



Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings and Standards Integration Guide: Implementation Study Summary of Findings

August 29, 2022

Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings and Standards Integration Guide: Implementation Study Summary of Findings

Compiled by the Region 11 Comprehensive Center (R11CC) at McREL International:

Dorothy Aguilera-Black Bear, Ph.D., dabbear10@gmail.com, South Dakota Project Lead

Susan Shebby, sshebby@mcrel.org, Co-Director

Jeanette Joyce, Ph.D., jjoyce@mcrel.org, Evaluator

Federal Disclaimer

This report is in the public domain. While permission to reprint is not necessary, publication should be cited as:

Aguilera-Black Bear, D., Shebby, S., Joyce, J. (2022). *Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings and Standards: Integration Guide Summary of Findings*. Denver, CO. Region 11 Comprehensive Center/McREL International.

This document is prepared by the Region 11 Comprehensive Center (R11CC), administered by McREL International, under Award #S283B190011 for the South Dakota Department of Education (SD DOE) and the South Dakota Office of Education, Department of Tribal Relations (OIE-DTR). The content of this document does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the R11CC, the SD DOE, the OIE-DTR, or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. © 2022 McREL International.

Contents

Oceti Sakowin Integration Guide: Implementation Study Summary of Findings	i
Federal Disclaimer	i
Contents.....	ii
Introduction.....	2
Study Approach	3
Study Results	4
Use of the OSEUS Integration Guide	4
Challenges Using the Integration Guide.....	5
Collaboration	5
OSEUS Resources	6
Professional Learning Supports.....	6
Systemic Barriers.....	7
Next Steps	7
References	8

Traditional Western educational systems perpetuate, and in some cases exacerbate, educational inequities for Native American students. Systems are fragmented, with educators who serve Native American students at the intersection of different requirements, regulations, funding opportunities, and constraints. These factors inhibit the capacity of educators to pursue evidence-based educational practices and approaches. However, they also present an opportunity to examine the “bright spots,” where, despite these conditions, educators embrace the intelligence of Native American children, use educational practices that draw from and build on Indigenous knowledge, and reduce inequities.

Introduction

The Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings and Standards (OSEUS), a vision held by many individuals, tribes, and organizations for several decades, was realized through legislation in 2007. The OSEUS and information about the development process are documented in the [Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings & Standards booklet](#).

The South Dakota Department of Education and the Office of Indian Education, Department of Tribal Relations are working with the Region 11 Comprehensive Center to identify evidence-based practices that can act as levers to identify and expand “bright spots” that lead to academic successes for Native American students. In 2021, the South Dakota Department of Education and the Office of Indian Education, Department of Tribal Relations identified a need to support K–12 teachers in implementing the OSEUS. One potential evidence-based practice that supports implementation is an innovation configuration map.

In the mid-1970s and 1980s, a team of researchers developed [Innovation Configurations Maps](#) to help guide educators implementing new programs by providing a model of what that program might look like in practice.

An innovation configuration map can be used in several ways.

- » **Teacher Reflection:** Innovation configuration maps present descriptions of different ways that teachers can implement instructional practices. Teachers can independently review their teaching practices compared with those presented in an innovation configuration map and self-reflect on ways to improve implementation.
- » **Teacher Observations and Coaching:** Educators can use innovation configuration maps as the structure for planning, observing, and conducting observation follow-up conversations.
- » **Professional Learning:** Innovation configuration maps can be used to identify teacher learning needs and corresponding priorities for teacher professional development. Rather than as a tool to evaluate individual teachers, data should be analyzed across groups to determine the content for training.

In July and September 2021, a diverse workgroup of 25 educators representing public, private, Bureau of Indian Education, and Tribal Contract schools; education organizations; and tribal nations from across South Dakota co-developed an innovation configuration map to support the implementation of the OSEUS (Integration Guide). The Integration Guide includes information about culture-based education, lesson planning and instructional design, collaboration with elders and colleagues, family and community engagement, and Oceti Sakowin sustainability, as well as links to curricular resources.

Teachers who helped create the Integration Guide and [Wóokiye Project](#) teachers were invited to participate in a preliminary implementation study to assess its usefulness, as well as inform improvements to the Integration Guide and identify the professional learning and resources that will better support teachers in their OSEUS implementation efforts. Additionally, the team wanted to identify best practices in evaluation to effectively track participants' experiences with the Integration Guide.

