Montana
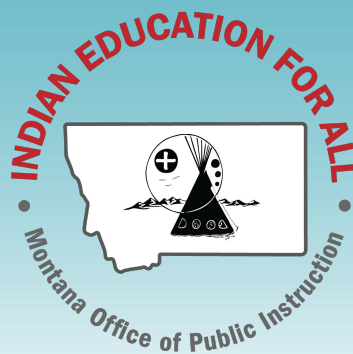**Indian Education for All**
Evaluation

Prepared for State of Montana
Office of Public Instruction

February 2015

Shawn deAnne Bachtler, Ph.D.
Independemt Consultant

INDIAN EDUCATION FOR ALL
Montana Office of Public Instruction

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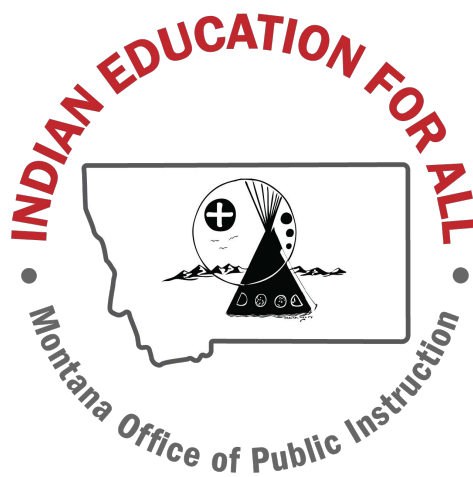Shawn deAnne Bachtler, Ph.D.

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Executive Summary

The Montana State Office of Public Instruction (OPI) requested an evaluation of Indian Education for All (IEFA), which is based on a state constitutional mandate that all Montana citizens "be encouraged to learn about the distinct and unique heritage of American Indians in a culturally responsive manner."[1] This evaluation gathered information pertaining to OPI efforts to provide resources to support instruction about Montana Indians and information pertaining to district-level IEFA implementation. Twenty districts were invited to participate in evaluation activities, including interviews, focus groups, and surveys. Nine ultimately contributed to remote data collection, and four hosted site visits. Although participation in this study was voluntary, levels of IEFA implementation in participating districts ranged from low to high. Thus, while the voluntary nature of the evaluation creates a bias that limits the degree of statistically generalizability across all districts, the results do provide considerable insight into the various levels of implementation and impact of IEFA.

To document and analyze OPI efforts to support IEFA instruction and to understand district implementation, the evaluation explored: the intentions, goals, and target outcomes of IEFA; OPI's strategies and resources; districts' use of OPI resources; implementation of IEFA in districts and schools; IEFA impact; and factors influencing IEFA implementation and impact.

This evaluation found that the Indian Education Division of OPI has developed a multi-faceted program and support system for implementation of IEFA. This includes *Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians*, a framework to guide implementation of IEFA, many instructional resources in multiple formats, professional development and differentiated district support, funding allocations and district grants, ongoing IEFA program and policy development, and a network of partners. Further, the results indicate that OPI, through these comprehensive efforts and measures, has made it possible for districts to implement IEFA. In addition, these efforts have garnered attention both nationally and internationally, and other states are looking to Montana for leadership and guidance for implementing similar programs.

The levels of IEFA implementation in districts participating in this evaluation ranged from low to high. Given the resources, support, and programming for IEFA provided by OPI, variations in district implementation appear to be associated with district variables. Evidence of IEFA success is apparent in districts where it has become part of the culture and integrated into efforts to maximize student achievement. Districts with high implementation often phased in IEFA over several years and reported strong educational practices, staff buy-in for the intention of the law, and a focus on building cultural understanding. Districts with low implementation appeared to be influenced by a range of factors both within and beyond district control. The evaluation also found that teacher and student support for IEFA is not universal.

On the basis of these results, recommendations are offered pertaining to the larger context and ongoing development of IEFA. These recommendations reflect the logical next steps, given the current status. They include clarifying the intentions of the mandate, sharing effective practices, differentiating support for districts, building cultural understanding, and determining if there is a need for ongoing program monitoring. Several of these represent a continuation of current efforts.

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[1] http://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title_0200/chapter_0010/part_0050/section_0010/0200-0010-0050-0010.html

Introduction

The Montana State Office of Public Instruction (OPI) requested this evaluation of Indian Education for All (IEFA). The 1972 Montana Constitution established the foundation for IEFA in Article X, Section 1(2): "The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity."[2]

In 1999, the Legislature passed House Bill 528 into law (MCA 20-1-501), which is commonly referred to as Indian Education for All (IEFA). It reads:

> **MCA 20-1-501. Recognition of American Indian cultural heritage -- legislative intent.** (1) It is the constitutionally declared policy of this state to recognize the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians and to be committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural heritage.
>
> (2) It is the intent of the legislature that in accordance with Article X, section 1(2), of the Montana constitution:
>
>> (a) every Montanan, whether Indian or non-Indian, be encouraged to learn about the distinct and unique heritage of American Indians in a culturally responsive manner; and
>>
>> (b) every educational agency and all educational personnel will work cooperatively with Montana tribes or those tribes that are in close proximity, when providing instruction or when implementing an educational goal or adopting a rule related to the education of each Montana citizen, to include information specific to the cultural heritage and contemporary contributions of American Indians, with particular emphasis on Montana Indian tribal groups and governments.
>>
>> (3) It is also the intent of this part, predicated on the belief that all school personnel should have an understanding and awareness of Indian tribes to help them relate effectively with Indian students and parents, that educational personnel provide means by which school personnel will gain an understanding of and appreciation for the American Indian people.[3]

In 1999, representatives of Montana tribal nations met to address the content and approach for providing Indian Education for All and developed the "Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians."[4] For the next six years, Indian Education for All was an unfunded mandate and eventually became a component of a school funding lawsuit. In a special legislative session in 2005, the Legislature appropriated funds for implementation of MCA 20-1-501, including support for staff at OPI, K-12 curricular materials, implementation resources, professional development for educators, direct funding to school districts for implementation in schools, and grants for schools to enhance implementation. In addition, resources from OPI were allocated to higher education for training in teacher education programs and for training of college and university faculty in other departments. This evaluation focuses on OPI's efforts with K-12.

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[2] https://courts.mt.gov/External/library/docs/72constit.pdf
[3] http://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title_0200/chapter_0010/part_0050/section_0010/0200-0010-0050-0010.html
[4] http://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/Page%20Files/Indian%20Education/Indian%20Education%20101/essentialunderstandings.pdf

IEFA STATE EDUCATION CONTEXT

Geographically, Montana is the fourth largest state in the nation with a population density of 6.7 people per square mile. There are seven Indian reservations and twelve tribal nations, including one landless tribe. In 2013-2014, the Montana education system served 144,129 students in 824 schools organized into 415 districts.[5] Forty schools are located on or near a reservation, and there is a tribal college on each of the seven reservations.[6] Table 1 shows the demographic composition of the state and student populations.[7]

Table 1. *Montana Demographics*

Racial Group	State population	Student population
American Indian	6.3%	11.3%
Asian	0.8%	0.8%
Black	0.4%	0.9%
Hispanic	2.9 %	4.1%
Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.2%
White	89.4%	80.0%
Other/More than one race	0.1%	2.6%

IEFA EVALUATION OVERVIEW

The Office of Public Instruction requested an evaluation of the implementation and impact of IEFA, including both state and district efforts. Evaluation questions were developed in collaboration with IEFA state leadership to guide evaluation activities and provide structure for this report. They included:

1. What are the overall intentions and goals of Indian Education for All?
2. What are the target outcomes at the state and district levels?
3. What are OPI's strategies and resources for implementing IEFA?
4. To what extent are school districts statewide utilizing IEFA support and resources?
5. What are the patterns of IEFA implementation in participating districts?
6. What strategies are OPI and participating districts using to determine IEFA outcomes?
7. What is the impact of IEFA on OPI, districts, schools, teachers, students, and school communities?
8. What factors influence the implementation and impact of IEFA?

With input and final approval from IEFA staff, focus group protocols and surveys were designed to address the evaluation questions. Human Subjects Approval for this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of Montana State University. Evaluation activities occurred primarily during the fall of 2014. Primary activities included onsite and remote data collection from a sample of districts, interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, and reviews of documents and data obtained from schools, districts, the IEFA website, OPI, and other participants.

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[5] *Facts about Montana Education 2013-14*
[6] http://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/Page%20Files/Indian%20Education/Indian%20Education%20101/Directory.pdf
[7] *Facts about Montana Education 2013-14*

IEFA EVALUATION PARTICIPANTS

Twenty districts were invited to participate in this study. These districts were selected by IEFA leadership. In their selection, IEFA leaders endeavored to include a breadth of geographical distribution, district size, and proximity to reservation lands (on, border, distant). They included districts known for IEFA implementation, as well as districts where implementation was unknown.

Districts were contacted by the evaluator and invited to participate: four for onsite visits, and seventeen for remote data collection, for a total of twenty districts (one site visit occurred in a district also selected for remote data collection). Participation was strongly encouraged but entirely voluntary. There was no requirement for participation, and no funding or compensation was offered for the time and effort of participants.

Of the twenty districts invited to participate, two declined and three were unresponsive. The remaining fifteen districts indicated an interest in participation. Of these, twelve provided data for this report: four participated in onsite data collection and nine participated remotely, with one district doing both. Three districts that initially expressed interest did not complete any evaluation activities. Table 2 shows the basic characteristics of the twelve districts contributing to the findings of this report, including the counties represented, proximity of the districts to reservation lands, and the enrollment and grade ranges.

Table 2. *Characteristics of 11 Districts Participating in IEFA Study*

Counties Represented	District Proximity to Reservation Lands		District Size		Grade Ranges	
Beaverhead	Location	#	Enrollment	#	Levels	#
Big Horn Blaine	On reservation-	2	> 500	5	PK-8	2
Cascade	Border area	4	250 to 499	4	PK-12	10
Flathead	Distant	6	100-249	2		
Gallatin Hill			50-99	1		
Lake			<50	0		
Missoula						
Phillips						
Sanders						

IEFA EVALUATION DATA COLLECTION

The onsite visits were geographically clustered to minimize travel time. Each onsite data collection occurred during a one-day visit and included:

- Visits to one or two schools in the district

- Interviews and focus groups (both confidential) with school and district staff members

- Focus groups (confidential) with students

- Educator surveys (anonymous, online)

- Student surveys (anonymous, paper, available for grades 5-12)

Remote data collection consisted of one or more of the following activities, as determined by the district:

- Interviews (confidential) with one to four staff members within the district

- Educator surveys (anonymous, online)

- Student surveys (anonymous, paper, or online available for grades 5-12)

Given the voluntary nature of this evaluation, it was necessary to allow each district to choose their own approach to survey administration. Administration of educator surveys varied among and within districts. The evaluator provided email invitations and follow up reminders for the survey to a staff member in the district for distribution to staff. Administration of student surveys varied considerably across sites, ranging from systematic administration of the survey to all eligible students (grades 5-12) in English Language Arts classes to one or two teachers volunteering to host the survey in one class. Ultimately, 389 educators and 362 students completed surveys.

In addition to data collection in districts, IEFA staff members identified eleven individuals across the state familiar with IEFA history, implementation, and/or outcomes. Each individual was invited to take part in the study via phone interview, and eight participated. Three additional people were interviewed on the recommendation of individuals in this group or in districts.

Ultimately, 157 people participated in focus groups and interviews. Represented among them were teachers, district and school administrators, librarians, counselors, parents, and students. They also included cultural and education leaders from Montana American Indian communities, professional development and education consultants, staff from education consortia and cultural groups, and school board representatives. The evaluator also observed and conducted focus groups during an IEFA conference for librarians. Thus, the evaluation gathered perspectives from multiple levels of the education system and from partners across the state. In this way, the evaluation was able to gather a wide breadth of information, including information about IEFA implementation in districts beyond those actively participating in data collection activities.

The voluntary nature of participation in this evaluation introduces a bias in the results and affects interpretation. Specifically, the results from this sample of districts cannot be relied on to statistically represent the larger population of Montana districts and therefore should be interpreted with caution. It is worth noting, however, that the schools and districts within this sample self-identified along the full continuum of implementation, using descriptors from "very weak in IEFA" to "fully committed to IEFA in every classroom." Thus, a broad range of implementation levels appears to be represented. So, while not statistically generalizable, the results do provide considerable insight into the various levels of implementation and impact of IEFA.

A final note about the evaluation: a number of participants were very pleased that OPI was gathering information about IEFA, as indicated by comments such as: "I appreciate that OPI has reached out for feedback." This included students who valued the opportunity to provide input in focus groups and occasionally wrote "Thank you!" on the survey.

Evaluation Findings

This evaluation gathered information pertaining to OPI efforts in providing resources to support instruction about Montana Indians and pertaining to district IEFA implementation. The results are intended to provide a picture of current IEFA implementation and impact, as well as challenges to both. It is outside the scope of this evaluation to detail the rich, complex, and collaborative history of Montana's educators and cultural leaders as they translated law into action. However, as references to this history frequently arose during the evaluation, it is important to acknowledge that many people contributed to the development of IEFA's intention, growth, and ultimate realization. Reflecting the comments of many participants, one person said, "I am proud of a state that does this."

The following evaluation findings are structured around the evaluation questions and cover: intentions, goals, and target outcomes of IEFA (Questions 1 and 2); OPI's strategies and resources and districts' use of OPI resources (Questions 3 and 4); implementation of IEFA in districts and schools (Question 5); IEFA impact (Questions 6 and 7); and factors influencing IEFA implementation and impact (Question 8). This is followed by a synthesis of the findings and recommendations. Additional data is included in the Appendix as noted.

Evaluation Question 1: What are the overall intentions and goals of Indian Education for All?

LEGISLATED INTENTIONS

As noted in the introduction, the legislation behind IEFA asserts that the state "recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural heritage." Further, all Montanans, whether Indian or non-Indian, are to be encouraged to learn about the heritage of American Indians. All education agencies and personnel are charged with working cooperatively with Montana tribes when providing instruction, implementing educational goals, or adopting education rules, to include information pertaining to the cultural heritage and contemporary contributions of American Indians, particularly Montana Indian tribal groups and governments.

INTERPRETATION OF INTENTIONS

The OPI Indian Education Division provides guidance and support for IEFA, as well as leadership for translating the legislation into education practice. According to OPI IEFA staff, implementation of IEFA is conceptually broader than adding a unit on Indian history or tradition. Instead, it is the intention that IEFA addresses broader issues of multicultural education, that it occurs through authentic integration throughout all curricula, and that it is based in best educational practices.

