



# **Listening Circles Tell Stories of Our Native Youth in New Mexico:**

## **THE NATIVE STUDENT LISTENING PROJECT**

**JUNE 2017**

**PREPARED FOR**

*The New Mexico Public Education Department*

*Indian Education Division*

**PREPARED BY**

*The University of New Mexico Center for Education Policy Research*

*and*

*College of Education Teacher Education, Educational Leadership, and Policy Department*



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## INTRODUCTION

In early 2017, the Indian Education Division (IED) of the New Mexico Public Education Department issued a notice of a project related to Native student listening. The IED focus of the project centered on improving academic outcomes for Native American students in the state. The Division's direction on the project was based on five priority areas the IED with various tribal authorities has identified as critical to improving future academic outcomes for Native youth. These five areas include:

- Attendance and truancy
- Cultural competency training and culturally responsive learning environments
- College and career readiness
- Supporting Native language programs and English learners; and
- School system alignment between PED/Bureau of Indian Education/Tribally controlled schools

To conduct this work, the IED Indian contracted with the Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR) at the University of New Mexico. The Center proposed an approach that included the use of a brief survey questionnaire that queried students on their perceptions related to statements on the five areas. A second component, included the use of an instrument that was used to provide a pre/post measurement of listening behaviors students exhibited before and after they 1) received training in active or effective listening, and 2) participation in a listening circle with their peers. These listening circles comprised the third component of the project. CEPR project team members have collected data from these three components, analyzed, and synthesized it as the core of this report.

The project began with an exploratory literature review and later with outreach to the Native student education coordinators from each of the twenty-three Native serving districts in the state as well as the education contacts from the twenty-three tribes in New Mexico. The CEPR research team invited all coordinators to attend one of two workshops held in Albuquerque and Farmington during the last week of March.

The project team used the workshops to: describe the project focus; provide contextual framing in relation to Native student academic performance in the United States and New Mexico; offer a grounding in active or effective listening theory and practice; address any issues or question the coordinators had; review the various draft project documents to solicit participant input; and to have participants practice engaging each other in simulated listening circles. The research team used the IED's Five Aims as the organizing framework for construction of all materials related to the project.

Because the contract was not fully executed until March, the project operated on a tight time schedule. Due to the time constraint, the CEPR team believed that it was not feasible to submit and receive approval of the project through UNM's Office of Institutional Review Board and complete the project by the IED's requested end date of June 23. Hence, the project principal investigator sought and received concurrence from the OIRB to proceed with the project, with the stipulation that district and school level personnel would conduct the outreach to and recruitment of students as well as the operation of the listening circles. The critical issue at play was the use of students who are considered a vulnerable and protected group of human subjects and under the purview of the OIRB. Typically, UNM researchers are required to secure approval before the conduct of such work. The project PI talked with OIRB staff and explained district personnel would recruit the students, administer the questionnaires, and the conduct of the listening circles. After hearing this explanation, the OIRB cleared the project team to coordinate activities as well as the analyses and reporting of the collected data with the stipulation that any attribution of quotes would be on an anonymous basis and that quantitative data would be reported in aggregate form. The project team has conformed to these stipulations in the preparation and reporting of the findings.

Consequently, the team had to rely on district and school level personnel to: familiarize themselves with project protocols and operation of the audio recorders; recruit students; distribute and collect parent/

guardian release forms; distribute and collect the questionnaires; conduct pre-listening circle sessions to explain the practice of active or effective listening; conduct and audio record listening circles; transfer audio files via the secure WinScp platform established for this project; and return project materials to CEPR. Please refer to Appendix 1 for copies of all guidance documents.

This report provides: a review of pertinent statistics on Native student education to provide context for the project; a brief literature review; a discussion of the methodology; summary findings of the qualitative and quantitative data; recommendations; and concluding remarks. In conformance with the direction the IED provided, the research team focused on listening to Native students by allowing them to voice their perspectives on issues of central importance to their education.

## **THE STATE OF NATIVE YOUTH NATIONALLY**

According to the 2010 Census, there are approximately 5.2 million self-identified American Indian/Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) living in the US, of whom 2 million qualify for federal services. There are currently over 2.1 million American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) under the age of 24 living in the United States. During the 2010-11 school year, there were 378,000 AI/AN (alone) students in public schools, while 49,152 students attended Bureau of Indian Education Schools. The national graduation rate for AI/AN high school students hovers around 50% in comparison to over 75% for white students. Only 13.3% of AI/ANs have obtained undergraduate degrees, versus 24.4% of the general population (CNAY, 2014). These facts and statistics are important to consider as we move through the research to understand the national statistics and how Native American students compare in the State of New Mexico.

## **THE STATE OF NATIVE YOUTH IN NEW MEXICO**

The status of Native youth in New Mexico including attendance and truancy rates, four and five year graduation rates, reading proficiency rates and participation in Bilingual Multicultural Education Programs. Native American students account for 10 percent (35,467) of the total population attending New Mexico public schools. The four year graduation rate for American Indians is at 61.7% and the five year graduation rate is at 62.9%. The attendance rate for Native American students in 2013-2014 was at 92.5%, in 2014-2015 was at 92.3% and in 2015-2016 was at 92.8%. It is important to note there wasn't a significant change over the course of those three years. The statewide habitually truant rate was at 18.61% and for the American Indian population was at 8.1%. Of the total number of students who participate in Bilingual Multicultural Education Programs (BMEPs) they comprised 16 percent of the total student population who participate in these programs statewide.

Out of the 23 school districts designated with high Native American student populations, 16 of these school districts provided a Native American BMEP. Yet, the reading proficiency rates for Native Americans was at 13% (23% for all students) in the seventh grade, 17% (26% for all students) in the eighth grade, 18% (27% for all students) in ninth grade, 21% (32% for all students) in the tenth grade, and 30% (45% for all students) in the eleventh grade. This is important to consider when we discuss this research study and why there is a need to hear directly from the Native American students within the twenty-three school districts their insights in the five areas of emphasis (Tribal Education Status Report, 2016).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In the literature review section, it is important to consider the research that touches on most of the five areas that were listed earlier and were emphasized in the study. The sections of the literature review that will address these five areas discuss the values and cultural norms of Native American students, academic persistence, and Native student empowerment. The last section of the literature review integrates the literature that was used to guide the approaches within this study on active listening and communication.



## Values and Cultural Norms of Native American Students

These findings have allowed practitioners to understand the unique values and cultures that Native American students bring with them to school/campus (Belgarde, 1992; Larimore & McClellan, 2005; Lin, LaCounte, & Eder, 1988). Native American culture and values sharply contrast with those of the mainstream culture; in Native culture there is an emphasis on the group more than on the individual. Many of the Native students attending various types of schools are raised in homes where the values of sharing, generosity, and cooperation are taught (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997). Consequently, the definitions for success and achievement differ for Native Americans who are not raised with the individualistic perspective of mainstream culture. This automatically creates a cultural conflict between the student and the school/institution (Lin et al., 1988; Pottinger, 1989; Scott, 1986). For many Native students, the motivation to complete a high school diploma or obtaining an academic degree is based on and reflects the cultural values of the sharing of knowledge, collaboration, and giving back to the community (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008).

The role and impact that Native and non-Native faculty and staff have on the academic and social integration for Native students is likely underestimated (Belgarde, 1992; Falk & Aitken, 1984; Wright, 1985; Tippeconnic & McKinney, 2003; Fox, 2005). For Native students, a perceived lack of support from non-Native American faculty/teachers and staff with regard to opportunities for interaction and mentorship is shown to impact Native American student success (Miheisueh & Wilson, 2004; Pavel & Padilla, 1993). This highlights the need for non-Native faculty/teachers and staff to become familiar with the issues and concerns of Native students (Hornett, 1989). Such efforts can greatly increase the success and confidence of Native students, while building a stronger connection to the school/institution itself (Jackson, Smith & Hill, 2003). At a minimum, differing cultural and societal values, norms, and identities between Native American and non-Native American students may impede Native American student success in education.

Native American culture is particularly and deeply connected to human relationships and to a meaningful relationship to place (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). Consequently, building relationships with other students, staff, and faculty/teachers, as well as with the school itself, is essential for Native American students to feel accepted, welcomed, and likely to engage. When the institution demonstrates a commitment to being supportive and honoring Native students' cultural values as strengths, the relationship to the institution is deeply connected and aligned with Native student tribal and cultural values (Huffman, 2001).

## Academic Persistence

Multiple studies have examined factors that contribute to the success and academic persistence of Native American students in high school to higher education. Identified factors include confidence and self-perception as possible predictors of academic persistence among Native American students (Brown & Kurpius, 1997). Jackson, Smith & Hill (2003) find that confidence and self-efficacy are related to academic persistence. Other studies find that self-efficacy is critical for helping students to overcome obstacles (Coffman & Gilligan, 2002; Kalsner, 1992). Consequently, as Native students transition from high school to college, nurturing confidence and self-perception is important.

Studies identify additional factors that are important for Native student academic persistence, including precollege academic preparation, family support, faculty involvement and support, institutional commitment to students and community, financial support, and institutional and individual support for students to stay connected to home communities while attending school away from their tribal communities or in college (Astin, 1982; Barnhardt, 1994; Brown, 1995; Falk & Aitken, 1984). Generally, if Native students aspire to attend college and are supported and prepared for it while in high school, they are more likely to persist academically (Benjamin, Chambers & Reiterman, 1993).

As previously mentioned, Native and non-Native faculty/teachers play a critical role in Native student academic persistence, particularly when they seek to understand the concerns and issues that Native

students face and demonstrate their support for and connection with Native students (Brown & Kurpius, 1997). Studies consistently indicate that positive interactions between faculty members/teachers and Native American students are critical for fostering persistence and academic achievement (Jackson, Smith & Hill, 2003).

Positive faculty/teacher and staff interaction, coupled with demonstration of school commitment to supporting Native American students through services and providing an inclusive campus climate, also increase academic persistence (Garrod & Larimore, 1997). With regard to learning styles and cultural competency in teaching Pewewardy (2002) suggests that a greater number of American Indian/Native Alaska Natives have definite learning style tendencies such as strength in the visual modality and a preference for global, creative, and reflective styles of learning. He stresses the need for teachers, especially those who are White, to be grounded in culturally relevant teaching and be exposed to Native American students during their preparation period and that assessment options beyond standardized tests such as portfolios be used.

Families and support networks also are critical. Many students draw their strength and motivation to persist from families; this includes the desire to make life better for their families and even the goal to not let their families down (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). The home or tribal community of Native students helps them persist because they receive emotional, spiritual, and financial support that encourages them to achieve their educational goals (Bowkers, 1992; Heavy Runner & DeCelles, 2002). As schools acknowledge the important roles that family, community, and support networks play with regard to academic persistence, they enhance the likelihood that Native students will maintain cultural ties to their community and benefit from a social support system while away (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008).

### Native Student Empowerment

Empowerment and voice are also necessary for Native students to succeed in education from high school to college (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). Mihesuah and Wilson (2004) state that empowerment represents the promotion within mainstream education of an inclusive environment by both acknowledging underrepresented student populations and familiarizing the academy with the role that family plays in Native students' lives. Achievement and equal footing in education can be ensured as support networks on schools and campuses are built and mentorship by Native American faculty/teachers and staff are provided (Angspatt, 2001; Dodd, Garcia, Meccage, & Nelson, 1995; Garcia, 2000).

