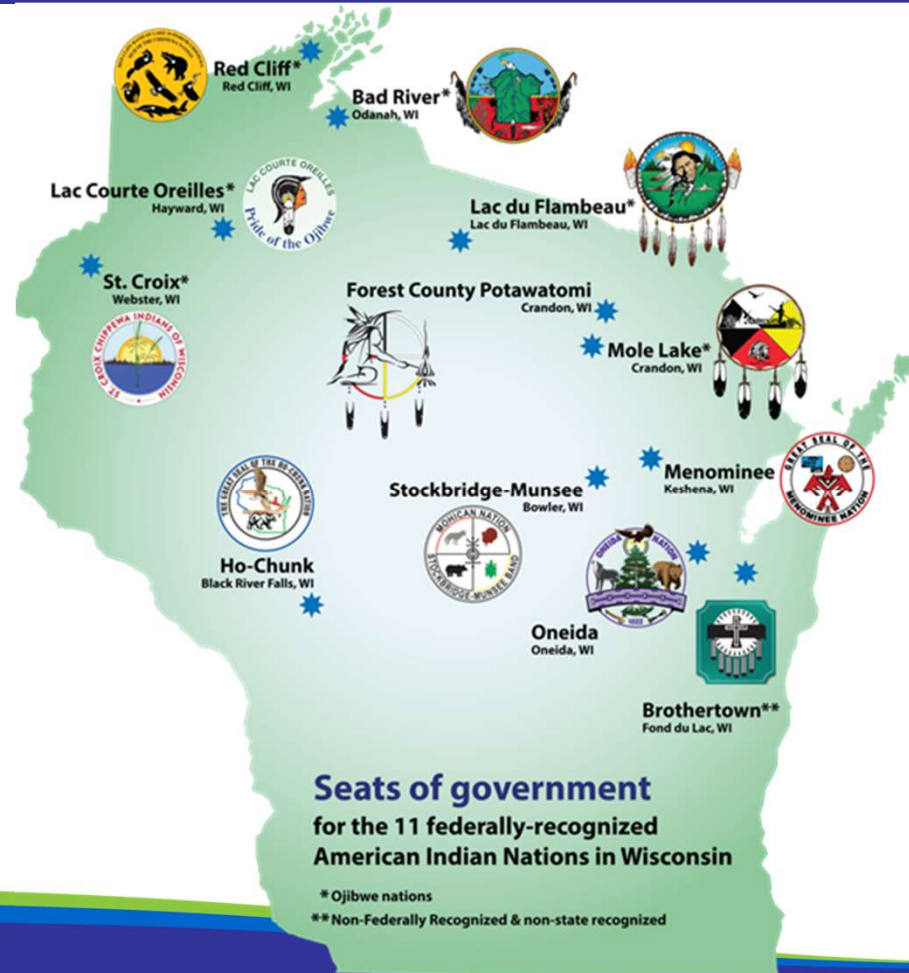
- Developing relationships with students and parents. Getting to know students so well that the teacher can tell when the test result doesn't match student abilities.
- Not blaming the students or parents. Addressing the difficulty, rather than casting blame.
- Having high expectations
- Recognizing strengths rather than focusing on perceived weakness
- Recognizing the biases and stereotypes you have been taught and that are continually reinforced



# How does this all connect to Native Families?

- Families can help you better understand your students, what goes on in the home and community, especially focusing on strengths and interests
  - Families can help you understand why their child does what they do.
  - If families see you treating themselves with respect, they will be more likely to collaborate with you.
  - If you don't know something about the culture, your American Indian families may be able to connect with you someone who can help.
  - When students see you treating their families with respect and interested in their lives, the students will be more likely to form a connection with you.
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# Tribal Nations and Communities of Wisconsin



# How to learn more

- **DPI American Indian Studies Website** <https://dpi.wi.gov/amind>  
Professional Development and Training Opportunities  
<https://dpi.wi.gov/amind/events/day>
- **Wisconsin First Nations Website** <https://wisconsinfirstnations.org/>
- **Wisconsin Indian Education Association Website** <https://wiewa.net/>
- **National Indian Education Association Website**  
<https://www.niea.org/>

# Connect With Us

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