Every adult who participated in a focus group or interview for this evaluation reported being aware that Montana State enacted legislation pertaining to inclusion of cultural, historical, and contemporary information about Montana Indians in public education. However, familiarity with the law ranged from basic awareness of that fact to verbatim recall of the language. Similarly, interpretation of OPI's intentions for IEFA ranged from a single annual event or lesson to comprehensive school-wide integration into instruction and culture. The results of the educator survey reflected similar variations in understanding: 62% of respondents indicated they are moderately or very familiar with the goals and intentions of IEFA, while 34% reported little or no familiarity with the goals and intentions (see

Figure1). On an OPI survey administered at professional development sessions, 72% of the 462 respondents said they had read Article X of the Montana Constitution and MCA 20-1-50, and the most of those respondents agreed (61%) or strongly agreed (30%) that they understand the intent of the IEFA constitutional mandate.
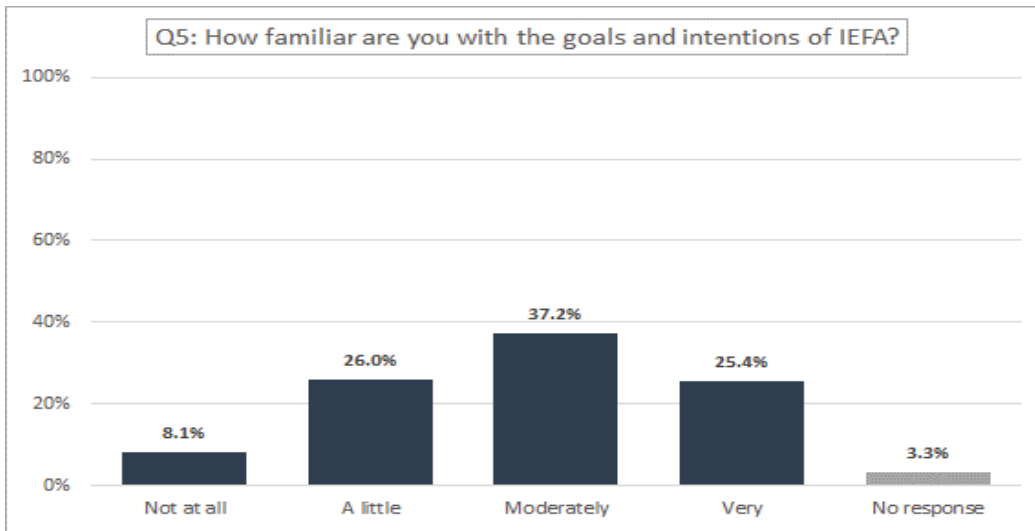

Q5: How familiar are you with the goals and intentions of IEFA?

Not at all	A little	Moderately	Very	No response
8.1%	26.0%	37.2%	25.4%	3.3%

Figure 1. Educatory survey – Familiarity with IEFA goals and intentions

Students participating in focus groups were rarely aware of the legislation or of IEFA, even if they had experienced lessons or events related to American Indians. Secondary students suggested the intention behind lessons incorporating Indian history and culture included, "It's part of American history," "It helps us not be racist," "It's good to learn about other cultures," and "They were the first people to settle here and they live here, too." Several elementary students shared similar perspectives: "They were the first people to settle here, and they live here, too. It's not just all of us" and "It's important to know how Native American cultures got our side of the country started and how they took care of it."

Evaluation Question 2: What are the target outcomes at the state and district levels?

Target outcomes for most initiatives are defined in terms of implementation goals, impact/outcome goals, or both. For IEFA, target outcomes are largely focused on implementation. For example, staff members described IEFA target outcomes as "consistent and authentic integration of IEFA in culturally-responsive learning environments in all grades in all schools across the State of Montana." District and school leaders also described IEFA target outcomes as implementation goals.

In addition to implementation goals, however, many evaluation participants believe there are long-term social impact goals related to preservation of Indian culture, improved relations among the state's cultural populations, and greater cultural awareness and knowledge among the state's citizenry of American Indian peoples and concerns.

Evaluation Question 3: What are OPI's strategies and resources for implementing IEFA?

Evaluation participants reported that OPI's strategies for implementing IEFA have evolved over time through a process that is intentional, inclusive, and well-informed. There was much praise for the support

and resources provided by OPI for IEFA implementation. One person said, "I am proud of OPI for the work they've done and how they've gone about it." In supporting districts to meet the state's mandate, OPI uses six major strategies: a framework to guide implementation of IEFA, instructional resources, professional development, funding and district grants, ongoing IEFA program and policy development, and relationships.

IEFA FRAMEWORK FOR DISTRICT IMPLEMENTATION

Strategies for IEFA implementation at the district level are provided in *The Framework: A Practical Guide for Montana Teachers and Administrators Implementing Indian Education for All* (2010), developed by Dr. Tammy Elser for OPI. The Framework specifies five major components for implementation in schools, provides guidelines for policy development and planning, and outlines three implementation models based on different district configurations. It includes additional information pertaining to the *Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians*, multicultural education, and curriculum and instruction.

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

A wide range of resources is available to support districts as they implement IEFA, including a large bank of materials developed and gathered by IEFA leaders and other educators. The OPI website features a webpage for IEFA (http://opi.mt.gov/Educators/Teaching-Learning/Indian-Education) where educators can access research and data, publications, teaching tools, curriculum resources, lesson plans, recommendations for literature, and guidelines for evaluating and using resources. A majority of these materials have been produced through OPI. Key instructional resources include Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians and materials connecting IEFA with Montana Content Standards. Materials are available for instruction in art, language arts, literature, math, science, social studies, and cross-curricular contexts. Through additional links, users can also access a variety of external websites pertaining to Montana Indians and American Indians across the nation, Montana tribal colleges, multicultural issues in instruction, and a variety of relevant organizations.

In addition to providing materials via the website, IEFA distributes texts, DVDs, CDs, and posters to all school libraries and to other offices involved in curriculum and instruction. Some of these materials were developed specifically by or for IEFA and include Montana Indian authors, musicians, historians, and artists. The materials cover a range of content areas and include histories, novels and stories, and references on instruction and on evaluating publications for accuracy and cultural responsiveness.

According to developers of IEFA instructional and curricular resources, OPI has been intent on aligning the materials with the Common Core Standards. Further, they encourage use of these materials to help teachers master the standards. One said, "We are working hard to help schools understand how to use IEFA to accomplish Common Core implementation." Thus, in addition to providing content and instruction pertaining to Montana Indians, IEFA lessons are intended to reinforce Common Core Standards across curricula.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

According to the IEFA webpage,[8] "OPI Indian Education staff provides Indian Education for All professional development for educators, school administrators, school boards, and community groups. Trainings are offered both online and onsite at schools, district PIR [Pupil-Instruction Related] days, and conferences at no charge." The website includes a survey districts can use to assess professional development needs and is used by OPI staff for planning school based professional development. There is also online access to presentations, podcasts, and instruction from OPI staff. A variety of content areas are covered pertaining to contemporary American Indian issues, integrating IEFA into curricula, developing world views, and facilitating relationships with communities and partners. There are specific online options for teachers, administrators, trustees, coaches, and advocates. In addition to these web-based resources, OPI IEFA staff provide consultations to school districts and teachers, both formally and on an ad hoc basis. Educators are invited to contact the office directly for support and guidance.

Professional development events also support IEFA implementation. During 2014-2015, these included the IEFA Librarians Conference, the IEFA Best Practices Conference, and IEFA workshops at other education conferences throughout the year, such as MEA-MFT, Montana Library Association, the Montana Indian Education Association, and disciplined-based conferences (e.g. Family and Consumer Sciences). These events provide opportunities for educators to share IEFA practices, develop familiarity with IEFA resources, consult with IEFA staff, and learn content and skills related to IEFA. Schools, districts, and education curriculum consortia also sponsor trainings for staff members using IEFA funding and with IEFA personnel.

Over time, OPI IEFA staff have expanded the types of professional development available. In addition to on-site professional development and web-based learning opportunities, they encourage job-embedded teacher training/support and provide grants to regional education entities to provide local professional development activities. Regional service providers have used IEFA funding for in-person workshops, online book studies and classes, and technical assistance.

IEFA DISTRICT GRANTS AND FUNDING

Districts have received direct funding for IEFA, based on enrollment, in the form of one-time-only appropriations in August 2007 and August 2008, and subsequent continuing appropriations. According to OPI's November 2014 document Understanding Montana School Finance and School District Budgets,[9] "Each district receives an Indian Education for All payment to implement the provisions of the Montana constitution (Article X, section 1(2) and the statutory requirements for the recognition of American Indian cultural heritage (20-1-501, MCA). The Indian Education for All payment is the greater of $100 for each district or $20.40 per ANB [Average Number Belonging]."

Through an annual grant program, districts may apply for funding to support local IEFA activities. In recent years, grants were available for a maximum $10,000 to $15,000 and focused on certain goals such as: reviewing the district's plans for integrating IEFA and building on existing implementation (2012-2013); designing and providing a professional development program to develop educators' capacity to integrate IEFA with Montana Core Content Standards (2013-2014); and incorporating a process for selecting and including tribally-specific resources relevant to Montana tribes into the district IEFA policy or plan and implementing a professional development program to support integration of IEFA with Montana Core Content Standards for all Montana students to graduate career and college ready.

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[8] http://opi.mt.gov/Educators/Teaching-Learning/Indian-Education
[9] Understanding School Finance document

ONGOING IEFA PROGRAM AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The Indian Education Division reported ongoing program development through continued creation and updates of materials and resources, incorporation of feedback from various constituents, and continued efforts to build relationships within OPI. They have also provided stewardship for the evolution of IEFA programming and policy by facilitating relationships with and obtaining input from representatives of Montana tribal nations, educators, cultural organizations, and communities.

RELATIONSHIPS

Throughout the evaluation, there were many references to the importance of relationships in fulfilling the mandate for IEFA. One person said, "IEFA is about people and communities and difficult history. You can't teach that without relationships." Partnerships, both within and beyond the education system, are central to OPI's strategies for implementing IEFA.

In 1984, to facilitate cooperation among key organizations and agencies, including the state's tribes, OPI and the Board of Public Education established the Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education. Among other things, this council provides a conduit between IEFA and the tribes. There are also partnerships with tribal governments, culture committees, language and education leaders, and tribal colleges. Individual elders and cultural leaders, including artists, authors, and musicians, are part of the IEFA network. Other partners include cultural organizations, museums, environmental organizations, historic park sites, government agencies, the Governor's Office, and colleges and universities. Regional and local education service providers and consultants are available to respond to district needs and to assist in building partnerships for IEFA. For example, one regional entity has fostered relationships between districts and tribal organizations by forming a standing committee that meets twice a year for collaborative professional development and planning. In the aggregate, these partnerships create a large, state-wide web that supports IEFA by contributing to understanding and perspectives, materials, resources, professional development, strategies, and policy development.

CONSIDERATION: THE OPI CONTEXT

A number of people from stakeholder organizations and partners external to OPI commented on the magnitude of the challenge in moving IEFA from legislation to implementation. One person said, "The task was absolutely astounding in its complexity." There was much praise for the efforts of OPI in supporting the Indian Education Division in development of IEFA. At the same time, some external observers raised concerns about the position of IEFA within OPI. One person noted, "OPI has a very strong Indian Education Division, but not everyone at OPI is on board. Even the type of office space sends a message." Other comments included, "There needs to be more synthesis and integration within OPI" and "Cross-pollination [among divisions] is not always happening at OPI." Similarly, one person suggested, "They need to find a way for IEFA to influence other OPI divisions to provide exemplars from their work." In addition, questions arose about OPI's long-range planning for IEFA. One person commented, "I don't see IEFA building capacity. What happens when the current leaders are gone? Is there an intentional plan to cultivate leadership for the future?"

Evaluation Question 4: To what extent are school districts statewide utilizing IEFA support and resources?

In order to understand the effectiveness of the support developed by OPI Indian Education staff, this evaluation investigated the extent to which districts use four primary IEFA resources: leadership consultation, lessons and instructional resources, professional development, and district grants and funds.

OPI IEFA STAFF CONSULTATION

A number of evaluation participants reported making direct contact with IEFA leadership for guidance or technical assistance. Comments from those who interacted with IEFA leaders were uniformly positive and included "very supportive," "so darned helpful," "approachable and friendly," and "great mentors." They are also valued for their resourcefulness. These qualities have proven critical to educators in the field, particularly when they feel daunted or uncertain and when confronting potentially sensitive issues. Based on interviews with educators, the need for this type of guidance is likely to continue and may increase as more districts move forward with IEFA implementation.

IEFA LESSONS AND INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

In focus groups and interviews, educators were asked about the extent to which they access and utilize IEFA instructional resources online or through their library, and responses varied widely. At one end of the spectrum, teachers and librarians were very familiar with these resources, making references to specific lessons and providing informed feedback about the materials. At the other end of the spectrum, educators were unfamiliar with the website and unaware that IEFA materials existed in their building.

Educators who accessed IEFA materials through the website described the lessons as sound, aligned with standards, and clear in directions to teachers. They appreciated that these and other materials had been vetted for accuracy and appropriateness and were coded for alignment with standards, making it easier to incorporate them into their curricula. Many valued the IEFA materials for the authentic voices and perspectives they bring into the classroom.

Teachers, coaches, and librarians reported some challenges in using the IEFA lesson plans and other materials. The availability of resources differs across content areas, making it harder for some disciplines. For example, there are many materials for language arts and social studies and fewer in science and math. While there are many lessons available, some teachers have had trouble finding a lesson that fits their district's grade level curriculum. Other factors that reduced teachers' access of website resources included feeling "daunted" or "not knowing where to start" and a lack of time to review the available materials. Some also reported links that are no longer active, lessons that are no longer available, and units requiring materials (e.g. novels) that are no longer in print.

With this in mind, several librarians and teachers recommended periodic reviews and updates of resources on the IEFA website. Suggestions included providing stipends for school staff members to review and update sections of the website. There were similar recommendations for educators to participate in reviews to identify gaps in content coverage and to further develop tagging and cataloguing to make the materials easier to identify.

Recommendations for additional resources arose during the evaluation. Several people requested examples of materials and lessons in use, such as the Code Talker unit, through video presentations. Many suggested an annotated list of people willing to visit schools or to host visits from students, and some districts and regions have already done this. Others suggested additional materials from tribal culture committees on how to approach certain topics and issues, and one person referenced such a list developed by the Cheyenne Culture Committee for that purpose.

IEFA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As noted above, there are various IEFA professional development opportunities each year, including conferences and workshops led by IEFA leaders, online on-demand professional development resources, and workshops and other opportunities provided in collaboration with partners. Many people stressed the importance of funding for locally-sponsored activities, given the time and costs of travel within Montana. They also noted, however, that professional development for IEFA can be hard to develop locally because "IEFA is so specialized, there are less people available and they are often far away."

In annual data collection conducted by OPI between 2008 and 2012, 36% to 50% of the state's districts reported that school board members received training in regarding IEFA in a given year. Training for administrators was more common, ranging from 74% to 89% annually. Figure 2 shows that the majority of respondents on the educator survey participated in one or more professional development experiences relevant to IEFA in the last two years, but almost one-fifth did not.