Part of the empowerment and finding of voice for Native students is the promotion of an inclusive environment from P-20, including non-Native faculty/teachers and staff and non-Native peers in classes whose attitudes are accepting and inclusive of underrepresented students (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Hornett, 1989). The perception that faculty/teachers care about and encourage Native students to become engaged in the classroom and in their own higher education journey is a catalyst for empowering Native students to find their voice and impact the university community (Belgarde, 1992; Brown & Robinson Kurpius, 1997; Carney, 1999; Cibik & Chambers, 1991; Jackson, et al., 2003). School commitment—demonstrated by administrators and faculty/teachers who acknowledge, honor, and preserve Native students' cultural values—inspires students to be engaged at the school and university and ultimately attain their respective diploma or higher education degree (Belgarde, 1992; Pavel & Padilla, 1993; Tierney, 1991; Wright, 1985).

As mainstream education increasingly recognize the needs of various student populations, the inclusion of the voice and needs of Native American students is essential. Incorporating broad definitions of families, empowering students, facilitating relationships between students and their home communities, building Native retention/school theories and student development models, recognizing the culture and values that each student brings to campus, are all important factors associated with enhancing Native student success (Jackson & Smith, 2001; Jenkins, 1999; Tippeconnic Fox, Lowe, & McClellan, 2005).

## Active Listening and Communication

The concepts of individualistic and collectivist (I-C) forms of communication in terms of cultural contexts are apparent with the student responses to questions posed during the listening circles. Further, Gudykunst (1998) argues that there are components of either direct communication which is seen more in individualistic cultures as compared to more indirect forms of communication that tend to be normative in collectivist settings. The author stresses though that while a particular culture may be either individualistic or collectivist in overall orientation, each person will reflect aspects of each of these in particular settings.

When we think of listening and the connection to communications, a key point that Purdy et. al (2017) offers is as follows. Stories are not definitive but always bounded by particular instances of time, culture, background, etc. They can offer a “truth” but perhaps not the truth in various forms, whether they appear in the form of personal narrative, a play, a novel, etc., and are always open to a field of possibilities. Bodie et. al (2012) expands on the notion of listening by initially discuss the different theoretical approaches of Explicit and Implicit approaches to studying listening. They argue for a third approach that listening is grounded more in initial impressions each of the parties forms of the other in a listening dynamic. It is these initial impressions that establish whether each will continue engaging with the others and sets the tone for future engagement. Purdy (2000) critiques the long established rationalist study of communication/listening and its orientation of placing the various components into some form of categorization that allows for quantitative analysis, holding that the approach tends to misunderstand how other members of other cultures (Asian, African, Indigenous, other non-Western) communicate/listen.

## METHODOLOGY

This section describe the methods used to include and inform Native student education directors from the 23 Native serving districts about the project. These steps included how the project team developed student questionnaires; prepared guides for student recruitment, participation and practice of active or effective listening techniques; conduct Native student listening circles; return data documents and audio files; and analyze data collected over the course of the project.

### Data Collection Process

In late March 2017, the Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR) conducted two training workshops for coordinators of Native student education from the twenty-three Native serving school districts in the state of New Mexico. The CEPR distributed email notices of the workshops to all twenty-three district coordinators as well as tribal education contacts. A brief questionnaire that asked coordinators about their educational background, their role as their district Native student education coordinator; tribal affiliation, etc. which the project team used to help structure the workshops. For those district coordinators who did not respond to an email prompt, CEPR conducted phone outreach to inform them of the project and upcoming workshops.

Of the twenty-three districts contacted, representatives from thirteen attended a workshop, one of which was held in Albuquerque and the other in Farmington. The workshop content centered on providing background information to participants on the purpose of the project—collecting Native student input on the five areas outlined by the Indian Education Division of the NM Public Education Department. Project team members also provided a review of the status of Native student education in the United States and New Mexico, a brief survey of Tribal Critical Theory, and coverage of the practice of active or effective listening.

The project team reviewed copies of the student questionnaires with participants in order to get their impressions as well as solicit input on the structure and content of the statements used. As a side note, the term “questionnaire” is somewhat a misnomer as in each case the documents used contained only statements, not questions per se, that students were asked to provide a response. The project team used the term questionnaire to avoid confusion in the minds of students if an alternative term, such as “instrument,” had been used instead. One of the two instruments, the Five Areas Questionnaire, provided two statements for each of the five areas for a total of ten statements. The other document used, the Active Listening

Questionnaire, included two administrations on a pre- and post-active listening session basis. This document sought to determine how students practiced various types of active listening techniques and whether receiving direction in how active listening worked altered their practice.

After discussions with the workshop participants about the questionnaires, the project team reviewed: the parental/guardian release form used during the project, a guidance document on active or effective listening, and guidelines on how to conduct a listening circle. The project team members answered questions as they arose and provided clarifying guidance as needed.

During the last phase of the workshop, participants engaged in simulated listening circles using the list of Listening Circle Questions while practicing active listening techniques. The workshop closed out with a final question and answer period and a request to coordinators to recruit between six and ten students for both the middle and high school listening circles.

The week following the workshops involved project team staff preparing and shipping via Federal Express packages of project materials to workshop participants. To minimize expenses for the districts and the logistical tasks associated with the project, the project team proved a total of twenty-four copies of each data document (Five Aims Questionnaire, Pre- and Post-Active Listening Session Questionnaires, and Parent/Guardian Release Forms) and twenty-seven copies of the list of questions used in the listening circles. This was done to provide an adequate supply for schools to meet the target of ten participants at each level and provide two extra copies to replace those that might have been lost or misplaced. To this collection were included three copies of the listening circle questions to provide one to each of the school-level circle facilitators as well as for the district coordinator. A copy of the listening circle guidelines was provided for each of the adult participants so they could use them for training purposes. For copies of the data collection instrument please refer to Appendix 2.

Also, included in the shipment was an audio recorder. The project team developed and included a detailed explanation guide on the recorders used during listening circles. After CEPR was able to get a secure WinScp (a secure electronic file transfer platform) site set up, UNM staff issued each of the district coordinators a link to the WinScp software, a user name, password and instructions on how to upload audio files. While several of the districts were successfully able to transfer their audio files in this manner, a few experienced technical challenges that could not be surmounted. In these cases, the coordinators returned the recorders with the audio recording(s) back to CEPR and the project PI downloaded them to a secure drive within the UNM IT system for later transfer to the transcription service used for the project.

Districts had various levels of success with recruitment at either the middle or high school levels. Three of the districts were unable to get any recruits at all and therefore were not able to make a contribution to the questionnaire data or listening circle conversations. Other districts successfully recruited only middle school or high school students.

Various factors came into play that impeded the ability to participate by some districts. The first included the abbreviated time schedule the project had as it window of operation for the distribution and collection of the questionnaires and holding the listening circles. Second, the request to conduct the listening circles conflicted with state testing schedules. Finally, spring break for many of the districts occurred in April, which further impacted the recruitment of students and the conduct of the listening circles.

For those districts that were successful, they were able to complete the tasks associated with the project. These occurred during April and into May before school let out and included: recruiting students, issuing and collecting parental/guardian release forms, distributing and collecting questionnaires, providing training to the students in active or effective listening techniques, conducting the listening circles, and returning the materials to CEPR. They need to be recognized for their efforts and critical partners in this project.

## PARTICIPANT/SCHOOL BACKGROUND

In this active listening circle research study there was intention to attempt to have all of the twenty three school districts in New Mexico who have high Native student attending populations. The initial count of those who had expressed interest to participate began at seventeen school districts and ended up with thirteen who participated in the workshops (one district immediately withdrew the following week and another volunteered to participate to maintain the count to thirteen). Four of the thirteen districts were not able to participate in the listening circles for various reasons. One district that did participate failed to secure parental release forms and thus their materials were excluded from use. Therefore, the materials from a total of eight districts make up the contents of the findings and include a mixture of middle and high schools from amongst them.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The following section provides a comparative synthesis of the qualitative and quantitative data collected as they address each of the five aims. For each of the qualitative data sections, we have reviewed the transcripts from listening circle sessions the school districts completed within the middle and high schools. These sessions followed the five aims framework and the project team broke down each school's transcripts within themes and by codes that emerged from these specific five areas. Exemplary quotations derived from the transcripts are used to illustrate the major themes. Any identifying terms or names of either locales or individuals have been struck to provide anonymity and protect privacy.

A review of the quantitative data collected through the Five Areas Questionnaire follows each qualitative section. Graphs showing response distributions from the middle and high school groups as well as interpretive discussion of findings for each of the five areas have been included in each section. Results from the pre/post listening session questionnaire will appear at the end of the data analysis section as it addresses listening behaviors of students rather than their perceptions of school policies or practices as dealt with through the Five Areas Questionnaire.

**The Five Areas Questionnaire:** The Five Areas Questionnaire (5AQ) contained a total of ten interrogatory sentences, nine of which were posed as statements and only one (item ten) as a question. These ten items paralleled the five area questions posed during the listening circles. The CEPR team prepared these items to provide another data set for assessing Native student perspectives related to the IED's five focus areas. While the majority of the statements could stand alone, exceptions to this characteristic included numbers nine and ten. Statement nine probed whether the student had attended a Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) or tribally controlled school prior to attending a public school. Students could respond either yes or no. If they selected yes, the student was to respond to item ten that inquired how easy the transition was to the public school. The first three items, as well as six and seven included the following four-point scale:

- 1) Not At All
- 2) Somewhat
- 3) Pretty well
- 4) Fully

Statement four used this scale:

- 1) Never
- 2) Sometimes
- 3) Often
- 4) Always

The fifth and ninth statements used a “yes” or “no” response.

The scale for statement eight asked about college preparedness and included the following choices:

- 1) Not At All Prepared
- 2) Somewhat Prepared
- 3) Pretty Well Prepared
- 4) Absolutely Prepared

Finally, item ten used a three-point scale for determining the ease of transition for Native students from a BIE or tribally controlled school to a public school which asked students to respond to *only* if they had responded “Yes” to statement nine:

- 1) Not At All Easy
- 2) Somewhat Easy
- 3) Very Easy

### Attendance and Truancy

During this part of the listening circles it seemed evident that the students understood and were familiar with the attendance and truancy policies that were in effect at their schools. The feedback and recommendations made were that teachers and parents need to be clear on why these policies were important and why it was important to attend school as one of the students emphasized, “They could talk to you about it and show you why it’s important not to miss out on school, and give you different types of information why and how it can help too” and another student within a different school district mentioned, “parents and school should try and show the students how important it is to be going to school and how if they do go to school.” In regards to the teachers, one of the students said, “the teachers really get involved in our lives” and then in regards to parents, “I think that needs to be included in some cases because parents need to be stricter with their kids on attendance.”

The students who were a part of these listening circles were able to connect the ties between teacher and parents working together and the impact that home life and needs have on the student’s success in school, one student mentioned, “I guess, would apply to kids and what their needs are and what their needs at home are cuz kids don’t wanna come to school if they don’t meet their needs. Every child has a need: food, water, house, shelter, paperwork, pencils.” A few more suggestions for changes that might help impact attendance and truancy were, “maybe start school later”, and “maybe like bigger consequences if they have that many tardies because usually when you have like a certain number of tardies, you just get ISS or something. To most people, that’s not really that big of a deal. Maybe if they have like stricter consequences, it would motivate people to follow the rules more.”

