



Highlighted Project *Oklahoma*

Oklahoma Native Language Certification Committee

Native American languages are disappearing from Oklahoma. Recognizing the need to support Oklahoma Tribes in the language revitalization effort, the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) established the Native American Language (NAL) Certification Modification Committee. The Committee brings together partnerships between OSDE, tribal education departments, local school districts, higher education, state stakeholders, educators, parents, administrators, tribal representatives, as well as the American Indian Institute and the South Central Comprehensive Center (SC3) at the University of Oklahoma. SC3 is currently assisting the Committee in developing competencies to certify NAL instructors in Oklahoma public schools, facilitating meetings, and providing targeted technical assistance (TA). SC3 supports OSDE in developing a professional development framework to allow NAL instructors who are not traditionally certified to obtain certification through a modified process. SC3 staff members on this Committee include the Director, Associate Director/Oklahoma TA Coordinator, TA Manager, English Language Learner and Migrant Education TA Coordinator, Literacy TA Coordinator, and Indian Education TA Coordinator.

OSDE Director of World Languages Desa Dawson who leads the Committee said, "...we must not lose the languages of the various tribes we have in Oklahoma. The revitalization effort is a worthy objective because we are a unique state with a unique heritage. I applaud the tribes' endeavors to revive and reinvigorate language and culture." As a result of the Committee's hard work, Oklahoma adopted a change in the administrative code in June 2013 that allowed an alternative route to certification. The alternative pathway will offer fluent speakers of native languages including tribal elders (who had faced barriers to be certified) a pathway to certification. OSDE is working with SC3 to offer 60 hours of professional development to support NAL instructors after initial certification to be effective in public school classrooms. Committee members are in the process of finalizing a survey to tribal language programs and districts desiring to implement NAL courses to determine the needs and competencies of NAL instructors.

The intermediate-term goal will be an increased number of qualified instructors with knowledge of languages and culture in Oklahoma classrooms to teach all students. The long-term goal is that more students will fulfill world language requirements for graduation by learning Native languages, thus contributing to language and cultural revitalization.

Dawson said, "...language is a key element in a culture's very existence. I would argue that the most important ingredient in expressing a culture's perspective on the world is often understood through its language."

For more information, visit the South Central Comprehensive Center website to watch a video on this project at www.sc3ta.org.



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