Figure 2. Educator Survey – Participation in professional development pertaining to American Indian education

IEFA DISTRICT GRANTS AND FUNDING

Common uses for IEFA funds and grants include professional development, guests for IEFA school and professional development programs, field trips, coaching time, and release time to collaborate and develop lessons. Schools and districts have obtained IEFA grants for endeavors such as a multi-day summer culture camp for students or a multi-day professional development event. For example, one district obtained a grant to host a two-day summer workshop and invited educators and curriculum coordinators from multiple districts. Following a series of presentations, attendees worked with the

workshop leaders and presenters to develop units. Grant funding supported the time of leaders and presenters and provided a stipend for teachers' time in developing instructional materials.

Anecdotal reports suggest the impetus for writing grants typically comes from two sources: a district IEFA implementation plan with activities that require funding or one or more staff members invested in an idea. For some districts, particularly those with fewer resources due to size and location, IEFA grants make a significant difference in capacity and implementation. However, some teachers were unaware of the IEFA grant program or of IEFA funding received by their district.

According to IEFA leaders and other evaluation participants, accountability for district use of IEFA funds was previously low, and funds sometimes were used for expenditures unrelated to IEFA. One participant suggested, "There should be a budget line [for IEFA] so people are not deferring the funds to other activities and staff." To address these concerns, a specific IEFA budget code has been put into place.

The educator survey asked teachers about the frequency with which they access various IEFA resources and about the helpfulness of those resources. Figures 3 and 4 show these results.
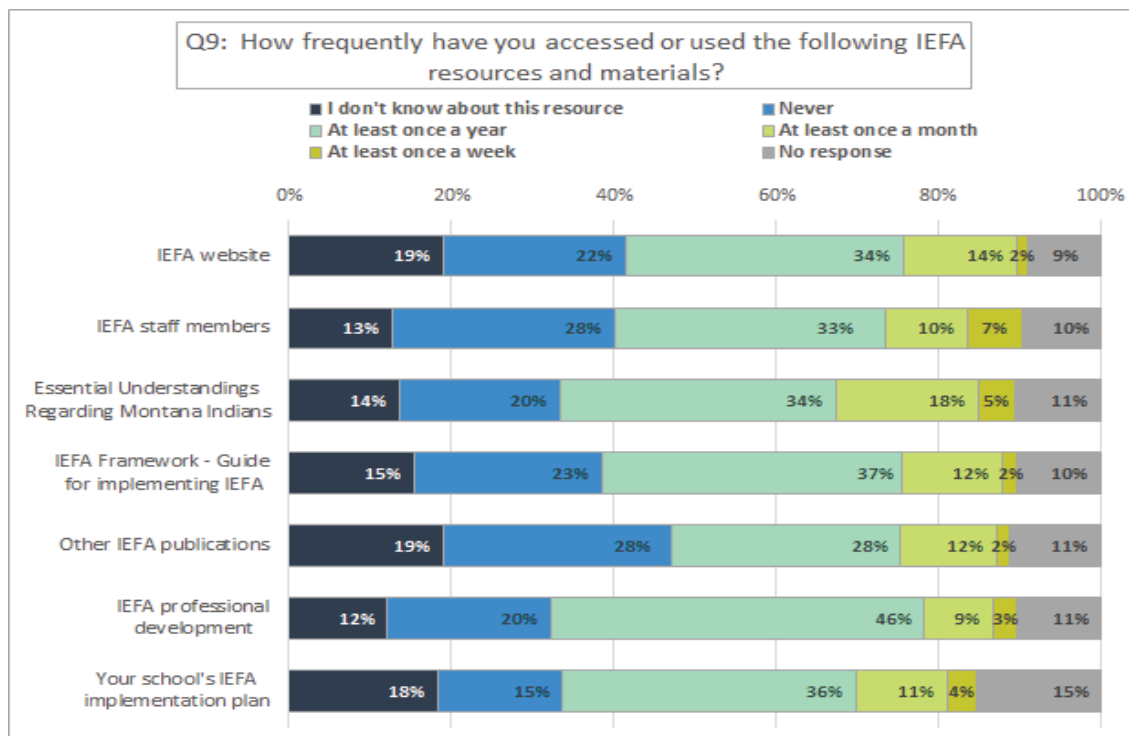

Figure 3. Educator survey – Frequency of educator use of IEFA resources and materials
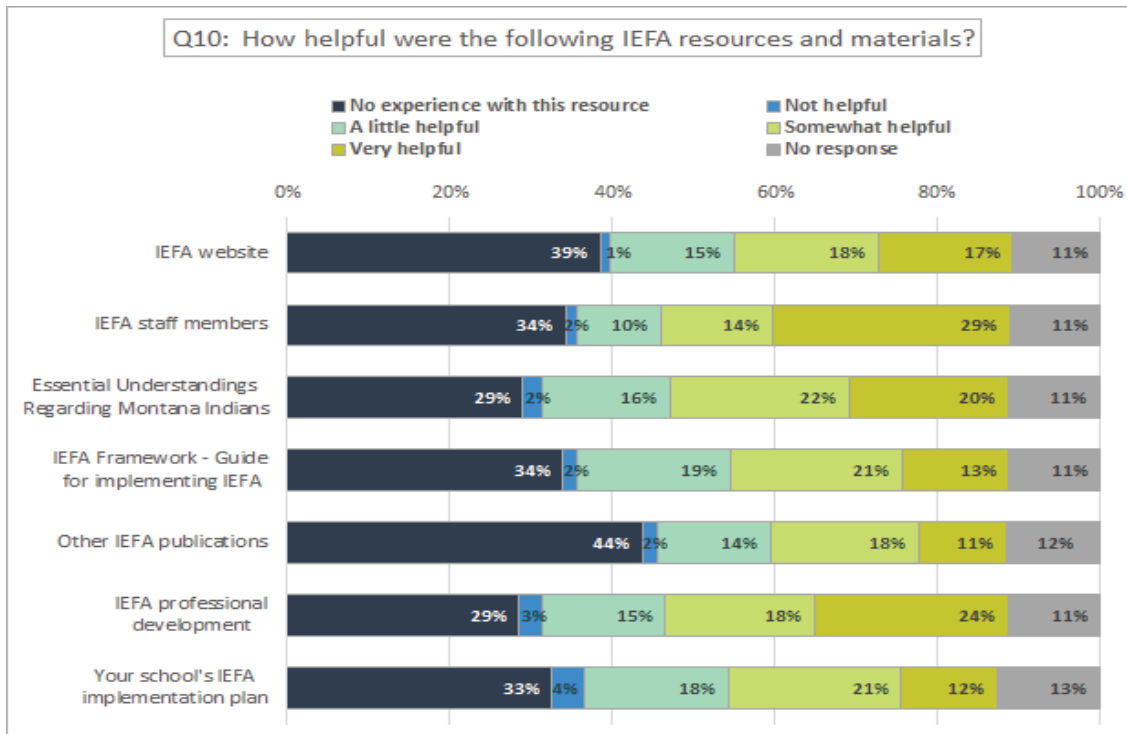
Figure 4. Educator survey – Educator perceptions of helpfulness of IEFA resources and materials

Evaluation Question 5: What are the patterns of IEFA implementation in participating districts and what factors influence district participation?

In the districts participating in this evaluation, implementation of IEFA takes many forms. In some cases, cohesive plans provide a framework for expectations and implementation, teachers are aware of the extent of IEFA implementation throughout the building, and the staff is focused on authentic integration into core content areas. In other districts, IEFA lessons may occur frequently but without building-wide cohesion, and curricular integration is less consistent. In still other locations, IEFA lessons occur in isolation in individual classrooms.

Implementation of IEFA involves many elements, including plans and policies, leadership, expectations and accountability, staff capacity, classroom instruction, and library services. These key elements are reviewed below. In addition, two areas emerged for special consideration and are included: IEFA in reservation schools, and contemporary American Indian lives and issues.

DISTRICT IEFA POLICIES AND PLANS

Various OPI documents, such as The Framework and IEFA grant application materials, communicate an expectation that districts will develop policies and plans for IEFA. Guidance for policy and plan development is available in these documents and through OPI IEFA staff and through professional development. The school board association also established IEFA policy language, which many districts adopt verbatim. Annual data collection by OPI between 2004 and 2012 shows the percentage of districts across the state with board approved policies has increased over time and now includes most districts (see Figure 5).
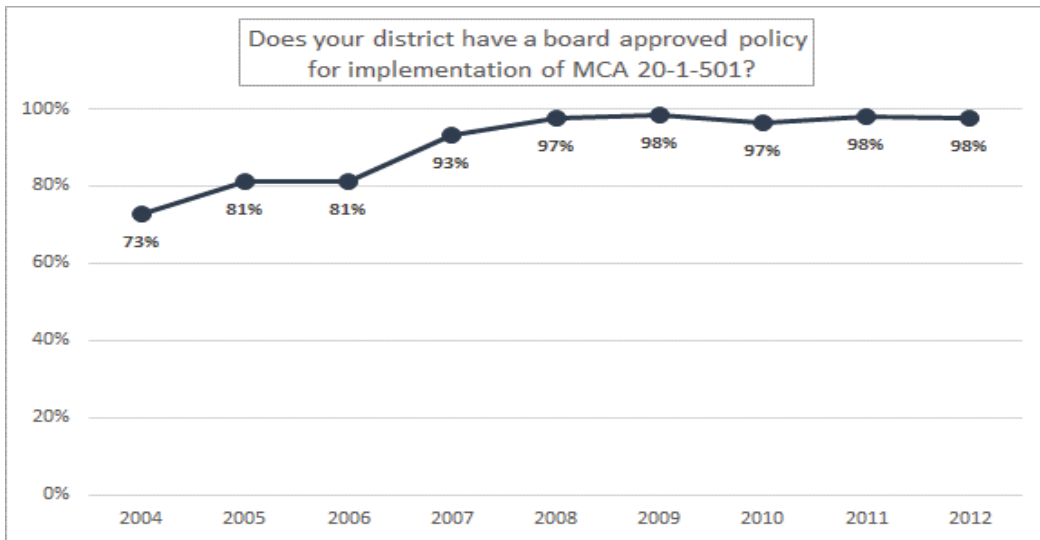
Figure 5. OPI annual data collection 2004-2008 – Percentage of districts with board approved policies for implementation of MCA 20-1-501

A review of the websites of the twenty districts invited to participate in this evaluation found that seven had some type of IEFA planning or policy documentation (e.g. board policy, professional development plans) within two clicks of the home page, but IEFA strategic plans were difficult to locate. A small number of districts submitted IEFA plans as part of this evaluation. It is unclear whether the remaining districts did not have a plan available for review or whether they were unresponsive to the request.

In focus groups and interviews, educators were asked whether OPI requires a district IEFA plan and whether their district had an IEFA plan in place. Administrators who participated in interviews said there is a clear expectation that districts will develop an IEFA plan. However, many educators outside leadership teams were unsure about OPI expectations and were uncertain if their school or district had plans or policies in place. On the educator survey, only 59% indicated their school or district has a plan for IEFA implementation, and 20% did not know if a plan is in place (see Figure 6). Between 2010 and 2012, the annual survey conducted by OPI gathered data on the status of district plans for implementing IEFA and showed very little variation over time. Over the three years, 41.3% to 42.7% reported a complete plan, 54.6% to 55.9% were developing a plan, and 1.9% to 3.2% had no plan.
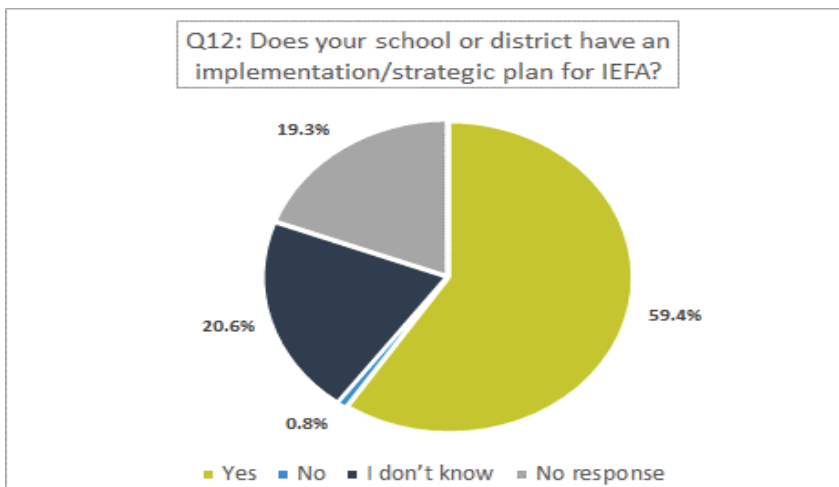

Figure 6. Educator Survey – Knowledge of IEFA plans

Where district plans exist, they are incorporated into or aligned with other district planning, such as long- range strategic plans or short-term action plans. Plans may address overarching goals and intentions, essential understandings, curricula maps, and professional development. A few detail grade level activities to ensure coverage of the essential understandings and to minimize redundancy during the course of students' education.

In districts where no plan exists, staff members attributed this to competing priorities or no leadership for the work. A teacher commented, "We have no district plan, no public plan. Would we do better if we had a plan? Yes, but there's just too many irons in the fire." Staff members of schools with and without plans were interested in seeing the plans of other districts.

DISTRICT AND SCHOOL IEFA LEADERSHIP

Districts differ in leadership models for IEFA. In some locations, IEFA leadership is under the purview of the administrative team or a special committee. Others have teacher leaders or coaches. Positions may be stipended or involve other compensation models, such as using IEFA leadership as a professional or academic project. In some buildings where IEFA has a low administrative priority, informal teacher leadership has emerged. It is important to note that leadership models for IEFA may shift significantly with administrative turnover or other major changes. One person said, "We used to have committees and a coordinator, but now [one teacher] is our unofficial leader."

Many people emphasized the importance of leadership in effective IEFA implementation. An evaluation participant observed, "It's a tremendous initiative that ultimately requires trustee and administrative commitment." In fact, the schools and districts reporting higher levels of implementation also reported observable commitment from the administrators and/or a teacher with strong investment, and these individuals inspired other staff members. There were concerns that IEFA awareness and implementation might diminish if these individuals leave. One teacher who provides informal leadership said, "There needs to be buy-in at all levels, so it is not dependent on me."

EXPECTATIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR IEFA IMPLEMENTATION

Interviewees commonly noted that expectations for implementation of IEFA are not precisely defined by the law or by OPI. In a state with a tradition of strong local control, this latitude has allowed proactive school systems to develop IEFA in a way that integrates well with their education model, and this enhances implementation and buy-in. In other districts, however, this lack of definition has frustrated educators. One commented, "We don't know if we are doing it right…if we are meeting the requirement." Indeed, interpretations of fulfilling the law ranged broadly from participation in a single annual event to ongoing integration across all curricula.

This absence of definition from the state level shifts interpretation to the districts, and few appear to have established firm criteria for meeting IEFA expectations. Rather, many teachers described a general expectation from administrators, such as "do IEFA once a month" or "a few times a year." Administrative follow through was rare. Very few teachers reported having to document their efforts, submit lesson plans, or host a classroom observation. One educator said, "The state has put an accountability piece in place, that if you are doing your job, you have to meet the standards, but our superintendent hasn't said anything more than 'this is your job.'" Another observed, "It used to be part of our evaluations but not in the last three years."