Other students suggested that parents could make sure they got out of bed and drove them to school or made sure they got to the bus on time. One student discussed how she had already missed five days of school and her mom had received a letter with this information. The result from this exchange led the student to have a higher level of attention about the possible repercussions if she missed any more days.

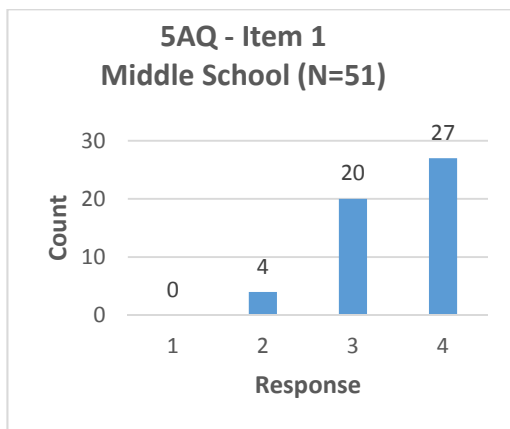
## 5AQ – Area One Quantitative Results

As with the sequence of the questions used during the listening circles, the statements in this questionnaire began with an inquiry as to the students' understanding on attendance they were expected to follow at their school. The first statement reads:

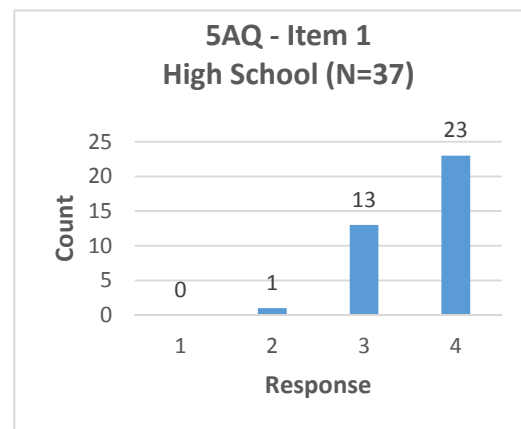
### ***1. I understand my school's policy on attendance I am expected to follow.***

The following two graphs illustrate the respective response distributions for middle school (figure 1) and high school (figure 2). As shown in the two graphs, while the absolute numbers are different between the two populations, the general conclusion that can be reached is that districts/schools appear to be providing sufficient information related to their respective attendance policies as reflected in the responses for either 3) Pretty Well (MS/18 and HS/13) or 4) Fully (MS/26 and HS/23) to their Native students and most students generally understand them.

**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**

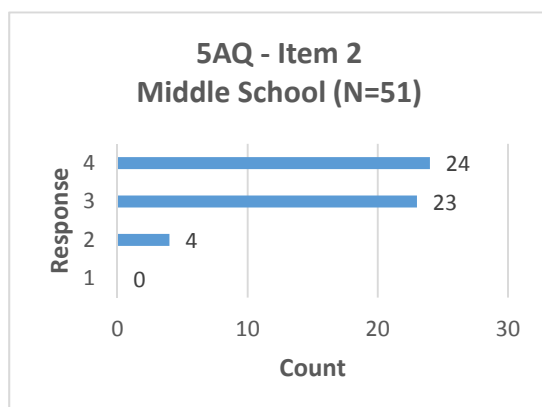


The second item focused on tardiness and it reads:

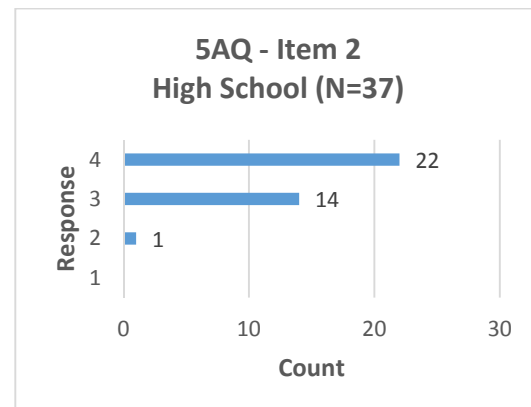
### ***2. I understand my school's policy on tardiness I am expected to follow.***

The two following graphs provide the distributions for middle and high school students. Here again, both figures 3 and 4 suggest that the project districts and schools have done a satisfactory job of providing information to students regarding tardiness policies and the students have a strong understanding of them as reflected in the combined scores for 3) Pretty Well and 4) Fully of 46 for middle school and 36 for high school.

**Figure 3**



**Figure 4**





## Culture Competency and Culturally Responsive Training

There were various perspectives regarding cultural competency and culturally responsive training. It was evident that the students in the listening circles wanted more opportunities to learn about Native Americans in their classes as one student says, “maybe teach more about natives.” Some were able to have this exposure to content but only had teaching in this area for a certain amount of time that wasn’t long enough for them as one student emphasized, “the only Native American history class here is our Navajo Government and History class which is half a semester. They don’t really cover all of it in just half a semester. It’d be more better like in the long period the—full year so you can get a better understanding and know what’s going on—dealing with current events and everything.” One student suggested that the native perspective be brought in as an addition to the strictly Anglo view too often focused on in the history lessons.

Another piece of the cultural competency and culturally responsive training that came up dealt specifically with what the students were experiencing in school with their teachers, “in some places, in my classes, we learn about like Natives in particular. Some are kind of negative and some are kind of positive. Sometimes people view us as like Indians. They don’t refer to us as Natives as we are from here. We originate here. I think that’s kind of the thing that is lacking is referring us to Indian and Native.”

There are teachers who are using negative examples and calling Native Americans Indians which the students take derogatorily. Other students mentioned how important it was for the teachers to get to know who they were as Native American students, “well, they can start by learning a little bit more about ourselves and us as an individual and what our culture is.” The last suggestion was that teaching about Native Americans should not just be for the Native American students but all students to help other students better understand who they are, “I think that the teachers in \_\_\_\_\_ Middle School could put in culture stuff in their lesson plans and that the other students could learn, too, about our culture, so get a better understanding of who we are.”

A few students suggested that their school could start a club that would help promote their Native culture whether Navajo, Jicarilla or other. At least one of the students suggested that the teacher use English then immediately follow it with the Native word (in this case Jicarilla) whether in math or language arts or history. One student suggested more emphasis on his tribe’s music, culinary arts, drawing and pottery as a way of his school showing deeper cultural respect.

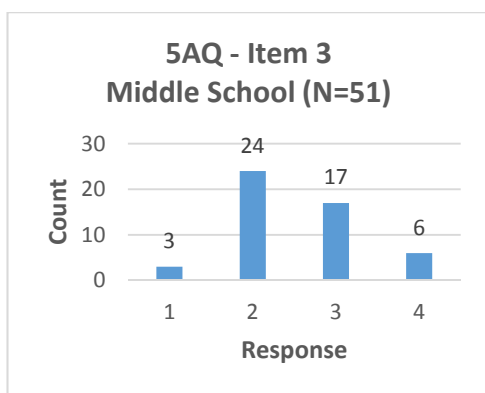
## 5AQ – Area Two Quantitative Results

The third and fourth statements shift the focus to Aim 2, Cultural competency training and culturally responsive learning environment for the Indian Education Division. The statement reads:

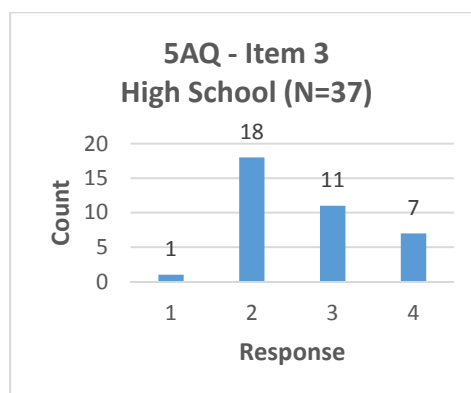
### **3. My school values my tribal culture and background.**

The figures 5 and 6 below closely mirror each other in terms of the distribution of the responses across the two populations of students. In each case, the majority of responses (23/50% in figure 5 and 18/48.6% in figure 6) were for “somewhat.” Another 20/43.4% for middle school and 18/48.6% for high school were for “Pretty Well” or “Fully.”

**Figure 5**



**Figure 6**





The next statement continues the focus on Area 2 and reads:

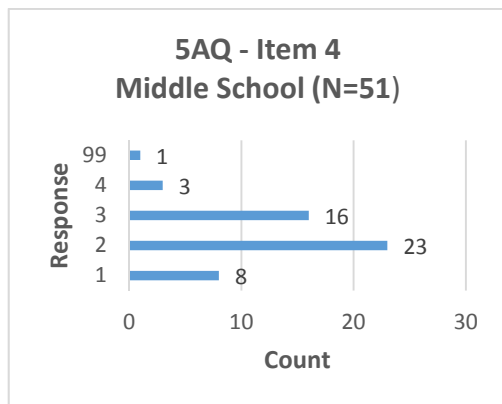
**4. Teachers in my school include lessons about my tribal culture & background.**

Further, the question used a different scale:

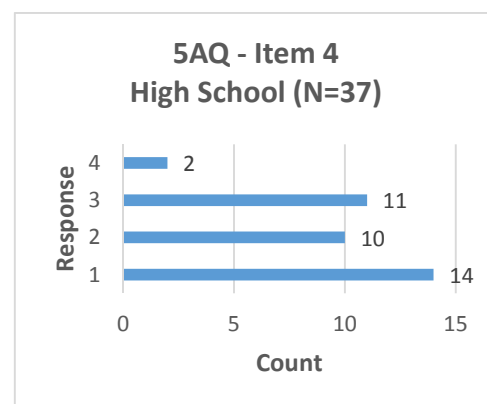
- 1) Never
- 2) Sometimes
- 3) Often
- 4) Fully

Figures 7 and 8 below show the distribution of responses to this statement. As the graphs suggest there exists a fair amount of difference among the various districts/schools on whether there is inclusion of lessons about local tribal cultures and background. For instance, 6/13% of middle school and 14/38% of high school responses indicate “never.” For “sometimes,” 23/49% of middle school and 10/27% of high school students chose this response. Those who indicated “often,” included 15/32% of middle school and 11/30% of high school made this selection. In terms of choosing the response, “always,” a small number of respondents—2/4% of middle school and 2/5% of high school students—made this choice. Finally, only one middle school student chose to not answer this question, which is indicated in that graph by 99 to indicate no answer.

**Figure 7**



**Figure 8**



## Native Language

When the students were asked about the importance of their Native languages all of them reiterated this importance, “it is very important to speak your language because that’s how we used to speak back then” and why it was important so they could connect to their elders and grandparents, “well, it could be important because of if you are speaking to one of your elders.” It was not only important to know the language to connect to elders but also to know about life as a tribal person, “so I’d say it’s really important to learn just to get to know how life works in general, how this whole world works and everything. Another thing is tradition. That’s very important because it teaches you about life as well.”

