



California  
Center for  
School Climate



AUDIO GALLERY

Shasta County  
Office of Education  
REDDING, CA



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## CO-DESIGNING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY WITH TRIBAL PARTNERS

Culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy (CRSP) has been increasingly cited as an important strategy for promoting equity in education through its promotion of linguistic and cultural pluralism and equality.<sup>1</sup> Yet, many districts and counties struggle to solidify this pedagogy into concrete policies and practices to support outcomes for all learners.<sup>2</sup> An example of a specific, compelling CRSP strategy is investing in community design circles that uplift the experiences, voices, and decision-making power of groups that are marginalized by systemic inequities.<sup>3</sup>

In most counties in California, fewer than 1 percent of students enrolled are Native American.<sup>4</sup> In the 2020–2021 school year, 3.8 percent (n=1000) of Shasta County Office of Education students were counted as Native American. County officials report high levels of self-identified mixed-race Native Americans who, while counted differently, bring a myriad of cultural assets that can be leveraged to support crucial learning outcomes. The Shasta County Office of Education (SCOE) developed a partnership with local tribal members as a result of the advocacy of the Local Indians for Education (LIFE) Center Director Rod Lindsay, who was concerned about chronic absenteeism among Native American students. At the time, 21 percent of Native American students were chronically absent within SCOE. Local tribal leaders met with SCOE to identify a main cause of high absenteeism. SCOE collaborated with tribal members to advocate for Assembly Bill 516, which was signed into law in 2021, amending the Education code to excuse absences for students attending cultural events or ceremonies.<sup>5</sup> SCOE representatives collaborated with tribal members to advocate for Assembly Bill 516, which was signed into

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law in September 2021, amending the Education code to excuse absences for students attending cultural events or ceremonies.

This inspired the formation of the American Indian Advisory, which has convened monthly since March 2019 with members from the Pit River, Redding Rancheria, Wintu, and Winnemem Wintu tribes, along with Title VI education coordinators, SCOE representatives, and educators. The Advisory works by means of a shared statement of purpose: to correct myths and misconceptions, to combat prejudice and promote appreciation, and to celebrate and honor the history, culture, and continuing contributions of Native Americans. The Advisory has co-designed an education series with speakers selected by tribal members for community members to learn about the history and current affairs of local tribes. Recently, the Advisory formed a Lesson Study team of teachers who co-design History and Social Study lessons with tribal cultural consultants who share their vision for a topic. Consultants then vet teacher-created materials with a tribal council to ensure accuracy before the lessons are piloted. This planning process enables tribal members to develop curricular narratives shaped by the wisdom and traditions of their own community, which is a powerful tool in combatting deficit narratives that dominate mainstream curricula.<sup>6</sup>

Cindy Hogue, a tribal consultant who also serves as an 8th grade teacher in the county, shared her insight into the significance of these co-designed lessons: “I see more of our children becoming able to branch out and express themselves. In my history, my own personal history, we were told to keep quiet because my mother and my aunts and my uncles had been seated in the back of the classrooms... Well, now I’m able to say, this is who I am... I want the kids to be able to say that. I want them to say, this is who I am and I’m proud of it. And so having a curriculum that celebrates them and celebrates their resilience and their ability to overcome so many

School Information	
Number of students	26,297
Geographic setting	Rural
Grades served	K–12
School model	Various

Student Demographics	
White	66.8%
Latinx	16.0%
Multiracial	6.7%
Native American/Alaska Native	3.8%
Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3.4%
Black	1.2%
Filipino	0.3%
Students with disabilities	16.6%
English language learners	83.1%
Socioeconomically disadvantaged	0.8%

*Data sourced from the [Shasta County Office of Education Report to the Community](#).*



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### *Consider while you listen . . .*

The Shasta County Office of Education demonstrates cultural responsiveness in its approach to co-designed policies and practices with the American Indian Advisory. **How does your school community honor and affirm the experiences and knowledge of traditionally marginalized groups? How might culturally responsive practices support student and community engagement?**

Tribal consultant Cindy Hogue emphasized the importance of respect and trust in building relationships with local tribal members, given the generations of genocide and abuse of Native Americans in the county. **How does your school or district approach relationship-building with historically and currently marginalized groups? How might a collaborative design process promote trust and equity in your community?**

## References

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- <sup>6</sup> Sleeter, C. E. (2011). *The academic and social value of ethnic studies: A research review*. National Education Association, Research Department.