According to evaluation participants, districts are not highly accountable for IEFA. One person described this saying, "If you don't meet your constitutional obligation [as a district], no one calls you out on it. In your yearly report, you can check that you have done it [IEFA], but there's no follow up…there's no teeth to this mandate."

Interestingly, peer expectation and accountability for IEFA appeared in those schools where collaboration is strong and teachers work together to plan and implement IEFA. In these settings, expectations are integrated into shared instructional goals. A teacher in one such school said, "We just all hold each other to high standards. It's school culture to hold high expectations [of staff]."

BUILDING STAFF IEFA CAPACITY

The law mandates that "educational personnel provide means by which school personnel will gain an understanding of and appreciation for the American Indian people." This is an important component of the law: it recognizes that educators cannot teach what they do not know. In addition, IEFA is intended to be more than a "canned" series of lessons. Achieving the curriculum integration of IEFA requires deeper understanding of concepts and teacher confidence in using them. As one educator commented, "Teachers who know more, do more. Teachers who have a background feel more comfortable and see that it [IEFA] fits in anywhere." This aspect of the law, then, requires that educators are provided the necessary background to meet the mandate.

Efforts to build staff capacity specific to IEFA differ from district to district. Locations that reported strong commitment to IEFA typically reported intentional processes to support teacher implementation of IEFA. Examples included surveying staff training needs and aligning training directly with the district IEFA plan. Formats for building staff capacity commonly included targeted professional development, collaborative lesson planning, coaching, and "train-the-trainer." In addition, some partnerships have formed among small rural districts to share coaches or trainings. Across the various methods, the areas of focus have included IEFA content, Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians, multi-cultural awareness, and IEFA and Common Core Standards. Some individual educators independently seek to improve their knowledge and understanding. For example, some have taken language courses offered by tribal colleges or attended workshops in American Indian history, culture, and archeology. There are also efforts to build school board capacity through IEFA trainings.

Figure 7 shows educators' perceptions of their knowledge in areas relevant to IEFA. Importantly, one-third reported knowing little or nothing about the Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians or about contemporary issues of American Indian people. Figure 8 shows the sources for educators' knowledge, skills, and information related to American Indian history, culture, and issues. Figure 9 presents data collected by OPI from participants of professional development and shows high levels of comfort in integrating the Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians among from the 462 respondents.
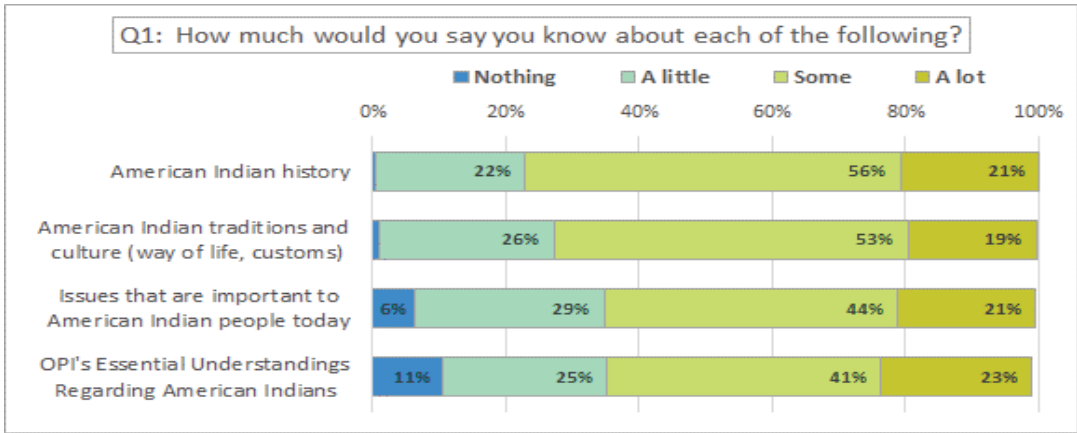
Figure 7. Educator survey – Educator self-reported knowledge levels[10]
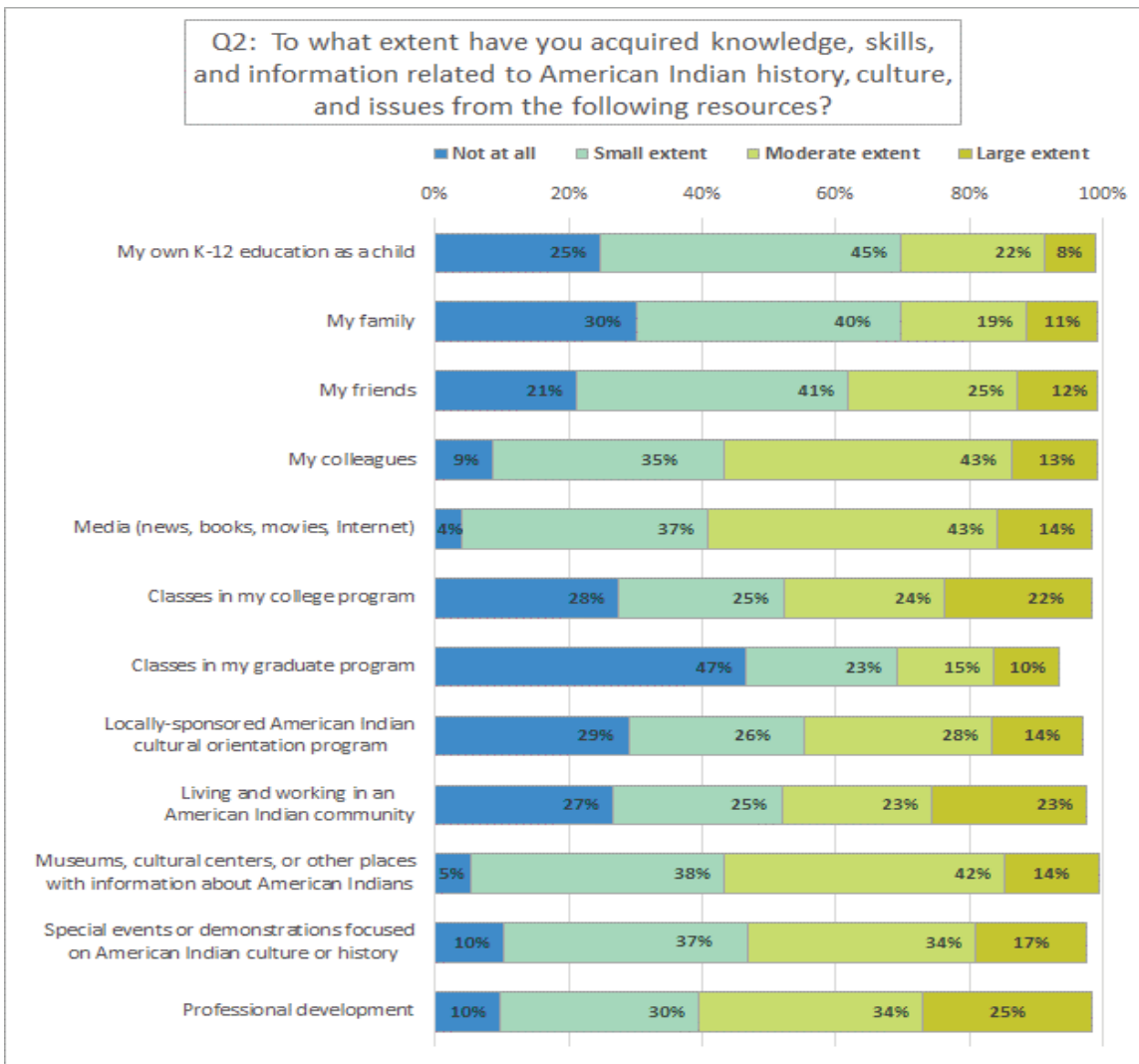

Figure 8. Educator survey – Sources of knowledge pertaining to American Indian history, culture, and issues

[10] In this and subsequent charts where the "no response" catagory in not included, the level is less than 2%.

I am comfortable Integrating this Essential Understanding into the curriculum

Legend: ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

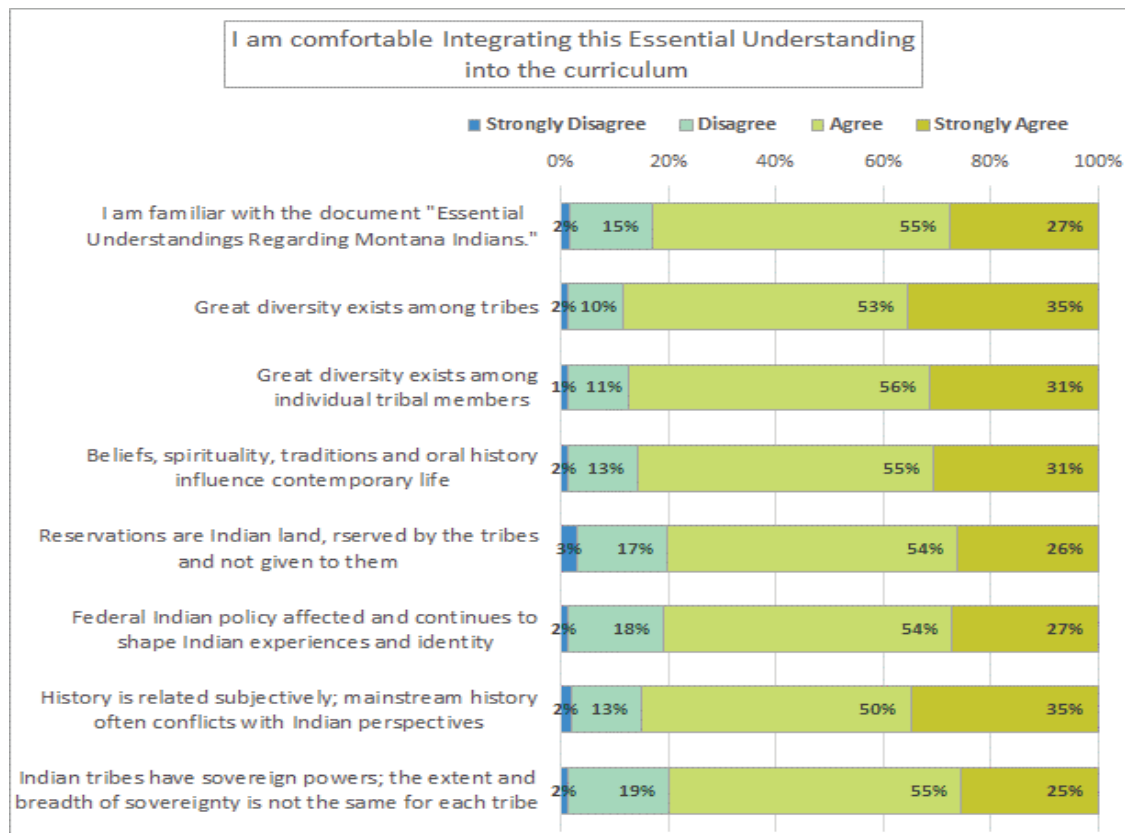| Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am familiar with the document "Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians."	2%	15%	55%	27%
Great diversity exists among tribes	2%	10%	53%	35%
Great diversity exists among individual tribal members	1%	11%	56%	31%
Beliefs, spirituality, traditions and oral history influence contemporary life	2%	13%	55%	31%
Reservations are Indian land, rserved by the tribes and not given to them	3%	17%	54%	26%
Federal Indian policy affected and continues to shape Indian experiences and identity	2%	18%	54%	27%
History is related subjectively; mainstream history often conflicts with Indian perspectives	2%	13%	50%	35%
Indian tribes have sovereign powers; the extent and breadth of sovereignty is not the same for each tribe	2%	19%	55%	25%

Figure 9. OPI professional development survey – Educator comfort in teaching Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians

IEFA SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM IMPLEMENTATION

While there is latitude for implementing IEFA, OPI has created an implementation framework to guide schools and districts. Among the key components are the content, as outlined in *Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians,* and the instructional design, which is based on cross-curricular integration. In addition, OPI has provided three models for implementation based on different district variables. To understand IEFA implementation, it is helpful to consider the different levels of implementation, approaches to phasing in IEFA, implementation activities, and factors associated with higher levels of implementation.

Levels of implementation. Based on reports from districts participating in this evaluation and from education personnel in various leadership positions, there appear to be three broad levels of IEFA implementation that can be loosely defined as follows:

·   *Low:* Implementation may be occurring in individual classrooms, and teachers may not be aware of other teachers' IEFA activities; there is no IEFA implementation plan.

       Example educator comment (from survey): "IEFA is never mentioned. Our current Native population is 85%. Some books are taught by Native Authors and I have [description of specific activity]. Other than this, our administration never mentions it. Ever."

·   *Moderate:* Implementation occurs via stand-alone IEFA lessons or is event-driven, curricular integration is limited, and teachers may be aware of other IEFA activities; a plan is in place.

Example educator comment (from focus group): "We are not fully immersed [in IEFA]. It's not a deep part of our culture. We are aware of it and use some of the resources, but we are not having conversations about what we are doing. We have a lot of documents in terms of planning and some accountability pieces, but it's very fragmented."

- *High:* Implementation is integrated into multiple content areas, and there is common understanding of and shared responsibility for implementation; a plan is in place and known to teachers.

Example educator comment (from focus group): "We made it a priority as a staff…When we started, the Essential Understandings were overwhelming…Eventually you learn from everyone else around you. We started small and then really built."

Figure 10 provides a basic measure of implementation: teachers' reports of the frequency with which they integrate lessons, materials, or standards about American Indian culture, history, and/or issues into their curriculum. Approximately one-third do these IEFA activities at least once annually, and one-third do so at least monthly.
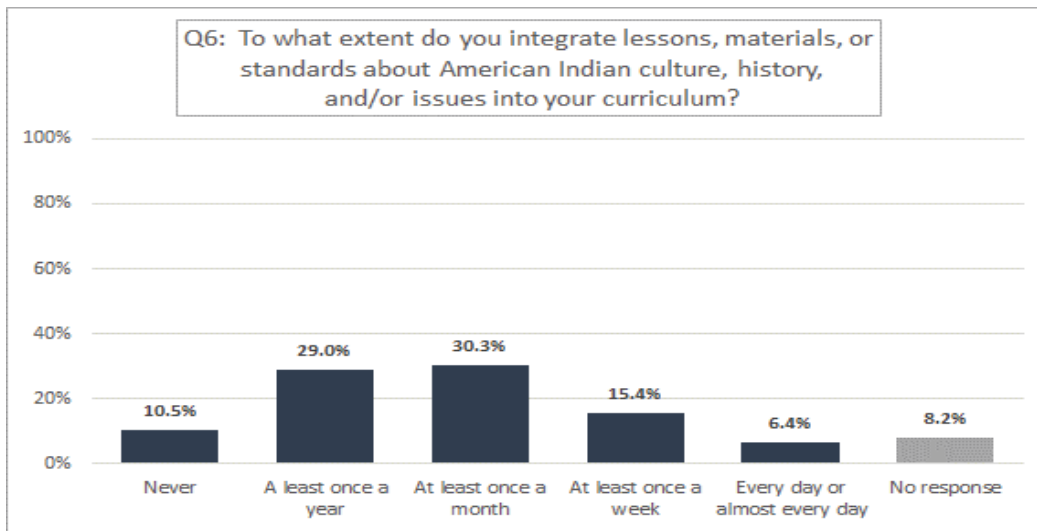

Figure 10. Educator survey – Frequency teachers integrate IEFA into curriculum

Phasing in implementation. Districts with higher implementation levels often phased in IEFA expectations and activities over time, which allowed their system and educators to build capacity for implementation. In one example, they simply began with a single event and then annually added activities: Year 1 - activities during Native American Heritage Day, Year 2 - three read-alouds using American Indian literature, Year 3 - two lessons per grade, Year 4 - a whole unit from the OPI website. As they phased in IEFA over four years, they built a program with multiple elements and were able to address concerns and needs as they arose. Some districts had pre-existing activities that supported IEFA implementation, such as Native American Studies Classes, Native Language classes, or Native American Club. A few districts reported adding similar classes and clubs more recently as part of their IEFA plan.