Suggestions of what the school could do to support Native languages were, “what they could do to help is just always have language classes.” The students also shared what the benefit of having these language classes would have on the Native American students as a whole, “now, if we had classes, it would totally help us to understand each other, not only in a personal way, but like in a bond, all of us.” The students also understood the importance of having classes that brought in their parents to learn and teach as well, “also, I think that teachers can value that into possibly having like a full-on semester class, instead of just like after school, and to also benefit from having other kids who don’t know their clans and to include some of the parents to possibly teach that to them, as well.”

The students also knew when their language teachers were passionate about teaching the language and the impact that had on them in their learning process, “she wants her students to achieve this. Even though the students are hard on her, she will lay her life down to get Navajo language out because that’s her passion.” Students tied knowing their language to their identity in the following ways, “that’s the most key important thing to knowing where you’re from, how you are is native to where you’re from” and another student said, “I think it’s very important that we learn our language cuz we can understand the teachings that our ancestors gave us and can teach us how we can be a young woman or a man and have the teachings we had.”

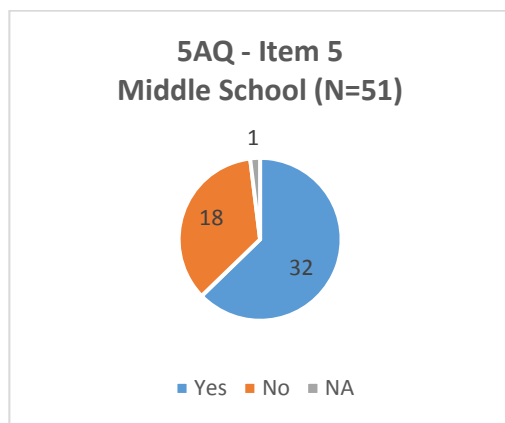
### 5AQ – Area Three Quantitative Results

The next two statements relate to opportunities students have to study their tribal language at their school and whether or not they know their tribal language and can speak it. Figures 9 and 10 below illustrate the distributions of middle and high school student responses to having the option to study their tribal language. Statement five reads:

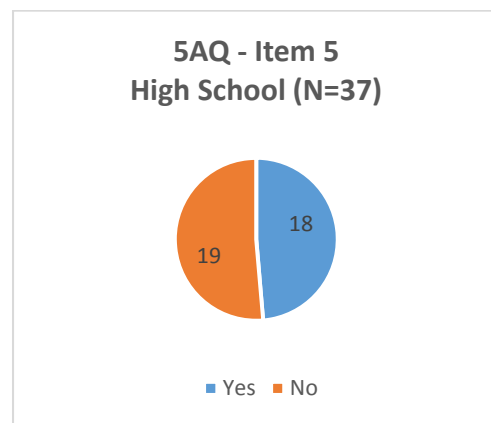
#### **5. I have the opportunity to study my tribal language at my school**

The responses offered included either Yes or No. As the figures indicate, a majority (28/60%) of middle school and almost one-half (18/49%) of high school respondents indicate, yes, they have the opportunity at their school to learn their tribal language. A single middle school student chose not to respond to the statement.

**Figure 9**



**Figure 10**



The corresponding statement of whether or not the student knows their tribal language reads:

#### **6. I know my tribe’s language and can speak it.**

This statement and the following used the same scale as that for statements one through three. To reiterate the scale is indicated as follows:

- 1) Not at All
- 2) Somewhat
- 3) Pretty well
- 4) Fully

In general, as figures 11 and 12 indicate a fair number of both middle and high school students possess a functioning knowledge of their tribal languages. This is illustrated by the choice of “somewhat” for 30/64% of middle school and 17/46% of high school respondents. Another 9/19% of middle school and 9/24% of high school respondents indicated that they can speak their tribal language “pretty well.” Relatively small numbers of respondents indicated they either “fully” knew their tribal language (3/6% of middle school and 4/11% of high school), or conversely, “not at all” knew it (5/11% of middle school and 4/11% of high school). The distributions for these responses are shown in figures 11 and 12.

Figure 11

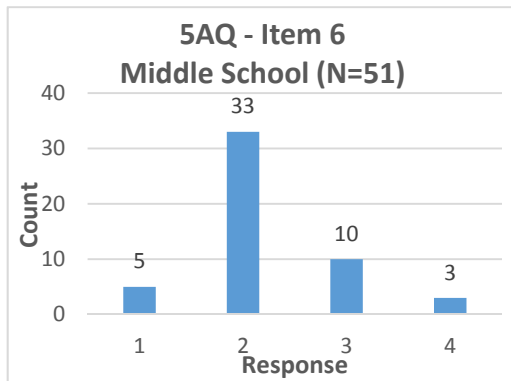
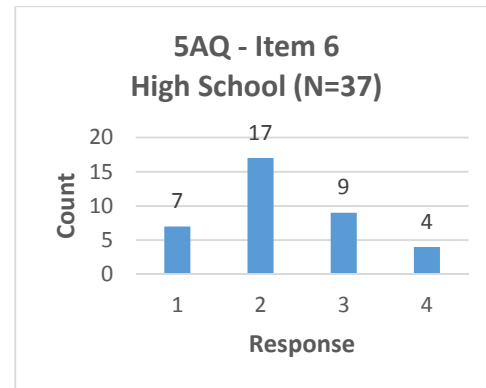


Figure 12



## College Readiness and Life after High School

The students in the listening circles were asked if they knew what college and career readiness was and what it meant to be prepared for life after high school. Some students tied their familiarity with readiness to school subjects they learned as one student said, “The class that I can use after high school is science or math cuz math you’ll have to use all your life.” Another student tied what their learning in their classes to life after high school, “most of the classes we’re just learning so then we can get prepared for high school and then high school so we can get prepared for college or careers.” Some of the students knew how important it was to know what you want to do after high school, “but first main thing is to probably be sure to—make sure you know what you wanna do before you go to college instead of just going and not knowing what to do.”

It was refreshing to see how the students tied their need to be ready to their ability to work in the community, “yeah. Probably just learning how to—I don’t know, just learning how to work in the community.” The tying into the community then brought it to a more individual level of preparation as two of the students mentioned, “how to be responsible for your own actions” and “being ready to stand by yourself.” It was also about social skills and the ability to interact with others not only within their community but in general, “they kinda have for assignments and stuff like that, but for mental readiness and how to be ready, meeting new people, they haven’t really did that.” This connection to self and community was deeply tied to who they were as a tribal person and ultimately what they can do for their community, “to also be organized in order to have a good life, and to also have the values of traditional Navajos.”

Some of the students felt the responsibility of their generation to impact their community, “I think that’s a lot for us as a generation to improve on, getting ready for college and going out there and doing what we should do as a generation to help our community and stuff.”

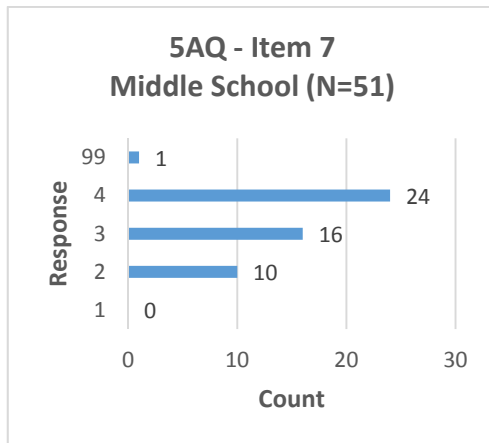
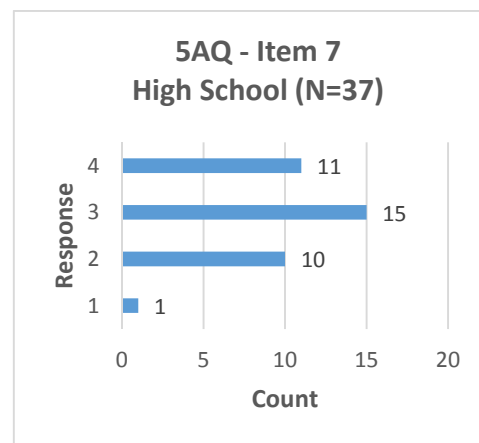
A few of the students indicated they had the opportunity to take a class on getting prepared for college that included how to complete an application and financial aid forms. However, others discussed how some of their teachers told them about how difficult college was but failed to actually provide them the skills to improve their readiness.

## 5AQ – Area Four Quantitative Results

The fourth set of statements used in the Five Areas instrument had two prompts, one that centered on the whether students agreed their school’s teachers and staff were helping them prepare for life after graduation. The second statement focused on whether the students believed that they would be prepared to attend college if they chose to go after graduation. The first statement read as follows:

**7. I agree that the teachers & staff at my school are helping to prepare me for life after graduation.**

As previously indicated, the scale used for this statement is noted above. Large majorities of respondents from both middle school (37/79%) and high school (26/70%) chose either that they would be “pretty well” or “fully” prepared for life after graduation. Nine (19%) middle school 10 (27%) high school respondents indicated they agreed with the statement and no middle school and one (3%) of the high school students chose “not at all” as their response. One middle school student did not to respond to the statement. Distribution of responses to this statement are provided in figures 13 and 14.

**Figure 13****Figure 14**

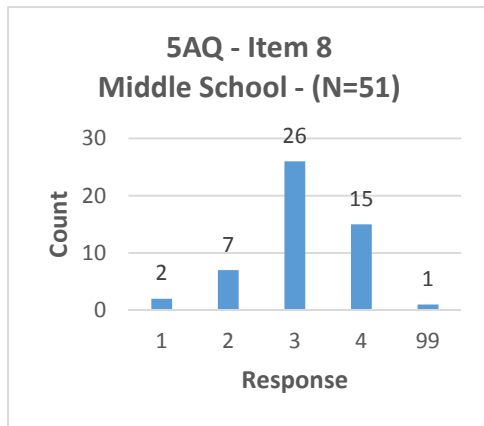
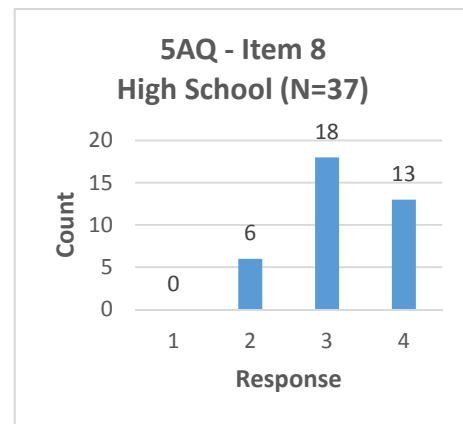
As noted, the second part of this statement series involves perceptions of college readiness. For the statement related to being prepared for college, the prompt read:

**8. I believe that I will be prepared to go to college if I want to after graduation.**

This statement included a standalone response scale that contains the following choices:

- 1) Not at All Prepared
- 2) Somewhat Prepared
- 3) Pretty Well Prepared
- 4) Absolutely Prepared

The distribution of responses between the two groups as shown in figures 15 and 16 somewhat parallel each other. An intriguing aspect of these responses is that the middle school population still has a few years ago before facing graduation and the choice to attend college; whereas for high school students the need to make this decision is much closer in time. Large majorities of both groups—37/79% of middle school and 31/84% from high school—believe they are either “Pretty Well Prepared” or “Fully” prepared to make the transition to college. Conversely, relatively small numbers—7/15% of middle school and 6/16% of high school respondents—selected “Somewhat Prepared” for college. Another 2/4% of middle school and zero high school respondents indicated “Not At All Prepared” to move on to college. One middle school student chose not to give a response.

**Figure 15****Figure 16**

Overall, the results from these two statements suggest that the participating districts/schools are providing significant supports to Native students who perceive themselves as prepared for life after graduation and to transition to college if they so choose.

### Transitioning between Schools

The last area that was discussed in the listening circle was the transitioning between schools. This was interpreted as between school types, such as BIE, tribally controlled and public to the transition of middle to high school. One of the students mentioned their struggle with the transition of types, “BIE set in one class. You had one teacher teach all these subjects. Then you go into Central Consolidated Schools where it’s actually more like high school where different teachers teach different subjects. That was a really difficult transition for them.”

For many of the students who had attended BIE schools, several talked the relatively small size of the classrooms and the schools themselves. They talked about how they felt they received more attention and could learn more easily than when they shifted to a public school. In these settings, the students felt they didn’t get as much assistance and sometimes found the learning more difficult.

Other students talked about seeing the difference in their skin color within these school systems, “I was at a public school going to a independent school, and to me it was hard to adjust because there’s nothing but your skin” and “in this school it’s more composed of teachers who are Caucasian. That’s where I felt the hardest thing for me was ‘cuz I’ve never really interacted with Caucasians before. It was hard for me to talk to the teacher—bring myself to talk to the teacher. I was very nervous. I felt very scared.” Some students even talked about their challenges in losing friends and having to reconnect socially within a new school system, “it was hard for me when I came here cuz, mostly, all my friends are down back in Utah. They went to a different school down there, and I came here. It was kinda hard cuz I didn’t have friends. It was very challenging and meeting new people. Finally, I made a friend that helped me get more friends cuz it was hard and challenging.”

Yet, the students also demonstrated their resilience in the need to transition and adapt, “I just adapted to it and then.” The students also talked about the importance of having a welcoming climate and teacher and knowing when they don’t have that how hard that makes the transition, “just that transition, I guess it was welcoming once you met people. The teachers, it was hard to connect to them because they did not know you. We did not know them. Some of them did not want to pursue a relationship with you. They did not want to know how your day was.” This welcoming climate and having teachers who built relationships was important not just between school types but also the transition of middle to high school. Students talked

about how hard that transition was, “I guess switching from elementary to middle to high school is hard” because, “for example, middle school was one, big building. Yeah, you were going to a few different classes, but for high school, there’s multiple buildings.”

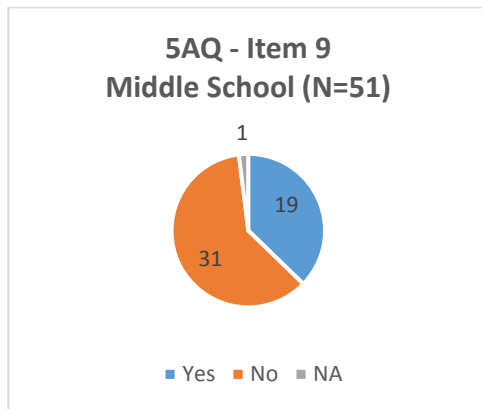
### 5AQ – Area Five Quantitative Results

The final block of statements used in this instrument relates to Area Five of IED’s policy initiative—School System Alignment Between PED/Bureau of Indian Education/Tribally Controlled Schools. The first of the two statements queried whether the student had attended either a BIE or tribally controlled school prior to entering a public school, such as the one they were now in and reads:

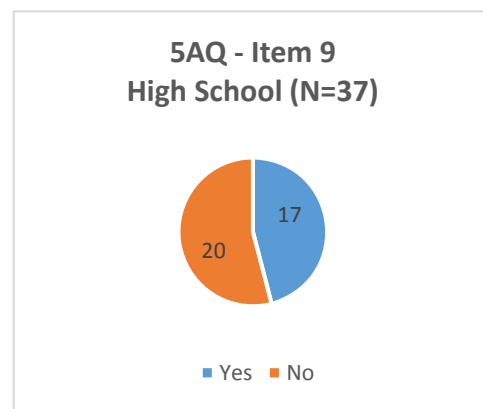
**9. I attended a Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) or Tribally controlled school before I attended a public school such as the one you now attend.**

The response selections were either “Yes” or “No.” Figures 17 and 18 show the distribution of responses for the two school levels. As the figures illustrate, majorities from both groups (27/57% of middle school and 20/54% of high school) selected “No.”

**Figure 17**



**Figure 18**



Students who selected “Yes” were requested to provide a response to item ten, which read:

**10. If yes, how easy was the experience of adjusting to the public school?**

The response scale for this prompt was standalone and included the following choices:

- 1) Not at All Easy
- 2) Somewhat Easy
- 3) Very Easy

For both school level groups, because they had answered “No” to question nine, a majority of students (28/61% of middle school and 20/54% of high school respondents) defaulted to “no answer,” which got coded to 99. These numbers and percentages need to be qualified. There were eight middle school and six high school students who selected “No” to the previous question but made a selection for this prompt. These responses were ambiguous because it could have indicate either one of two explanations. On one hand, they may have misinterpreted what was being asked and simply chose “No” when they meant “Yes.” On the other, they may have attended a different type of school that was not a Bureau of Indian Education or a Tribally-controlled school, say a private or parochial, and chose a selection to indicate the ease of which the transition to a public school occurred. Since the instrument provided no means of clarification, and in order to rationalize the analysis, if the student selected “No” to item nine and made a selection for item ten, the item ten response got recoded to “99” as a “no answer.”

For the remaining thirteen middle school and seventeen high school students who responded yes, the results were mixed. Two each of middle school (2/4%) and high school (2/5%) students indicated the transition was not at all easy. The students who selected “Somewhat Easy,” included 11/23% of the middle school and 6/16% of the high school respondents. Finally, 5/11% of middle school and 9/24% of the high school students chose “Very Easy” as their response. Figures 19 and 20 provide the distribution of results:

Figure 19

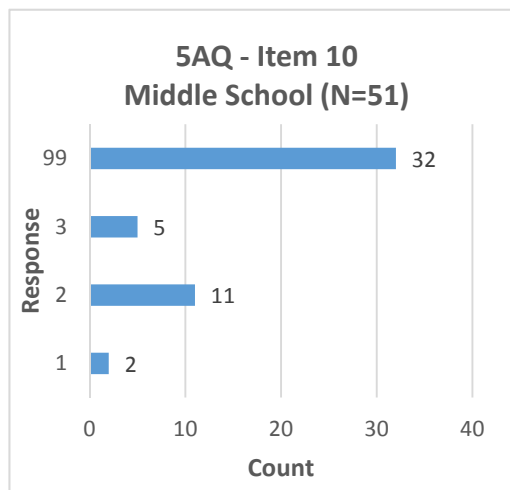
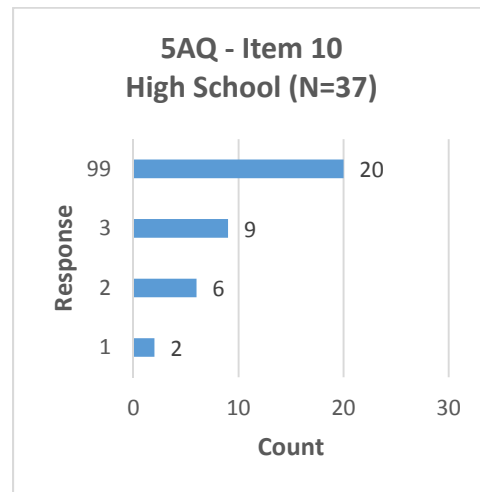


Figure 20



### Pre- and Post-Active Listening Session Instrument

As noted previously, the study team developed an instrument to assess the listening practices of Native students who participated in the Listening Circle project. The instrument was administered twice in order to measure what, if any, effect occurred as a result of receiving instruction in effective or active listening techniques and their participation in the listening circles.

For this process, the instrument offered seven statements for student response. The first statement was used to determine whether students thought a difference existed between *hearing* and *listening*. The following six statements served to ascertain whether the student practiced behaviors that either supported or departed from effective or active listening. These include: asking clarifying questions, using proper body language, focus, recapping a conversation, reading body language, and not being distracted by other people. The results are as follows.

It should be noted the number of respondents for the pre/post questionnaire are different from the Five Aims Questionnaire. In some cases, the district/school did not send one or the other response sheets back when they returned the materials to UNM. In other cases, the student simply did not respond to the statement.

### Pre/Post Item 1

Statement one, which aimed to determine if students believed a difference existed between “hearing” and “listening” reads:

#### 1. *There is difference between hearing and listening*

Students selected a response from the following list:

- 1) Yes
- 2) No
- 3) I Don't Know

Figures 21 and 22 provide response distributions from the two groups of Native middle and high school students. The groups are identified by either MS for middle school and HS for high school. A total of 35 middle school students responded for both points in time. Further analysis of the data indicated that 29 of the respondents stayed the same, 3 students went from “no” to “yes,” 1 went from “yes” to “no,” and 3 went from “I don’t know” to “yes.” For the high school group, we looked at a total of 34 student responses of which 31 stayed the same, 1 went from “I don’t know” to “yes,” 1 went from “no” to “I don’t know,” and 1 went from “no” to “yes.” In summary, there was slightly more movement among the middle school students than those in high school but the number was not significant.

Figure 21

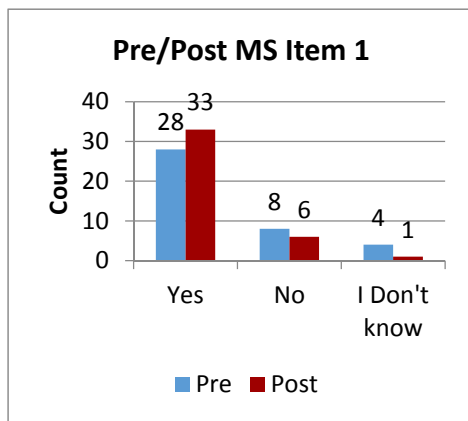
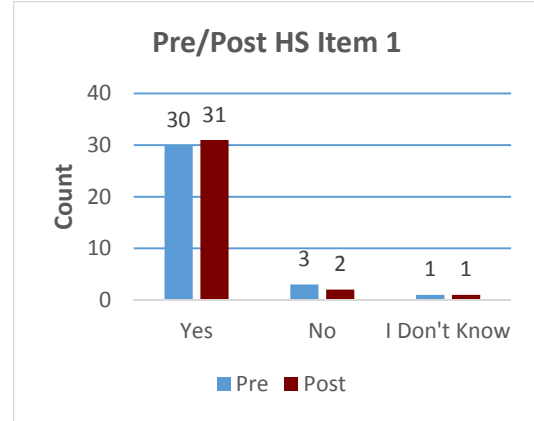


Figure 22



## Pre/Post Item 2

Statement two began the process of ascertaining the type of listening behaviors students engaged in. The initial statement relates to asking clarifying questions, and reads:

**2. When I talk to someone and do not understand something that she or he said, I ask a question so I can understand that person better.**

The results for the responses to this statement appear in figures 23 and 24. For the middle school group, the number of students who selected either “never” or “always” remained the same at one and five respectively. For those who selected “sometimes,” the number rose from 13 on the pre to 16 on the post and, conversely for those who selected “usually,” the number decreased from 21 to 18 from the two administrations. For high school students, the number who selected “sometimes” remained at 13 for the two administrations, decreased from 15 to 11 for those who selected “usually” and ticked up from 7 to 10 for “always.”