Reports from districts with higher levels of implementation suggest there is a trajectory of staff growth around IEFA, with staff needs changing over time. Early on, staff needs were related primarily to instruction in IEFA content, integrated instruction, and cultural awareness. As IEFA became embedded, two additional areas emerged: strengthening coverage of contemporary American Indian lives and issues, and building accountability and sustainability.

Implementation activities. Implementation activities occur at the district, school, and classroom levels. They range in complexity from short student assignments to large, multi-day events. In a few cases, implementation is managed almost entirely at the district level by embedding IEFA in certain required classes, such as Montana History, which ensures all students receive IEFA content at specific grade levels. However, in most locations, educators reported that implementation is focused at the school and/or classroom level.

Several schools organize IEFA activities building-wide by establishing annual themes, such as a focus on a certain tribe or element of American Indian history or culture. Others assign Montana tribes or reservations to different grade levels. School-wide implementation may also occur through assignments. For example, a school-wide prompt for a writing assessment had students write an imagined letter home from the vantage point of a Native child in a boarding school. Large events typically center on a specific theme, holiday, or local celebration. For example, students have honored American Indian veterans, participated in American Indian themed celebrations for their communities, attended culture camp, and attended assemblies with American Indian guests.

Classroom activities are generally determined by individual teachers or collaborative teams. Throughout this evaluation, educators provided examples of lessons and classroom activities they had developed for use in their schools or had accessed from the OPI website. Reports from staff members and from the librarians who manage IEFA materials suggest integration occurs most frequently in language arts. Integration occurs somewhat less frequently in social studies and science, and math poses the most challenges to authentic integration. Integration was also reported in other content areas, including but not limited to art, music, business and vocational classes. Regardless of overall implementation level, no school reported significant vertical and horizontal alignment in IEFA instruction and content.

While reports suggest IEFA is easily implemented in English language arts, teachers acknowledged struggling to teach certain American Indian stories. One person commented, "Some of the stories seem incomplete to teachers and students. They kind of leave kids hanging." Some noted that contemporary students often have trouble relating to stories from other times or other cultures, not just Native American stories, due to content and pacing. Others expressed concern about the level of tragedy in some stories for younger children, leading teachers to alter or just skip the story. One teacher said, "I ended up telling the story instead of reading it because I was losing the students."

Although a number of people reported challenges in integrating IEFA into science, it is important to note that some teachers have had considerable success in incorporating American Indian traditions, practices, and contemporary issues into science. This has been particularly effective in schools where science curricula have a strong outdoors component. One teacher said, for example, "We integrate [Indian] guests with outdoors education, go to the woods with experts in Native American tools and nets, talk about plants and early medicines who try to make it relevant to kids…Students have made basic tools, such as fish traps, and then this relates to lessons on fish dissection." Some teachers have connected the science of nature or the environment with Indian stories being taught in language arts.

Math continues to be a challenge for authentic integration. One person said, "It would be nice to move beyond using teepees for geometry and buffalo for counting. Some of that just seems to reinforce stereotypes." Math and elementary teachers are hoping OPI will create additional lessons that integrate math and IEFA.

Many teachers said they understand the intention behind cross-curricular integration but find it easier to implement stand-alone IEFA lessons within their content area. A comment submitted through the educator survey captured this position: "Though the intent of the IEFA law may be different, I

am increasingly convinced that meaningful IEFA instruction can and should occur in concentrated doses, such as required US History and literature courses, as well as appropriate electives, rather than in watered-down, special lessons in courses such as math, science, trades and industry, and health enhancement." Still, there are a number of districts and teachers who have made advances in integrating IEFA across curricula, and many people expressed interest in learning more about these efforts.

Figure 11 shows the frequency with which teachers in this sample of schools use common IEFA activities. In the results, fifty percent or more of teachers indicated they are not using these activities or using them only once a year. Most frequently, teachers have students read, write about, and discuss content pertaining to American Indians, and integrate this content with other curricula. Interestingly, student survey results were stronger: almost half of the respondents reported that teachers talk about content related to American Indian people living in Montana once or twice a month (see Figure 12). The reason for the discrepancy between teacher and student reports is unclear, but may reflect a bias in the student sample, with teachers invested in IEFA more likely to administer the student survey. Figures 13 through 16 show students' general reports of guests, field trips, and use of resources and library materials relevant to IEFA. More students (64.9%) reported using books, videos, websites, or other materials to learn about American Indian people than the other activities (35.1% to 49.1%).
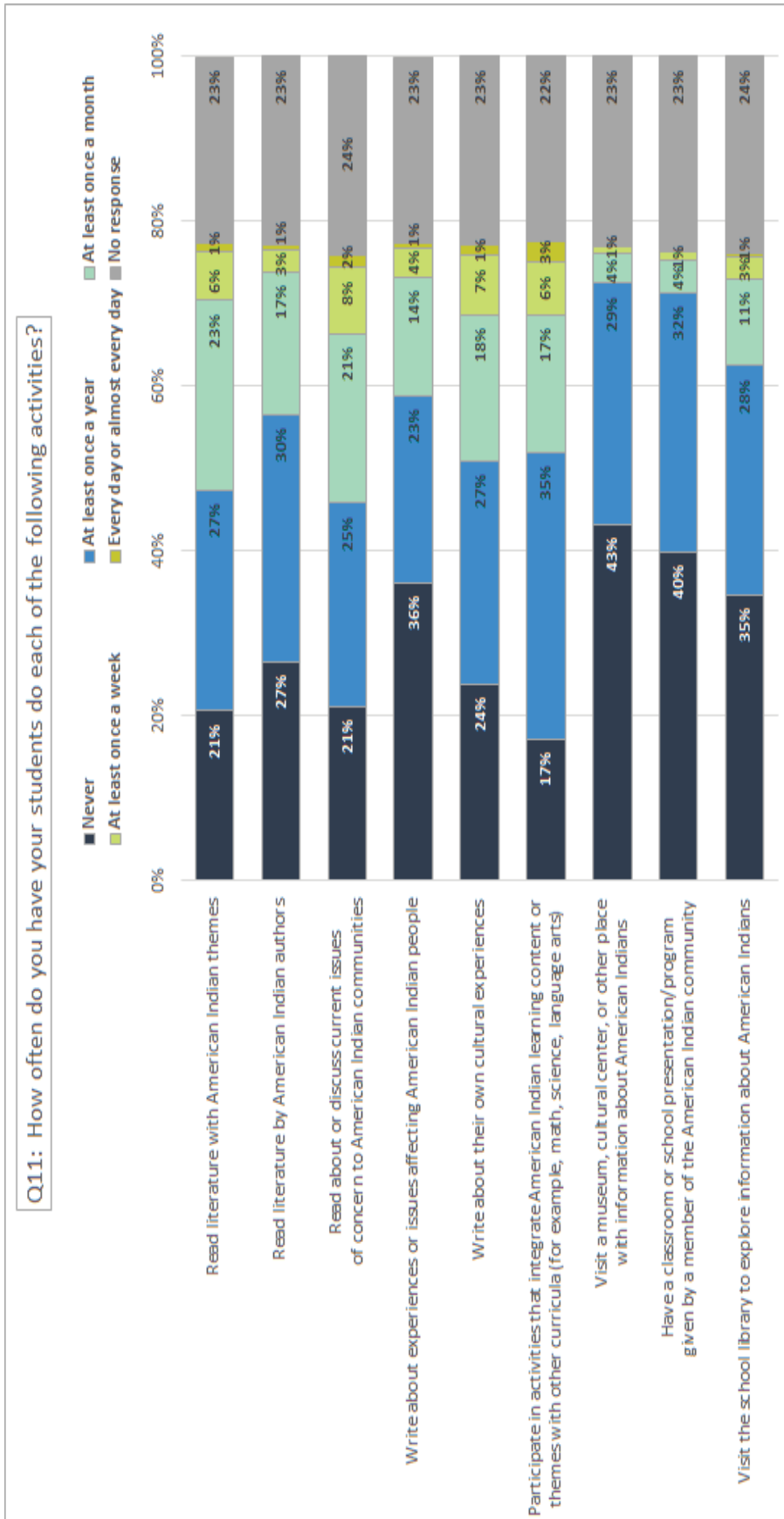
Q11: How often do you have your students do each of the following activities?

Legend:
- Never
- At least once a week
- At least once a year
- Every day or almost every day
- At least once a month
- No response

Activity	Never	At least once a week	At least once a year	Every day or almost every day	At least once a month	No response
Read literature with American Indian themes	21%	27%	23%	6%	1%	23%
Read literature by American Indian authors	27%	30%	17%	3%	1%	23%
Read about or discuss current issues of concern to American Indian communities	21%	25%	21%	8%	2%	24%
Write about experiences or issues affecting American Indian people	36%	23%	14%	4%	1%	23%
Write about their own cultural experiences	24%	27%	18%	7%	1%	23%
Participate in activities that integrate American Indian learning content or themes with other curricula (for example, math, science, language arts)	17%	35%	17%	6%	3%	22%
Visit a museum, cultural center, or other place with information about American Indians	43%	29%	4%	1%		23%
Have a classroom or school presentation/program given by a member of the American Indian community	40%	32%	4%	1%		23%
Visit the school library to explore information about American Indians	35%	28%	11%	3%	1%	24%

Figure 11. Educator survey – Frequency of activites

Q3: Thinking about last year and this year, how often do teachers talk about the history, traditions, and cultures of American Indian people living in Montana?

Figure 12. Student survey - Student preceptions of frequency of IEFA activites

Q5: Thinking about last year and this year, have any American Indian people come to your school to talk about their traditions and cultures (ways of life, customs)?

Figure 13. Student survey - Student report of American Indian guests at school

Q6: Thinking about last year and this year, have you attended school field trips to museums, traditional villages, or other places to learn about American Indian people?

Figure 14. Student survey - Student report of field trips with American Indian content

Q7: Thinking about last year and this year, have you used books, videos, websites, or other materials in your classroom to learn about American Indian people?

35.1%

64.9%

■ Yes   ■ No

Figure 15. Student survey - Student report of using materials with American Indian content

Q8: Have you ever used or checked out books, videos, or other materials about American Indian people from your school library?
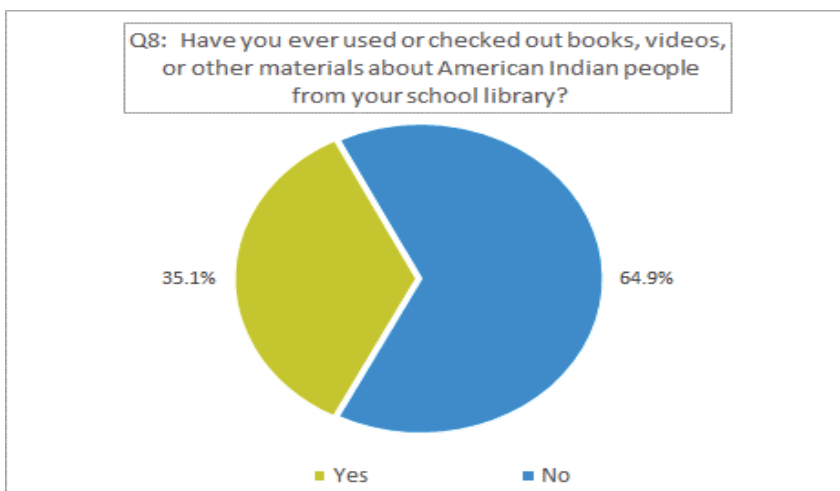
35.1%

64.9%

■ Yes   ■ No

Figure 16. Student survey – Student report of using library materials with American Indian Content

Factors in implementation. Staff members in districts that reported higher levels of IEFA implementation also tended to report strong administrative leaders that provided vision and instructional leadership. There is often a known general plan or model for continuous school improvement. They also tended to report other educational practices commonly associated with positive learning outcomes, including:

- Common vision
- Teacher leadership
- Instructional framework
- Teacher collaboration
- Shared professional development
- Cultural awareness
- High expectations of students

Integration of IEFA into other curricular areas appears to occur more readily where staff distinguish pedagogy from curriculum. Further, IEFA is not viewed as competing with other academic priorities, such as reading or math, but as a means of enhancing those areas. Teachers in schools with high implementation often reported being encouraged to take instructional risks and were supported in efforts to obtain additional grants and to establish outside partnerships. Many staff members underscored the importance of collaboration for preparing effective IEFA lessons and for working through uncomfortable or controversial content in the classroom. For some, IEFA also provides a framework for collaboration. A staff member commented, "IEFA helps our staff as we collaborate and make decisions daily about our curriculum. We intentionally make it part of our dialogue and are confident that any challenges we face are within our ability to meet. We support and encourage each other in our implementation of IEFA."

Finally, staff buy-in plays a large role in IEFA. In districts with high implementation, staff members frequently made statements reflecting a "moral imperative" for IEFA or a conviction that Montana's citizens need to understand American Indian history, culture, and issues.

LIBRARY ROLES IN IEFA

As the districts' main recipient of IEFA materials from OPI, libraries play an important role in IEFA. Libraries automatically receive these materials, and OPI publishes a list of the resources they have distributed. They also host a two-day conference for librarians, focused on developing IEFA expertise. It is the intention that all school libraries have a full set of materials for teachers and students, and that these resources are catalogued and readily accessible. Some teachers indicated they are very familiar with the IEFA resources in their library, including both the teacher and student resources. Others knew that IEFA materials were in the building but did not know where or what they were, and still others were unaware of the resources. In fact, during the evaluation, some interviewees expressed a need for certain materials that were, in fact, currently in their school library. Figure 17 shows educators' perceptions of the availability of IEFA materials in their school library.

Q4: To what extent are books and materials on American Indian subjects available in your school library?

- I don't know: 21.3%
- Not at all: 0.0%
- Small extent: 5.7%
- Moderate extent: 33.4%
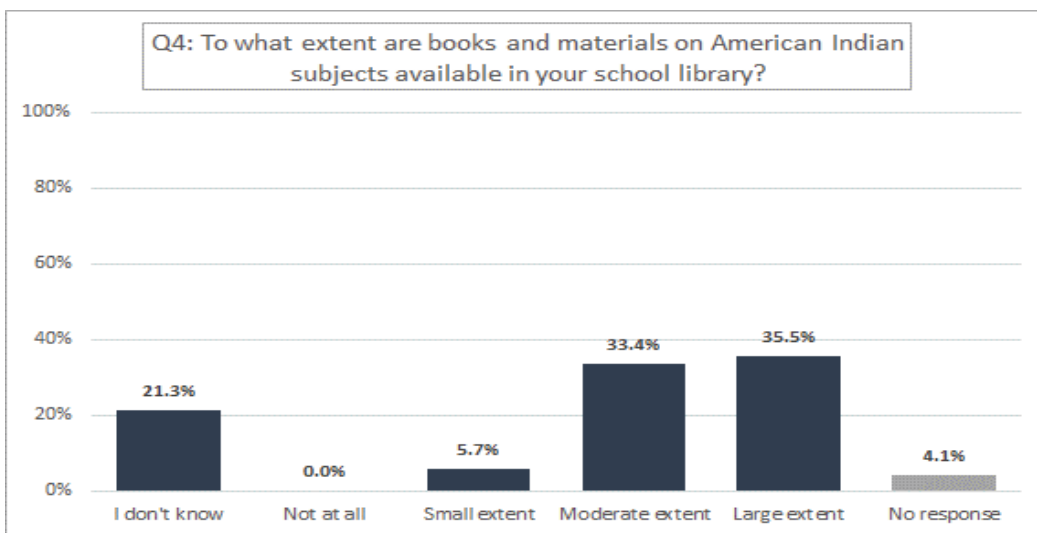- Large extent: 35.5%
- No response: 4.1%

Figure 17. Educator survey – Educator perceptions of availability of IEFA library materials

In some schools, collaboration on IEFA between the librarian and the staff is strong. Librarians distribute information about resources through emails or through presentations at staff meetings. They also create displays to build interest, sometimes inviting American Indian staff members or students' families

to contribute objects such as quilts or instruments. One staff member noted, "It makes the kids ask questions. It's one of the most effective things, and it's an example of a primary source." Librarians also consult with teachers on materials to accompany lessons and sometimes gather the materials necessary for a multi-step lessons to make them easier to use. A few librarians have established staff work groups to review materials for appropriateness.

However, this collaboration is not universal. Some librarians regularly distribute information about IEFA materials but receive little interest from teachers. Conversely, there are settings in which there is little initiative from library services. Several librarians reported that, when they first arrived in their current positions, IEFA materials were in storage, still in their original packages, or scattered throughout the building. One person observed, "In my visits to some schools, no one knows who the mail recipient is [for IEFA materials], where the materials are, how to check them out, or where and when to return them." The leader of a multi-school IEFA workshop encountered this in the field: "When I brought out boxes of IEFA units [in the workshop], I was stunned. So few teachers had ever seen them, and one person was tearful."

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATION: IEFA IN RESERVATION SCHOOLS

Early during the evaluation the following question arose: What is the nature of IEFA implementation in schools located on or very near Montana's reservations? Some of these schools have long-standing tribal culture and/or language programs that pre-date funded implementation of IEFA and have been providing education in cultural heritage and support for youth development on the reservation for quite some time. According to participants in the evaluation, these programs have historically focused primarily on the tribes and languages of the reservation.

During the evaluation, people involved with these schools as staff members or in advisory capacities provided their perspectives on IEFA in these reservation contexts. They noted that teachers may be interested in teaching about other tribes or reservations, but there is a commitment to ensuring students learn deeply about their own tribe and reservation as matter of cultural transmission and identity. Some teachers choose to cover other tribes and some do not.

Some locations have sought approaches that honor both the development of students' cultural identity and the requirements of IEFA. Two of the schools in this sample focus on students' own tribes and reservations during the first several years of their education, and then gradually incorporate other tribes and reservations over time. Staff members believe this provides an early foundation for identity and cultural heritage, while still allowing students to learn about other tribal cultures. It is important to note that this evaluation included only a sample of schools on or near Montana's reservations and it may benefit OPI to learn more about IEFA from other reservation and border schools.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATION: CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN INDIAN LIVES AND ISSUES

According to students and educators, most education on American Indians currently focuses on history, culture, and traditions, with considerably less coverage of contemporary experiences and issues. Children as young as fourth grade were aware of the distinction and wanted to know "how things are for Indians now." Even in districts with strong implementation, contemporary content was reported as notably less.

While there are likely multiple factors for this, three emerged in this evaluation. First, materials for historical and cultural traditions tend to be more easily accessible – both literally and figuratively.

Second, educators from non-Indian cultural backgrounds said it can feel "presumptuous" or "objectifying" to teach about the beliefs and ways of life of their contemporaries. Third, contemporary content includes current events and political issues, which can be controversial, and some evaluation participants believe it is not the role of schools to address political issues associated with IEFA. Many people in this evaluation acknowledged that IEFA content, both contemporary and historical, "can make people uncomfortable."

A small number of educators reported making forays into contemporary content. When asked about their approach, several commonalities emerged. Typically, they or the district have relationships with America Indian educators and community members "who can speak from experience and tackle contemporary issues." They also believe this collaboration is "part of the spirit of the law."

In addition, there were common approaches to dealing with controversial issues in the classroom. These teachers said they encourage students to understand that they can consider multiple sides of issues without abandoning their own beliefs. One teacher tells students, "We are not telling you what to think, but that there are different ways to think. Let's lay out the facts, and then you can choose." Another commented, "We are teaching them how to look at both sides of a story, even if they don't agree with one side, and that's critical thinking." These teachers also use primary sources and videos because: "Then it's not you [the teacher], but the Native voice directly, and that alleviates concerns about accurate and authentic representation."

Some districts view this as an area for capacity building, noting, "We are asking people to take a risk." Teachers said they need to learn how to answer students' difficult questions and how to keep the classroom safe if controversy arises, and many said they lack confidence in this area. A coach observed, "Reluctance is not the same thing as defiance or resistance. If you are a Caucasian person, you can be reluctant to teach something that is not your world, and you would want to do it correctly. Teachers have said over and over, I'm afraid I'm going to say the wrong thing." To address these concerns, districts have provided training in cultural awareness, and coaches directly support teachers in the classroom. Some districts intentionally focused first on developing cultural awareness, then moving on to IEFA implementation.

Evaluation Question 6: What strategies are OPI and participating districts using to determine IEFA outcomes?

There are two primary ways to consider impact associated with IEFA: the impact of the law on the education system in creating a program of instruction (implementation), and the impact of that instructional program on teachers and students (outcomes). Thus far, the focus of program monitoring and data collection has primarily been on the former.

As noted previously, there is latitude for districts, schools, and educators to customize IEFA implementation to their local education models and communities. Latitude of this type can result in rich and effective programming. It also presents a challenge for program-wide monitoring and evaluation: with programming different at each site, it is difficult to develop common measures and collect meaningful program-wide data. However, OPI has implemented strategies for monitoring certain aspects of IEFA implementation and has used the results for ongoing program development.

At the state level, OPI collects several different types of data. Since 2004, OPI has conducted an annual, state-wide survey that gathers implementation information about IEFA policies and plans, training activities, use of IEFA materials, and needs. This survey has been updated periodically in response to

the growth of IEFA over time, and several items from the survey are included in this report. Current OPI data collection also includes surveys at IEFA professional development sessions, trustee summaries, a librarian survey, and final grant reports from Regional Education Service Areas. Staff members reported using this data in an implementation feedback loop to adjust IEFA resources and priorities for growth, and a number of educators commented that OPI has been responsive to this feedback.

Interviewees reported that district implementation of IEFA is monitored in annual district reports to OPI through a dichotomous "check box," indicating whether IEFA implementation occurred. It was also noted that the lack of specificity in this measure and the absence of verification render this data "meaningless." Several district and school administrators reported gathering anecdotal feedback about implementation and impact, and a very few monitor implementation through documentation (e.g., teacher lesson plans). In general, there appears to be minimal local monitoring of IEFA implementation. In most cases, this was reportedly due to a lack of capacity, such as insufficient time and knowledge, to develop and implement monitoring.

When asked about monitoring IEFA student and teacher outcomes, most evaluation participants said they would be difficult to measure, given that target outcomes have not been defined. While some supported the use of IEFA outcomes measures, others were concerned they would refocus instruction on basic content rather than more meaningful integration and concepts. At least one participating district reported intentions to develop impact measures for IEFA, and some reported that IEFA content will soon appear on the Smarter Balanced assessment, providing student outcomes data. On the educator survey, the majority of respondents indicated they did not know if their school uses impact measures for IEFA (see Figure 18).
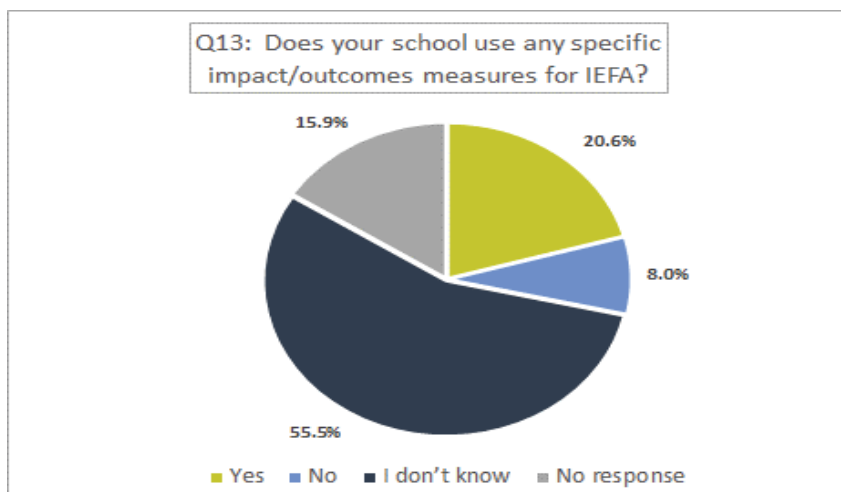

Figure 18. Educator survey – knowledge of impact/outcomes measures

Evaluation Question 7: What is the impact of IEFA on OPI, districts, schools, teachers, students, and school communities?

The work of IEFA has impact well beyond Montana's education system and has moved OPI into a leadership position in Indian Education. Within the state, OPI IEFA staff have responded to requests for presentations to improve understanding and cultural sensitivity for other professional communities, including bus drivers, state troopers, and career training programs. Montana's innovation and leadership is also evidenced by interest from other states seeking to implement similar initiatives modeled on

IEFA and by contacts outside the United States, as with the Aboriginal Studies Department of Australia's Murdoch University.

At the school and district levels, reports suggest both positive and negative impacts. Districts and schools with higher implementation levels reported significant benefits to general instruction and cultural awareness. Commenting on the benefits to instructional practices, one person said, "The [IEFA] units are based on sound pedagogy and detail how to use it. These practices are transferrable, so IEFA can actually teach teachers how to teach." Another said, "You can teach everything in the Common Core through IEFA alone."

For some school and districts, IEFA has provided a vehicle for building cultural awareness. One educator said, "When we started to put lessons together, we really hit a brick wall, wondering, why are we doing this just for Indian education? We stepped back to develop cultural proficiency, to make sure everyone has a cultural lens, [both] teachers and students, and started there." They then returned to lesson development and were able to infuse cultural awareness into IEFA and other academic lessons. Personnel from another district described a similar process and believe IEFA would not have been possible without first considering students' and teachers' cultural foundations, regardless of cultural origins.

People described these effects of IEFA on educators and students saying, "It has increased respect for diversity," "People are more careful with their language," and "People make less assumptions and fewer generalizations." One teacher observed, "The staff seems more willing to explore issues of cultural responsiveness." Still another said, "I, personally, have learned so much about my students' cultures, issues, and histories." Several educators also shared stories of shifts in their own attitudes, as IEFA challenged them personally. One commented, "IEFA made me want to know more about my own origins and how I thought about these things. I had to admit that I had stereotypes and uncertainty."

Another positive IEFA impact frequently reported in focus groups and interviews were the effects of IEFA funding, which has provided training, opportunities for collaboration, support for lesson development, and opportunities to interact with the American Indian community through guests and field trips. The staff survey showed considerably less certainty about the degree to which IEFA funding has influenced implementation (see Figure 19).
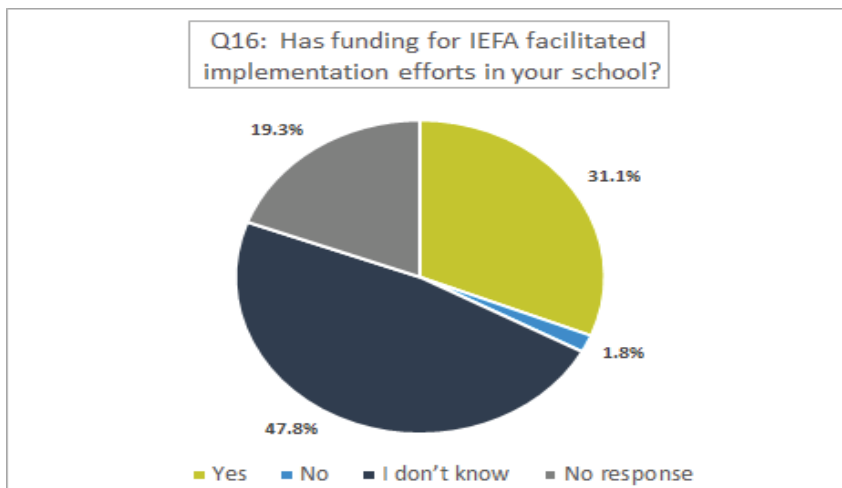

Q16: Has funding for IEFA facilitated implementation efforts in your school?

19.3%

31.1%

1.8%

47.8%

■ Yes ■ No ■ I don't know ■ No response

Figure 19. Educator survey – Perceptions of funding impact on school

Reports of negative impact on schools focused primarily on the stress of IEFA. This was reflected in comments such as, "It seems to be a burden and very forced in my department." Another person observed, "I think staff are very hesitant to utilize the program, especially because there is no accountability for them to do it. [Administration] doesn't seem to care. The main focus is test scores and achievement. If we deviate from the curriculum [to incorporate IEFA], it feels like we are not doing what is required." These issues appear to be amplified when educators do not believe there is a need for instruction focused on American Indian content and issues. Reflecting on IEFA in the context of district achievement goals one person asked, "What does this have to do with college and career ready?" While less evident in focus groups and interviews, open-ended comments on the educator survey indicate that there is not universal support for IEFA.