Figure 23

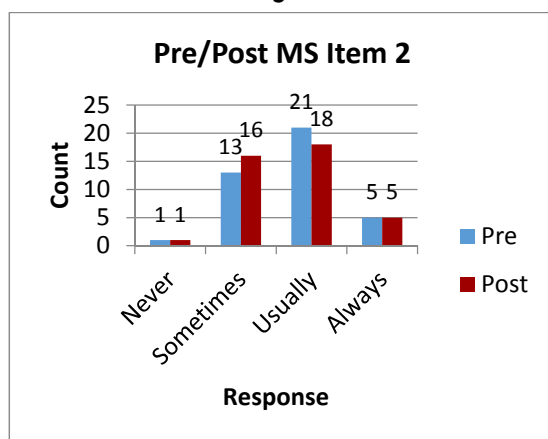
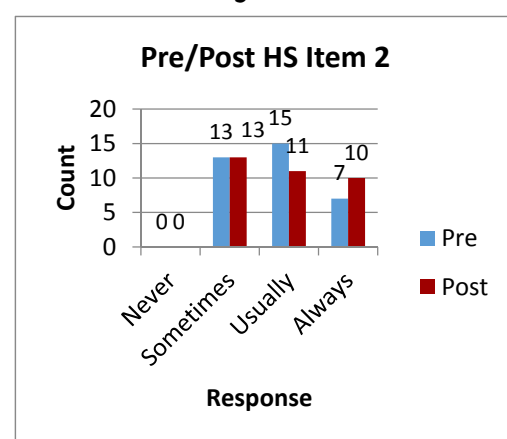


Figure 24





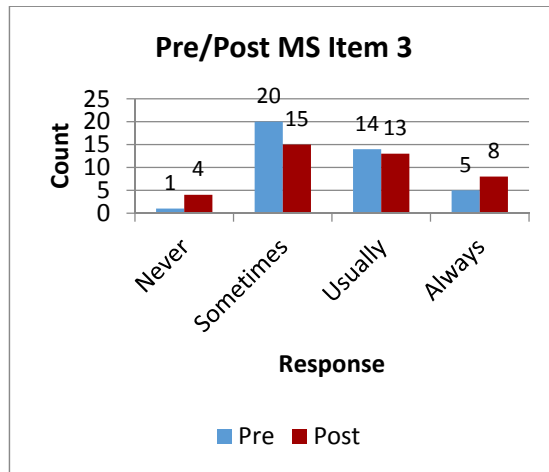
### Pre/Post Item 3

Statement three sought to determine whether students exercised effective body language techniques, such as head nodding or giving affirmative verbal cues to indicate understanding, while engaged in listening with another person. The statement reads:

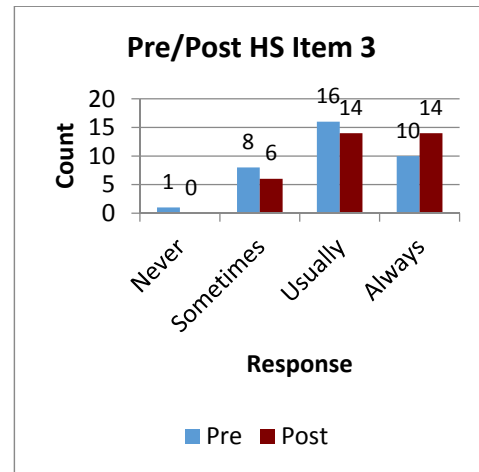
**3. When I talk with someone, I nod my head or say “uh-huh” to show I understand what that person is saying (even if I don’t agree with what they are saying).**

Figures 25 and 26 provide the distribution of responses to this statement. For middle school students the responses for both “never” and “always” increased in both cases by 3, whereas for “sometimes” and “usually,” the responses reduced from the pre- to post-administrations by 2 and 4, respectively. The pattern for the high school student responses was somewhat similar to that seen with the middle school. With the exception of “never” which fell from 1 to 0, the responses for “always” increased by 4 and reduced by 2 for both “sometimes” and “usually.”

**Figure 25**



**Figure 26**



### Pre/Post Item 4

Statement four addressed a practice which distracts from active or effective listening, which is formulating a response prior to the person completing their discussion. The statement reads as follows:

**4. When another person is talking to me, I think about what I will say before that person has stopped talking.**

Figures 27 and 28 provide the response distributions. The responses between the two groups indicate opposite pattern directions across three of selection categories with only the responses for “always” remaining static at 8 and 11 for the middle and high school pre/post selections, respectively.

Figure 27

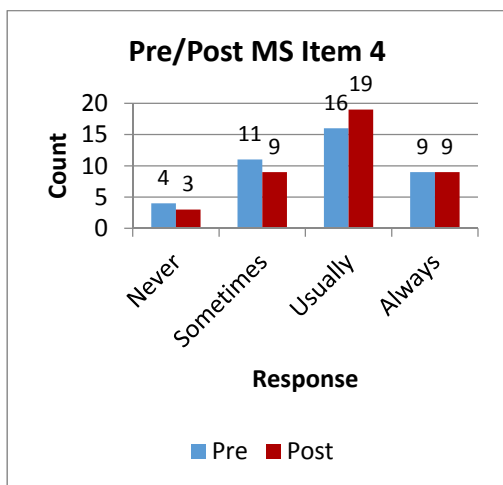
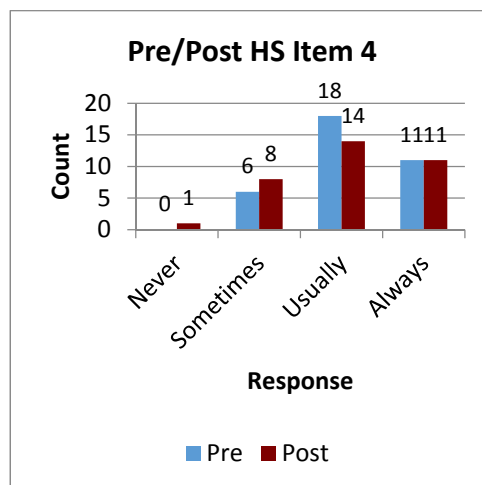


Figure 28



## Pre/Post Item 5

In response to statement five, a student indicates whether or not they practice a key aspect of formal active listening—providing a summary of a person’s conversation to indicate understanding. The statement reads:

**5. After a person finishes talking, I sum up what he or she said to show I understand before I reply.**

On one hand, middle school responses to this statement show slight changes as illustrated in figure 29. On the other hand, as shown in figure 30 there is substantial variance in responses for high school students. Middle school students indicated slight shift downward by 2 for “never” and “always” and a similar shift upwards of 2 for “sometimes.” Whereas for “usually” the shift upwards was by 3. The high school responses for two of the four responses indicate more substantial changes in that student selection of “sometimes” declined by 8 from 16 to 8 and rose by 7 for “usually” from 12 to 19. The responses for “never” and “always” remained with no change at 0 and 7, respectively.

Figure 29

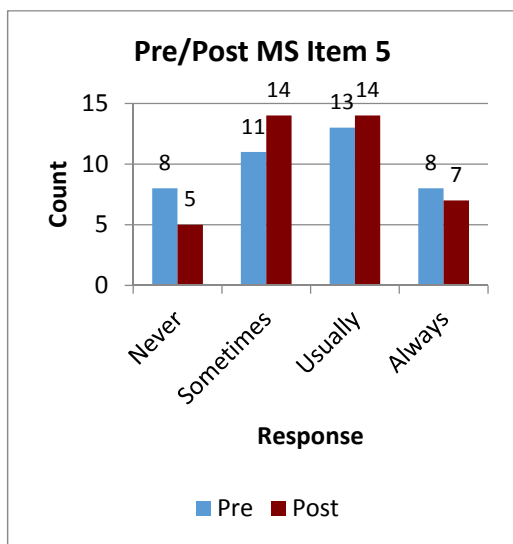
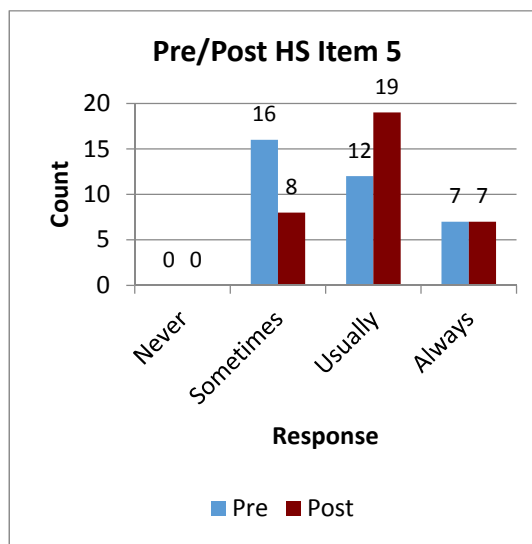


Figure 30



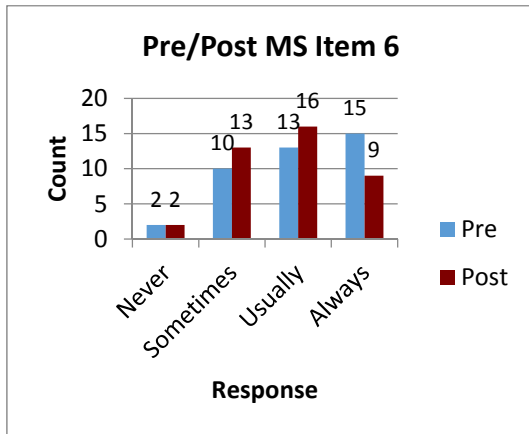
### Pre/Post Item 6

Paying attention to the body language of the person you are engaged in conversation with is the focus of statement six. The statement reads:

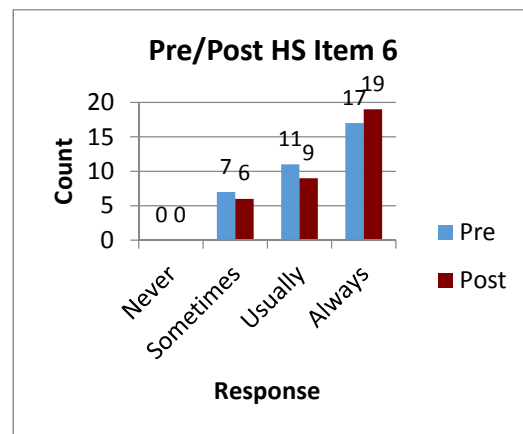
**6. When I talk to another person, I play attention to her or his face and body movements to see how that person understands me.**

Paying attention to the body language of the person you are engaged in conversation with is the focus of statement six. Here, too, the responses among the two groups are relatively dissimilar save for both sets of responses to “never” that remained at 1 for middle school and 0 for high school. For each of the other responses, the two groups diverged in their selections. For example, middle school students moved up by 4 for “sometimes,” whereas the high school group reduced by 1. For “usually” the same type of upwards adjustment for middle school, this time by 2, is compared to a downward shift by 2 for high school. Finally, for the response “always,” middle school students indicated a fairly sharp decline of 6 that compares to a modest upward movement of 2 from the high school group. These comparisons can be seen in figures 31 and 32.