Teachers reported that some students are very interested in IEFA content while others are not. According to one person, "Impact [on students] runs the spectrum, from yeah, yeah what does it have to do with us, to kids who are empathetic and interested in differences." This range was evident on student surveys (see Figure 20). Comments on the surveys indicated some students welcome IEFA instruction and feel they benefit from it, whereas others objected to the focus on American Indians, saying they were not interested in the material or were confused by the emphasis. Regardless of interest, between 40% and 59% of students reported "some" or "a lot" of knowledge of American Indian history, traditions, and issues (see Figure 21) and most frequently cited school as the source of their knowledge about American Indians (see Figure 22). Finally, one person's comment suggests IEFA impact may be deferred: "As these kids grow up and become leaders, they will have different knowledge and perspectives to work from. I think the true impact is in the future."
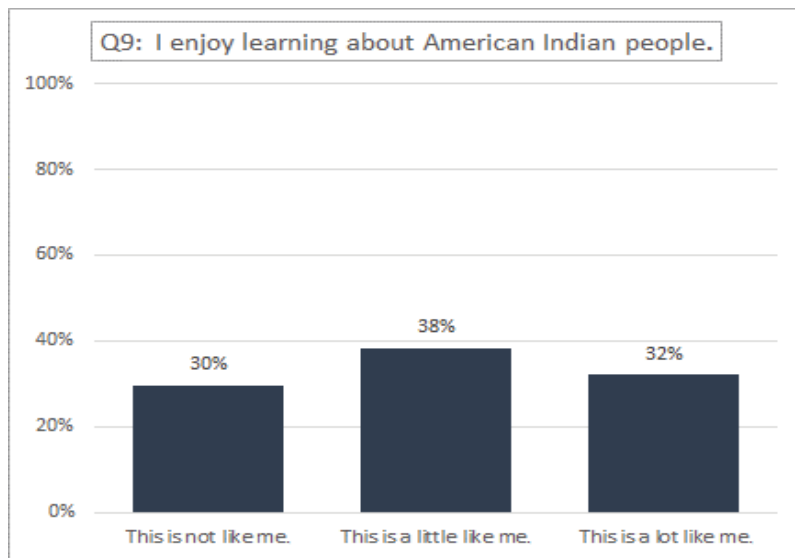

Figure 20. Student survey – Student affinity for learning about American Indians
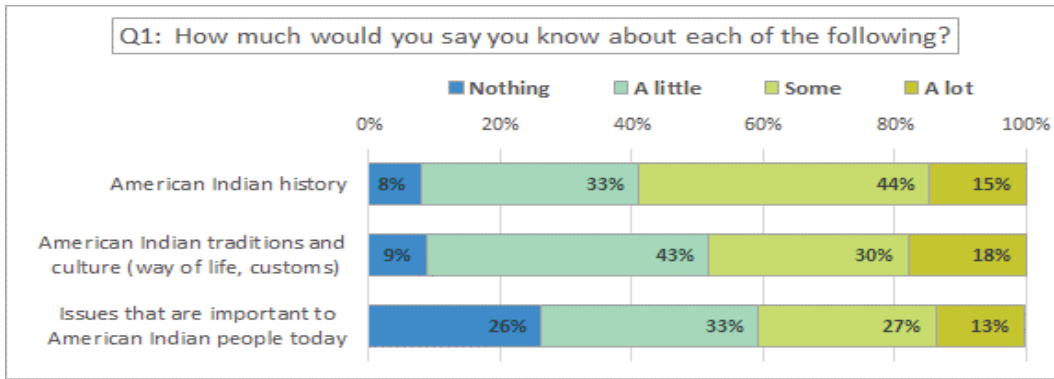
Q1: How much would you say you know about each of the following?

■ Nothing ■ A little ■ Some ■ A lot

	Nothing	A little	Some	A lot
American Indian history	8%	33%	44%	15%
American Indian traditions and culture (way of life, customs)	9%	43%	30%	18%
Issues that are important to American Indian people today	26%	33%	27%	13%

Figure 21. Student survey – Student self-reported knowledge levels

Q2: If you know some things about American Indians history, culture, and issues, where have you learned them?
You can choose more than one answer.

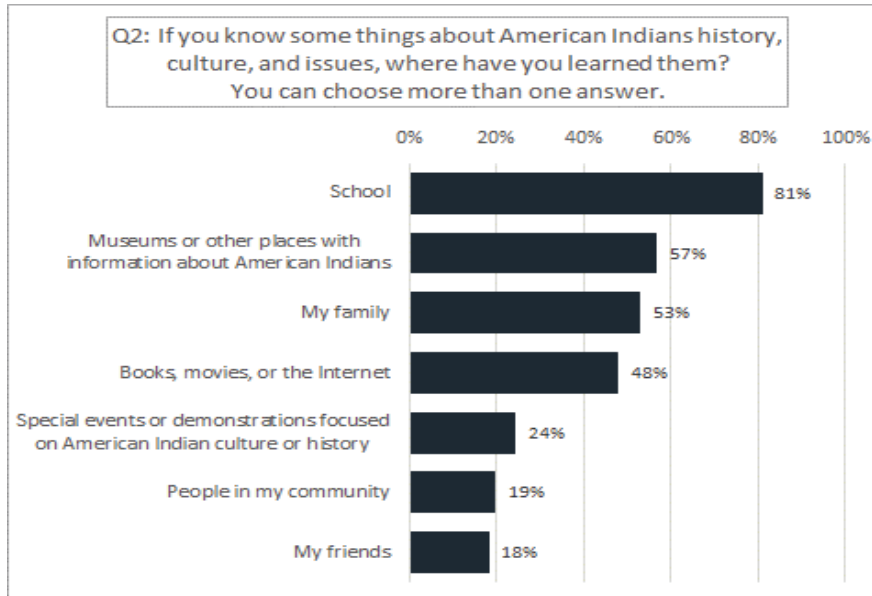|	
School	81%
Museums or other places with information about American Indians	57%
My family	53%
Books, movies, or the Internet	48%
Special events or demonstrations focused on American Indian culture or history	24%
People in my community	19%
My friends	18%

Figure 22. Student survey – Sources of knowledge pertaining to American Indian history, culture, and issues

Evaluation Question 8: What contextual factors influence the implementation and impact of IEFA?

A number of contextual factors influence the implementation and impact of IEFA. Contextual factors can support or challenge initiatives. Consequently, they can sometimes be leveraged or minimized to enhance outcomes.

Engagement of American Indian communities in IEFA and in education. Many people praised OPI for their direct engagement with American Indian communities in developing and implementing IEFA. There were suggestions that more efforts need to be made systemically and in regional and local areas to increase leadership and presence of the Native community in education. One person said, "We keep ignoring that they are not at the table." Educators reported different levels of interest among tribes in engaging with schools and wondered how to build those relationships.

Characteristics of Montana's education system. Many people pointed to local control as a key factor in whether IEFA is implemented, since districts have considerable autonomy. The majority of Montana's schools are small. In some, administrators have multiple roles or lead teachers in charge of

administration. Where there are few staff members in a school, teachers reported feeling stretched by multiple roles and the need to manage OPI requirements, leaving little time to address IEFA. One said, "When you teach five grades and everything in all of those grades, it's cumbersome. You don't just throw those [IEFA]lessons in…" With few staff members, it can also be difficult for educators to leave the building for training or field trips.

Competing mandates and initiatives. Like school systems across the nation, Montana is balancing a number of initiatives for improving student outcomes. An interviewee said, "The number one complaint I hear is 'I don't have enough time, Common Core is so rigorous, assessments are looming.'" Another noted the effects of the focus on math and reading: "People who have done wonderful units over the years don't do them anymore. They get frantic because reading scores are low." For schools in improvement, this may be particularly true. As noted by one observer, "IEFA units end up being problematic in districts where schools have been targeted for improvement because of program mandates, like Houghton Mifflin. You can't deviate from it, and therefore you can't meet the demands for IEFA fidelity and Houghton Mifflin simultaneously." Staff members also reported challenges in integrating IEFA with the Response to Intervention mandates of uninterrupted instruction.

Staff turnover. Some districts reported high levels of administrator and teacher turnover. In districts where IEFA is led by individuals rather than embedded in the system, turnover can significantly affect engagement with IEFA and create repetitive needs for basic staff training.

Budgets and fiscal resources. Districts and education service providers reported reduced funding from OPI for IEFA, and most sites have decreased professional development and collaboration time as a result. Some districts have sought grants to augment IEFA training and to obtain training in cultural awareness, in particular, and individual teachers have also obtained grants for projects related to IEFA. According to one interviewee, "With decreased [IEFA] funding, there is not money for subs or travel for PD [professional development], and other funds are already prioritized for PD in reading and math." Another commented, "We have maxed out our resources. I've definitely seen a loss of implementation in [the region] with the reduced funding."

Geographical location. Montana has many rural schools. Those that are geographically isolated have fewer local resources for teachers and students, and travel for field trips and professional development can be prohibitive. Schools located on or near reservations have the benefit of easier access to tribal culture committees, education leaders, and resources such as cultural centers. It is also possible to build relationships with representatives of the tribal communities. On the other hand, several urban educators suggested that teaching controversial topics may be easier in districts distant from reservations, as compared to border areas where there can be more tension between Indian and non-Indian communities. Districts in communities with colleges and universities have access to the resources they provide, such as classes, events for students, collaborations with different departments, and libraries.

Pre-service teacher training. Teacher training programs have introduced IEFA into their curricula and have implemented or increased multicultural course requirements. According to an interviewee at one Montana university, "All pre-service teachers, whether they're in ag [agricultural] ed, elementary ed, special ed, now have to take a multi-cultural course, and IEFA is the signature assignment, the main component." Recent graduates of teacher training programs have the benefit of this preparation. One first- year teacher said, "I got a lot of experience with IEFA from my college classes, and that has been very helpful."

Higher education in Montana. While this evaluation focuses on K-12, the Montana University system has an academic plan that incorporates IEFA. In addition, for several years OPI IEFA resources were allocated

to higher education for training in teacher education programs and for training of college and university faculty in other departments. This has fostered K-20 awareness of IEFA. At the same time, several participants noted that, while IEFA legislation is intended to include post-secondary education, there has been little follow up on implementation or accountability at that level.

Synthesis of Findings

The purpose of this evaluation was to review the implementation and impact of Indian Education for All, particularly OPI's efforts in providing resources to support instruction about Montana Indians and the extent of IEFA implementation by districts. District participation in this evaluation was voluntary, which introduces a bias into the results and affects interpretation. Thus, the results cannot be considered statistically representative of all Montana districts and should be interpreted with caution. At the same time, the evaluation obtained information from districts representing a full range of implementation and buy-in. Thus, while not statistically generalizable, the results do provide considerable insight into the various levels of implementation and impact of IEFA.

OPI EFFORTS TO PROVIDE RESOURCES TO SUPPORT INSTRUCTION ABOUT MONTANA INDIANS

The efforts of OPI to translate state law into education practice began prior to funding appropriations and have continued since that time. Over the last decade, OPI has developed a multi-faceted program and support system for implementation of IEFA. This includes Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians, a framework to guide implementation of IEFA, many instructional resources in multiple formats, professional development and differentiated district support, funding allocations and district grants, ongoing IEFA program and policy development, and a network of partners.

The process has characterized as intentional, inclusive, and well-informed. It has also adapted to changes in funding and been responsive to state educational directions, as evidenced by IEFA incorporation of Common Core Standards. There is much praise for the depth and breadth of the support and resources provided by OPI for IEFA implementation. These efforts have garnered attention both nationally and internationally, and other states are looking to Montana for leadership and guidance. The results of the evaluation indicate that OPI, through these comprehensive efforts and measures, has made it possible for districts to implement IEFA.

EXTENT OF IEFA IMPLEMENTATION BY DISTRICTS

Given the resources, support, and programming for IEFA provided by OPI, variations in district implementation must be attributed to district variables: while all districts participating in this evaluation have equal access to OPI's comprehensive IEFA support, implementation levels ranged from low to high.

Evidence of IEFA success is apparent in districts where IEFA has become part of the culture and integrated into efforts to maximize student achievement. In the current sample, districts with high implementation typically phased in IEFA over several years. They also reported practices associated with strong educational outcomes, which likely created a fertile environment for IEFA, and staff buy-in for the intention of the law. A focus on building cultural understanding for students and teachers of all cultural backgrounds was also reported. Districts with low implementation appeared to be influenced by a range of factors both within and beyond district control. Defined IEFA implementation criteria and accountability measures are not essential to implementation in all schools, but their absence may prevent IEFA from being a priority in individual districts.

Recommendations

There are many directions OPI could take at this time to in response to input from educators and stakeholders. While the evaluation identified a number of these adjustments, the recommendations presented below are focused on more substantive, initiative-levels concerns. It is noteworthy that several suggest staying the course, another indication of the effectiveness of OPI efforts to date.

Determine the full intent of the mandate. Thus far, implementation of IEFA has been very strong in some locations and very minimal in others. These variations are determined largely by local priorities, interests, and resources. In the absence of accountability for IEFA, this variation will very likely continue. Further, implementation will likely wax and wane in response to other variables, such as changes in leadership, funding, and competing priorities. It will be important for OPI and the state to weigh the intentions of the mandate with other systems values, such as local control, and determine whether to maintain the current approach or to introduce meaningful accountability. If accountability is introduced, it will be very important to clearly define the requirements, identify who is responsible for oversight of that accountability, and whether there are consequences for not meeting the requirement. These decisions will depend on the intentions of IEFA and on resources for instituting accountability measures.

Continue to share effective practices. Across the state, IEFA has resulted in much experimentation, innovation, and careful risk-taking. There is likely a wealth of lessons and materials still to be shared. There is also much to be learned from the other important aspects of IEFA, such as the ways effective partnerships develop among disparate groups for the key purpose of communicating culture and educating Montana's citizens. While some mechanisms are in place for exchanging experiences and practices, such as the IEFA Best Practices Conference, educators are asking for additional opportunities to learn about approaches in other districts. It may be useful to identify the areas of greatest interest for exchange and the best platform for sharing. Areas that emerged during this evaluation included IEFA implementation plans, approaches to building cultural understanding, strategies for integrating IEFA into math and science, and ways to partner with tribes around education.

Continue to differentiate support. At this point in time, district implementation levels cover the entire range of the continuum. Districts with low implementation will continue to need support for building a foundation and for the early stages of classroom integration. Districts with moderate to high implementation are currently addressing different areas, primarily authentic instructional integration, infusion of contemporary issues, and IEFA sustainability. It may be beneficial to revisit strategies for support and increase the focus on these emerging areas, if this has not already been done.

Continue to build cultural understanding. As noted by several participants, IEFA content can feel risky to teachers, students, and communities, and this can limit authentic instruction and conversations about difficult issues. Cultural leaders, OPI IEFA staff, and their partners have been instrumental in working with educators and communities to create spaces for difficult conversations and to help teachers build confidence in the classroom. These efforts should continue. Further, it may be beneficial – and appropriate to the stage of development of IEFA – to increase intentions and expectations around these issues. There is much expertise to draw from within the American Indian community, within Montana's academic community, and within the citizenry to support these efforts. Further, districts that have made progress in this area may be ideal mentors to other districts.

Determine whether program monitoring is needed. It may be useful to implement some form of program monitoring that more accurately documents implementation and is also easy to use, such as a well-developed rubric. This will depend on OPI needs and on the reality of requesting the information from districts. However, there are benefits to documenting implementation, such as correlating it with other variables to understand patterns of implementation and to identify factors associated with high and low implementation and impact.

Appendix

The following graphs provide demographic data for the educator survey (see Figures 23 through 26) and very basic demographic date for the student survey (see Figures 27 and 28). Respondents to the educator survey had been employed in the field of education for an average of 15.68 years (minimum = 1, maximum = 47) and in the Montana education system for an average of 13.45 years (minimum = 1, maximum = 45).
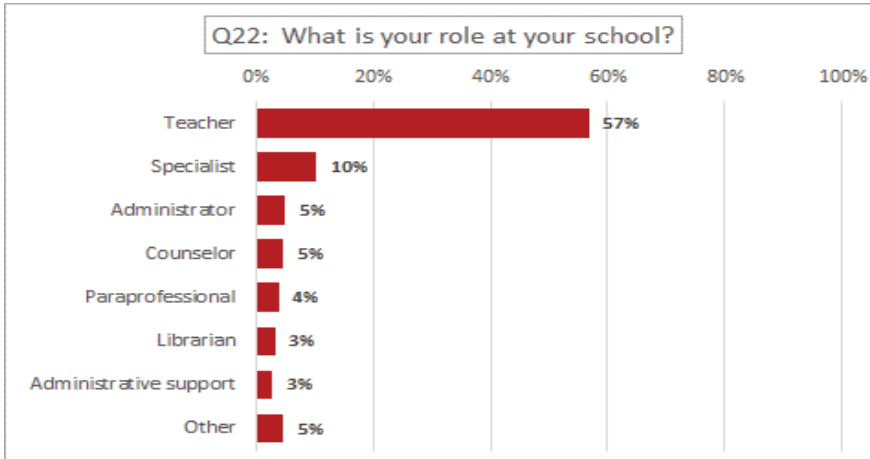

Q22: What is your role at your school?

Role	Percentage
Teacher	57%
Specialist	10%
Administrator	5%
Counselor	5%
Paraprofessional	4%
Librarian	3%
Administrative support	3%
Other	5%

Figure 23. Educator survey – Respondent role in school

Q24: If you are involved in classroom instruction, what subject(s) are you teaching this year?

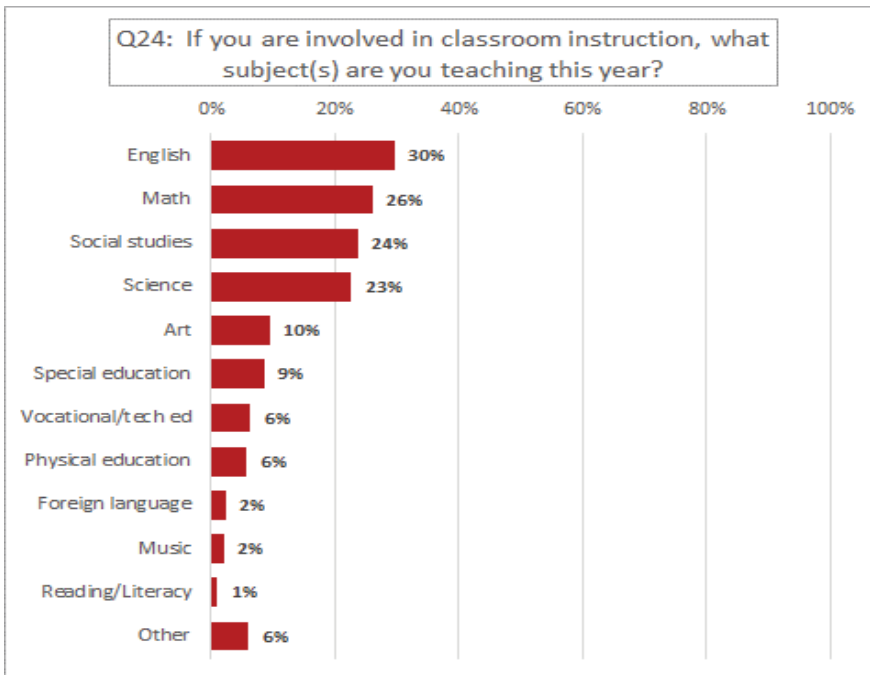| Subject	Percentage
English	30%
Math	26%
Social studies	24%
Science	23%
Art	10%
Special education	9%
Vocational/tech ed	6%
Physical education	6%
Foreign language	2%
Music	2%
Reading/Literacy	1%
Other	6%

Figure 24. Educator survey – Respondent instructional area(s)
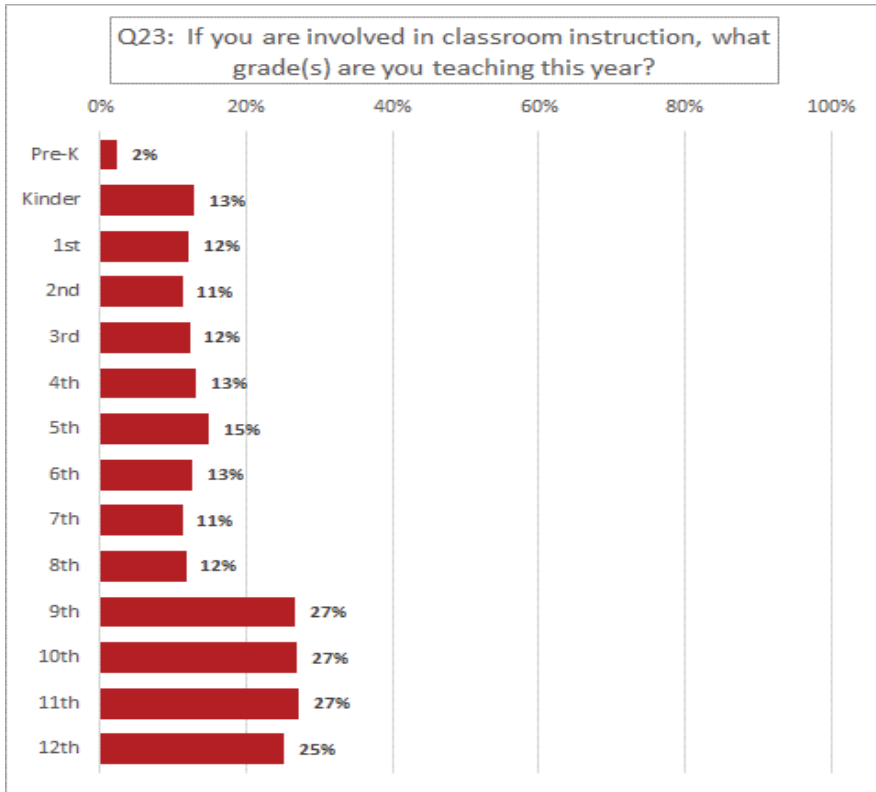
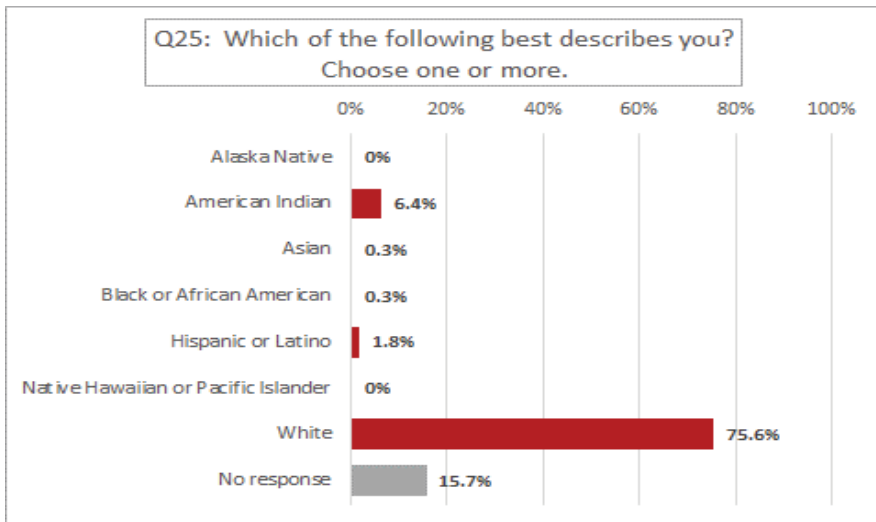*Figure 25. Educator survey – Respondent instructional grade level(s)*

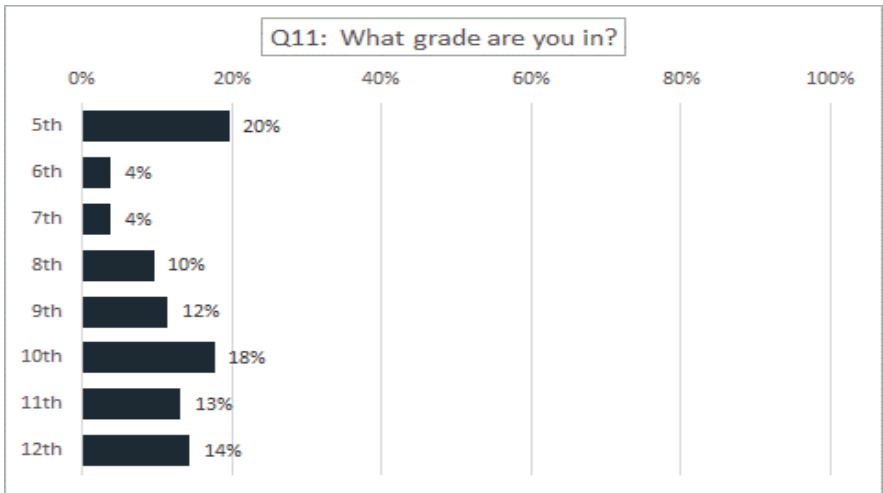*Figure 26. Educator survey – Respondent ethnic/racial identity*

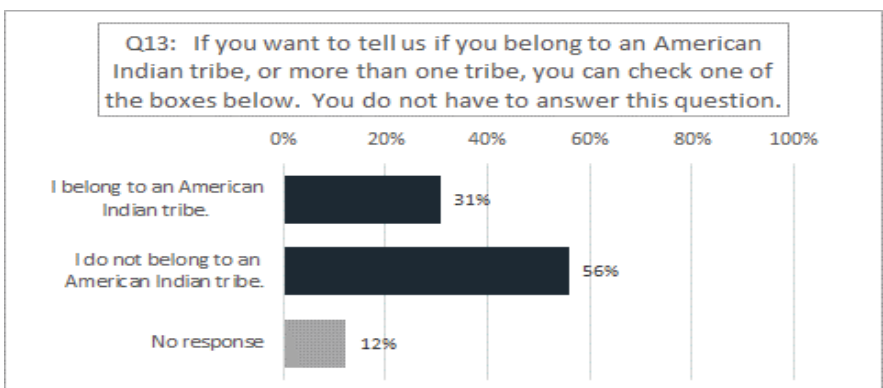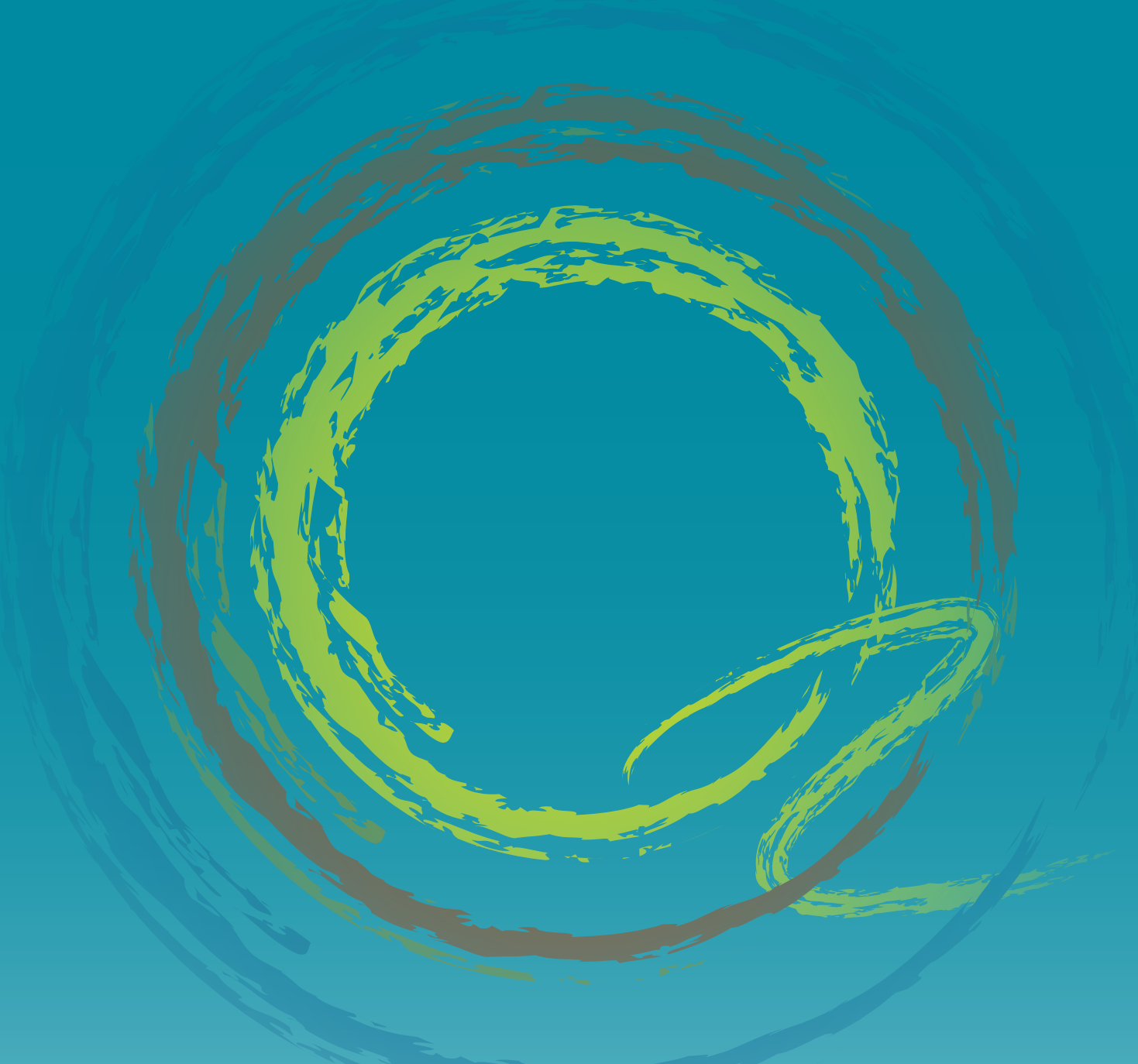*Figure 27. Student survey – Respondent grade level*

Figure 28. Student survey – Respondent tribal affiliation

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INDIAN EDUCATION FOR ALL

Montana Office of Public Instruction