**Figure 31**



**Figure 32**



### Pre/Post Item 7

The final statement we asked students to address centered on maintaining focus on the person being talked to even if another person is vying for the listener’s attention. The statement reads:

**7. When I talk to somebody, I pay attention to him or her even if another person wants to talk to me.**

The final statement we asked students to address centered on maintaining focus on the person being talked to even if another person is vying for the listener’s attention. With this response series, while the trend directions are similar, the difference of their magnitude is dissimilar in both “usually” that rose by 5 for middle school and only 2 for high school and “always” that declined for middle school by 4 and 2 for high school. The responses for “never” remained static at 1 for the pre/post for middle school and 0 for high school. A modest decline of 1 for “sometimes” is seen in the shift from 8 to 7 in the middle school group and from 3 to 2 for high school. See figures 33 and 34.

Figure 33

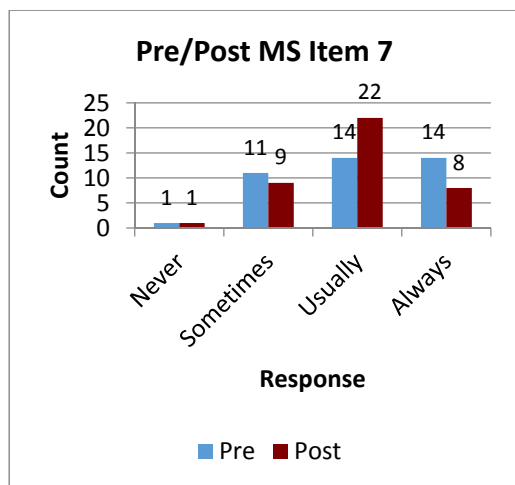
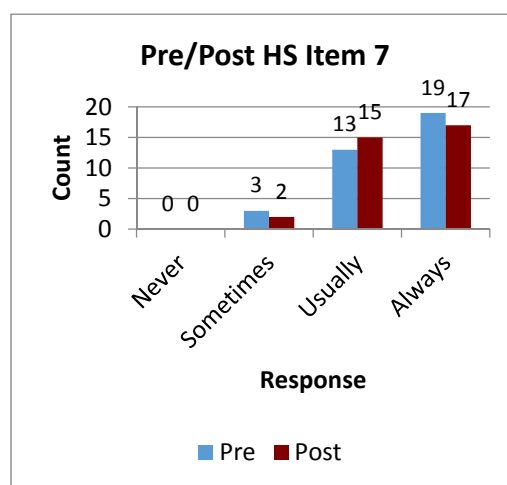


Figure 34



Ideally, students would have had a longer period of time to practice the skills associated with active or effective listening. That said, the results from the administration of the Pre- and Post-Active Listening Session Questionnaires indicate many students developed or enhanced their working application of active listening skills. This crucial aspect of communication is an important tool for them to have as they move through their public school careers and onward to college or a career.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, recommendations will be provided around the five areas that were investigated within the surveys and listening circles within the nine school districts. There will also be recommendations for the project itself and what could be considered for future expansive projects or similar projects initiated within the NMPED and IED.

### Five Area Recommendations

**Attendance and Truancy.** There were apparent recommendations by the students to encourage the parents and school to work together collaboratively to support the students in understanding why it was important to attend school and also to assure strict and appropriate policies were implemented. There was also encouragement by students for schools to consider what home factors might be impacting student attendance that would include shelter, food, transportation and other potential factors.

**Cultural Competency and Culturally Responsive.** There were suggestions by the students that teachers become more literate and trained in the local tribal languages (if appropriate) and at the minimum holding a general knowledge of Native Americans to promote respect and deeper understanding of the students background. This would counter facing negative stereotypes and references to Native American students in the classroom as well as consideration of curriculum and lesson plans that might be inaccurate of Native populations.

**College and Career Readiness.** It was obvious there was a time delay between middle school and high school students understandings of college and career readiness. There was some general knowledge about what it means but more understanding of transition between middle and high school for the middle school student population. A recommendation for more outreach and cultivation of understanding on what it means to be college and career ready. Students were aware of the importance of school subjects and how that impacts college course success. There was a strong understanding in the connection between what readiness

means for the individual and the community. A recommendation to continue to foster the connections of individual and community and tying readiness to culture would be more relevant to Native American students.

**Native Language.** All of the students understood the importance of language for themselves, but more so the importance of being able to communicate with elders and the impact it has on their identity and cultural resilience. Recommendations from students were to be more consistent in teaching the language, having language teachers who are passionate about teaching the language and the school providing opportunities for parents or tribal members to attend events at the school to learn the language with the students. The students recommended the process of certification for tribal language teachers needs to be amended to ensure language instructors have training and a desire to teach the language in the schools.

**Alignment and Transitioning Between Schools.** For students who identified as moving from BIE or tribally controlled school a recommendation was that the receiving school district needs to provide a deeper orientation so student can transition into how the school operates, scheduling and adjusting socially. As another recommendation, it would be helpful for school districts to better communicate between administrators and teachers on how to support students transitioning in and build relationships with them. It is also apparent there are ethnic and racial differences per school and school district that might be considered being address on a one-to-one basis for students transitioning.

## PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

### Timeframe, feasibility and logistics

It is important when soliciting projects to consider the timeframe provided and expectations placed on project coordinators and research team members. This impacts the monitoring and would improve coordination of efforts. It seems the project team would have had more effectiveness to have worked in the schools but this would require high coordination of recruitment within schools and having the project team members conduct the listening circles to ensure proper recording of devices, protecting of information and confidentiality.

### Institutional Review Board Processes

It is highly recommended, if a future project occurs the researchers are given adequate time to receive Institutional Review Board (IRB) institutional approval for completion of deeper research and then coordinated with school districts and tribal nations. Such an expansion would allow adequate time and planning to receive IRB approval within school districts and tribal nations (as applicable) and would also encourage more school districts to participate for more representation of Native American students within the state.

## CONCLUSION

The Native Student Listening Project provides a strong baseline document to help stimulate discussion among the twenty-three Native serving school districts and twenty-three tribes in the state of New Mexico. While reflective ultimately of only eight of these districts, the findings can help inform a broader discussion of the status of Native student education in the state.

As detailed, the findings suggest that most students are fully aware of the attendance and truancy policies of their respective districts. This level of student awareness is indicative that the districts have performed this task effectively and thoroughly. As many of the students pointed out those who get in trouble with these policies often only have themselves to blame. In many case, the students provided helpful suggestions on how to ensure students understood the connection from policy to the importance of attendance and academic success.

In terms of cultural competence and culturally relevant materials and instruction, many of the students indicated that they would like to see changes in how this is handled as well as the culturally competency training provided to non-Native teachers and staff. The students cited cases of individual educators who were either Native speakers or who had taken the time to learn about the local Native culture and strove to include discussion of it in their ongoing instruction. Too often though, they indicated that the amount of coverage was typically insufficient and could be improved.

A large number of students believed their districts and schools were doing a good job in preparing them for the inevitable transition out of school and into college and career. Most of the students had a clear idea that this transition meant movement into adulthood and being responsible for themselves. They often commented on the need to learn good study habits, the ability to stay on task and develop a mindset that would help meet the obligations of life after public school.

When considering their native language, several of the students recognized the need and importance for them to both understand and speak it, even if many had not yet fully developed those skills. They saw it as an important element in allowing them to communicate with their family and elders and helping to preserve their culture, heritage, and history. Many of these students appeared acutely aware that they bore much of the responsibility for learning their language and keeping it from extinction. They often commented on the role that schools could play in providing more classes and other time and spaces for them to learn and practice their language.

The final area that we addressed in this project surround the alignment of PED schools with those of the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) or tribally controlled schools and how students transitioned from one setting to another. A fairly large percentage of students had only attended a public school so they could not address this issue. Others though commented on various aspects of this transition with mixed responses. In some cases they found the change to be challenging. For others, the shift had been easy. And, still other fell somewhere in between. Many of the students discussed the smaller classroom and school settings found in BIE schools to have facilitated their learning and experienced some shock when they moved to, generally, much larger public schools. Others though commented on the enhanced resources they found in the public schools and how this helped with their academic progress.

As indicated in the recommendations section, if a future project that will continue this focus is undertaken, it would be beneficial if it is initiated earlier in the school year. Such a change would help facilitate outreach to schools, provide for enhanced training, and allow for more in-depth discussion with the students as well as reaching more of them.

We want to thank the administration, faculty and students of each of the schools that contributed to this project. It goes without saying that had it not been for their participation this project could not have been undertaken or completed.

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## APPENDIX 1

### GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

Adult Educator Protocol  
District Coordinator Protocol  
Elements of Active Listening  
NMIED Listening Circle Questions  
IED LC Student Information Cover Letter  
Circle Participation Release

## Native Student Listening Circle Protocol — School-Based Adult Educator

### START

As discussed with your district coordinator, you have agreed to serve as a school-level adult educator who will be responsible for facilitating a listening circle for students in your school. As you will recall, the purpose of the project is:

Improving academic outcomes for Native students by having them participate in school-based listening circles and completing brief questionnaires that provide them the opportunity to offer their perspectives related to the five aims below:

- Attendance and truancy
- Cultural competency training and culturally responsive learning environments
- College and career readiness
- Supporting Native language programs and English learners; and
- School system alignment between PED/Bureau of Indian Education/Tribally controlled schools

The various responsibilities include the following:

- Recruit 6 to 10 students who are willing to participate in a listening circle and answer the questionnaires.
- Schedule a brief session with the students to go over the basics of active listening. (Basic elements sheet is provided separately). Ideally, this will be done separately from the day of the circle in order to allow them to be exposed to the process and perhaps have the chance to practice. However, we know that time is scarce and if necessary you can go over the basics immediately prior to the circle.
- Complete the top section of the release forms with the information requested (your name and contact information and the date/time of the listening circle).
- Provide the students with two copies of the release form (copies provided) with the top information completed that the student will need to sign along with their parent/guardian. Please inform the student their parent/guardian should retain one copy for their files and they should return the second signed copy to you prior to the scheduled date of the circle in order for them to participate.
- Ask students to complete brief questionnaires on: 1) their listening habits (pre- and post-training and listening circle participation) and 2) their views on the five aims.
- Conduct the Listening Circles using the question set provided.
  - Record the discussion using the provided audio recorder, (directions for operation provided on a separate sheet and in the box containing the recorder).
  - Save the recording
- Collect the completed questionnaires from the students. Enclose them into the provided envelopes.
- Return the envelopes and the audio recorder to the District Coordinator.

Contact Scott Hughes at UNM if you have any questions: [Shughe58@unm.edu](mailto:Shughe58@unm.edu) or 505-321-3927

### DONE

## Native Student Listening Circle Protocol — District Coordinator

### START

Identify and contact the school level person (a.k.a. adult educator) who will conduct the listening circle at their school.

Set up a time to discuss the purpose of the project:

Improving academic outcomes for Native students by having them participate in school-based listening circles and completing brief questionnaires that provide them the opportunity to offer their perspectives related to the five aims below:

- Attendance and truancy
- Cultural competency training and culturally responsive learning environments
- College and career readiness
- Supporting Native language programs and English learners; and
- School system alignment between PED/Bureau of Indian Education/Tribally controlled schools

Inform them as part of this effort, they will be asked to do the following:

- Recruit 6 to 10 students who are willing to be participants in a learning circle.
- Schedule a brief session with the students to go over the basics of active listening. (Basic elements sheet is provided separately). Ideally, this will be done separately from the day of the circle in order to allow them to be exposed to the process and perhaps have the chance to practice. However, we know that time is scarce and if necessary they can go over the basics immediately prior to the circle.
- Provide the students with two copies of the release form (copies provided) that the student will need to sign along with their parent/guardian. The parent/guardian will retain one copy for their files. The student will need to return the signed second copy to the adult educator prior to the scheduled date of the circle in order for them to participate.
- Ask students to complete brief questionnaires on 1) their listening habits (pre- and post-training and listening circle participation) and 2) their views on the five aims.
- Conduct the Listening Circles using the question set provided.
  - Record the discussion using the provided audio recorder,
  - Save the recording
- Collect the completed questionnaires from the students. Enclose them into the provided envelopes. Return the envelope and the audio recorder to the District Coordinator.

Discuss the basic elements of active listening from the provided sheet.

Collect all questionnaire protocols and recorders from participating schools.

Transfer recording to secure file transfer protocol site to CEPR. (Directions and site information to follow). **Recharge recorder via USB link prior to handing off to another school. Return to top.**

Place envelopes and recorder in Fed Ex Box and arrange pickup for shipping back to UNM/CEPR. Box and shipping label are provided.

Contact Scott Hughes at UNM if you have any questions: [Shughe58@unm.edu](mailto:Shughe58@unm.edu) or 505-321-3927

### DONE

## Elements of Active Listening

### Pay Attention

- Concentrate on the speaker
- Don't let distracting thoughts intrude on your concentration
- Be open to the message
- Don't begin thinking about what you intend to say in response
- Don't engage in side conversations
- "Listen" to body language
- Put yourself in the other person's shoes

### Show That You Are Listening

Use gestures to indicate attention to the conversation:

- Nod Occasionally
- Smile and use other facial expressions
- Note posture and make sure it conveys openness (Don't cross your arms)
- Use an occasional "yes" or "uh-huh" to show you are following along

### Summarize in Your Own Words What you Heard/Comment on What you Heard

- Use comments to reflect back your understanding, such as:
  - "What I'm hearing is..."
  - "Sounds like you are saying..."
- Ask questions to clarify points where you are unsure, such as:
  - "What did you mean when you said...?"
  - "Did you mean...when you said...?"

### Don't be Judgmental

- Interrupting frustrates the speaker and can discourage full understanding of the conversation
- Allow the speaker to finish each point prior to asking questions
- Don't introduce counter arguments until the conversation on the topic being discussed has ceased

### Respond Appropriately

- Active listening is based on a process of mutual respect
- Be open, honest, and say what you believe
- Be assertive *not* aggressive
- Treat the person the way you want to be treated

**NMIED Listening Circle Questions****Area 1: Attendance and Truancy**

What supports are needed to address attendance and truancy (from the school, parents (guardians) and community)?

**Area 2: Cultural competency training and culturally responsive learning environments**

What can schools do to value your culture? What can teachers do to help integrate your culture?

**Area 3: College and career readiness**

What are you learning in school that will help you in your life after graduation? What do you think it means to be college and career ready?

**Area 4: Supporting Native language programs and English learners**

How important is it to speak and/or understand your native language? What can your school do to support using your Native language?

**Area 5: School system alignment between PED/Bureau of Indian Education/Tribally Controlled Schools**

Have you attended a BIE (Bureau of Indian Education) or tribally controlled school during your education? If yes, was there a smooth transition between being in the BIE or tribally controlled school and moving to a public school?

Hello,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Native Students Listening Circle Project. The New Mexico Public Education Department has selected the Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR) at the University of New Mexico to conduct the project. The project is centered on getting your ideas on areas related to your education that the Public Education Department along with school districts and tribal authorities across the state are interested in exploring. The project staff at CEPR will prepare a summary report for the Public Education Department that will be shared with people in districts and tribes across the state.

As part of this project we are asking you to answer three questionnaires. Two of them are identical and ask about your listening habits. You will be asked to complete one before and the second one after you have had a chance to meet with the Listening Circle coordinator who will talk to you about a process known as active listening. You will be asked to follow the guidelines related to active listening when you participate in the Listening Circle. The third questionnaire will ask what you think about how your school, including the teachers and other staff, support different parts of your education.

For each of the questionnaires, we are asking for your name, district, school and grade. We are asking for this information only to make sure we have an accurate record of the answers given by any one individual and don't confuse them with somebody else. To make sure this process works, once they receive the questionnaires back from your district the people at CEPR will assign what is known as a control code that will replace your name. People at CEPR will then destroy the sheet with your name and other information. We will only report the answer you give to each question as part of a total score collected from other students either at your school or other schools across the state who are also participating in the Listening Circles. Your name will not appear in any information included as part of a report that will come out of this project.

We thank you for participating in this project and hope that you enjoy your experience in the Listening Circle.

Sincerely,

Scott Hughes & Robin Minthorn

UNM/CEPR Student Information Cover\_V1 4-4-17



**Native Student Listening Circle****Parent/Guardian Release for Student Participation**

School Name:	Location:	Date/Time:
School Contact:	Email:	Phone:

The Indian Education Division of the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) has contracted with the University of New Mexico Center for Education Policy Research (UNM CEPR) to oversee a project to collect Native student input on five areas related to improving their education within their schools and to help inform policy at the district and state department level. The five areas include:

- Attendance and truancy
- Cultural competency training and culturally responsive learning environments
- College and career readiness
- Supporting Native language programs and English learners; and
- School system alignment between PED/Bureau of Indian Education/Tribally controlled schools

You are being asked to read this release form, and if you agree to allow your child to participate in a "Listening Circle" at their school, please sign below.

We expect that 6 to 10 students from the school will comprise a circle, and an adult educator (either a teacher or administrator) will facilitate the discussion. In order to facilitate the collection of information the educator will audio record the circle and will transfer the recording to the UNM CEPR for transcription. CEPR staff will review the transcriptions and capture the information from the recordings in a report to the PED IED. **CEPR staff will eliminate any names or identifying information collected in the recordings to protect the privacy of the students or other individuals.** Please note: we will ask students to only share what is appropriate in regards to anything surrounding culture and language and want to only capture generally what will support students in honoring their culture in the classroom and within the schools.

As part of the project, the adult circle leader will train students in a process known as active listening. Active listening is a learned skill that encourages improved understanding, remembering, interpreting, evaluating, and responding in a conversation. They will ask students to answer a brief questionnaire related to their listening habits before the training on active listening and after they participate in the listening circle. A second part of the questionnaire will include asking about their general views on how their school and district address the five areas noted above. **The date and time of the listening circle are noted above along with the name and contact information of the adult educator who will facilitate the circle.** The total time commitment for your child over the month of April is estimated at 2.5 hours.

Questions related to either the listening circle process or the questionnaires can be directed to Scott Hughes of UNM CEPR, the Native Student Listening Circle Project Manager. You can reach Dr. Hughes by phone at 505-277-2344 normally between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM or by email: [Shughe58@unm.edu](mailto:Shughe58@unm.edu).

***By Signing, I acknowledge that I have read this release form and grant permission for my child to participate in the listening circle on the date and time noted above and to complete and return the questionnaires described above. Please have your child to sign as well.***

Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign both copies. Retain one for your records and return the other to your child's school. Your child will not be allowed to participate unless the form has been returned to the school.

UNM/CEPR V3 3/28/2017

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## APPENDIX 2

### DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

5 Aims Questionnaire\_Final  
Active Listening Questionnaire\_Pre-Session  
Active Listening Questionnaire\_Post-Session

**FOR SINGLE ADMINISTRATION**
**Five Aims Questionnaire**

The following statements relate to how you think about different aspects of your school and how they might support you or not.

**Please circle one answer from the replies for each statement.**

Statement		Reply			
1	I <b>understand</b> my school's policy on attendance I am expected to follow.	Not at all	Somewhat	Pretty Well	Fully
2	I <b>understand</b> my school's policy on tardiness I am expected to follow.	Not at all	Somewhat	Pretty Well	Fully
3	My school values my tribal culture and background.	Not at all	Somewhat	Pretty Well	Fully
4	Teachers in my school include lessons about my tribal culture & background.	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
5	I have the opportunity to study my tribal language at my school.	Yes		No	
6	I know my tribe's language and can speak it	Not at all	Somewhat	Pretty Well	Fully
7	I agree that the teachers & staff at my school are helping to prepare me for life after graduation.	Not at all	Somewhat	Pretty Well	Fully
8	I believe that I will be prepared to go to college if I want to after graduation.	Not at all Prepared	Somewhat Prepared	Pretty Well Prepared	Absolutely Prepared
9	I attended a Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) or Tribally controlled school before I attended a public school such as the one you now attend	Yes		No	
10	If yes, how easy was the experience of adjusting to the public school?	Not at all Easy	Somewhat Easy	Very Easy	

CEPR USE ONLY Control Number \_\_\_\_\_

**FOR PRE-ACTIVE LISTENING SESSION ADMINISTRATION**
**Active Listening Questionnaire**

The following statements relate to how you listen to other people in places like your classroom and talking to a teacher or out of school and talking to an adult. The statements don't really apply to how you talk to your friends.

**Please circle one answer from the replies for each statement.**

Statement		Reply			
1	There is a difference between hearing and listening.	Yes	No	I Don't Know	
2	When I talk to someone and do not understand something that she or he said, I ask a question so I understand that person better.	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
3	When I talk with someone, I nod my head or say "Uh-huh" to show I understand what that person is saying (even if I don't agree with what they are saying).	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
4	When another person is talking to me, I think about what I will say before that person has stopped talking.	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
5	After a person finishes talking, I sum up what he or she said to show I understand before I reply.	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
6	When I talk to another person, I pay attention to her or his face and body movements to see how that person understands me.	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
7	When I talk to somebody, I pay attention to him or her even if another person wants to talk to me.	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always

CEPR Use Only Control Number \_\_\_\_\_

UNM/CEPR V2 4/3/2017

**FOR POST-ACTIVE LISTENING SESSION ADMINISTRATION**

## Active Listening Questionnaire

The following statements relate to how you listen to other people in places like your classroom and talking to a teacher or out of school and talking to an adult. The statements don't really apply to how you talk to your friends.

**Please circle one answer from the replies for each statement.**

Statement		Reply			
1	There is a difference between hearing and listening.	Yes	No	I Don't Know	
2	When I talk to someone and do not understand something that she or he said, I ask a question so I understand that person better.	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
3	When I talk with someone, I nod my head or say "Uh-huh" to show I understand what that person is saying (even if I don't agree with what they are saying).	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
4	When another person is talking to me, I think about what I will say before that person has stopped talking.	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
5	After a person finishes talking, I sum up what he or she said to show I understand before I reply.	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
6	When I talk to another person, I pay attention to her or his face and body movements to see how that person understands me.	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
7	When I talk to somebody, I pay attention to him or her even if another person wants to talk to me.	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always

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