The study period was from February to May 2022; seven individuals agreed to participate. All seven participants taught in K–12 public schools and five taught in rural communities. Three schools served predominately Native American students (from 52% to 79%), while four schools served predominately white students (from 72% to 82%), [South Dakota Department of Education, 2020-21 Report Card](#). All but one of the participants are certified teachers. The participants taught in content areas including reading, language arts, English, social studies, history, government, Native American studies, mathematics, and science.

Study Approach

All teachers were asked to complete monthly logs with questions about their use of the Integration Guide, including collaboration with colleagues, and resources and supports needed. At least 57% and up to 100% of participants completed each monthly log. Additionally, the evaluation team conducted individual interviews with all participants during May to further explore nuances about experiences with the Integration Guide. The findings presented below include data from the monthly logs and individual interviews.

Study Results

Use of the OSEUS Integration Guide

Teachers were more likely to use the Integration Guide during February and March, with a subsequent reduction in use in April and May, possibly as teachers became more comfortable and familiar with its components and resources for implementing the OSEUS. Of those who reported using the Integration Guide in a given month (Figure 1), most also reported finding it useful (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Teacher use of the Integration Guide

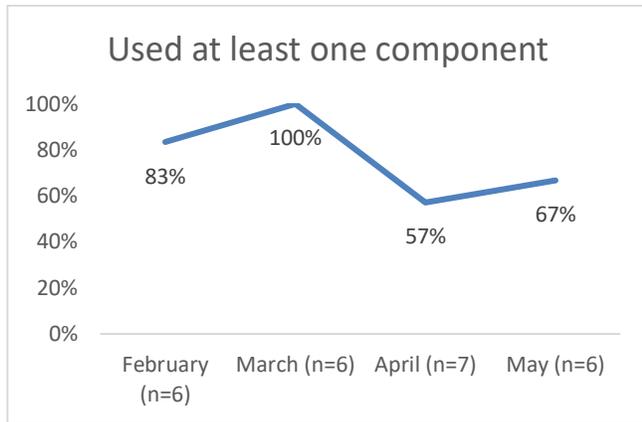
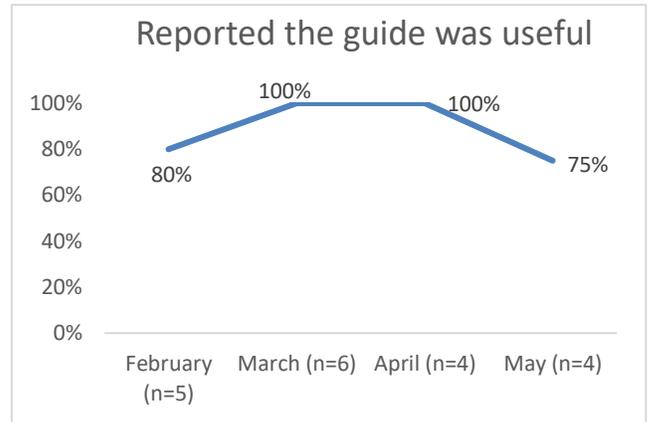


Figure 2. Teachers reporting the guide was useful



During the interviews, several teachers provided more information about their use of the Integration Guide. Two teachers reported using it for lesson planning and one described using it as a progress monitoring tool:

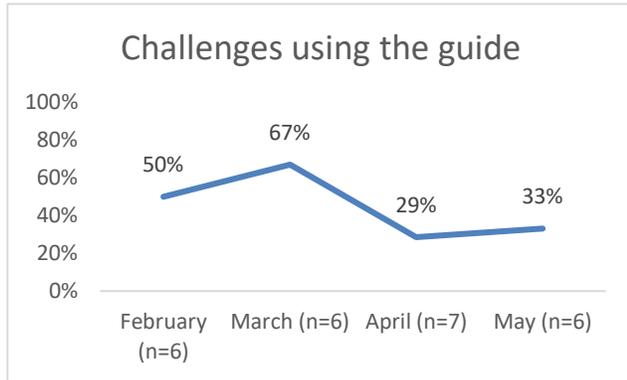
- » “I was able to see where I was at, you know, at a certain point, and what I needed to do to move back and forth within the components of the IC Map [Integration Guide] and what that looked like because they gave ideas/examples....”

Another described how the Integration Guide was helpful when visualizing how to implement approaches in the classroom: “I’m always trying to imagine, ‘How does this translate into what I can do in a classroom?’ And if so, I think, ‘How do I do this?’” A third shared enthusiasm for the approach without providing a specific example: “I was really interested in the approach, and I happily jumped in.”

During the interviews, several explained they did not use the Integration Guide for lesson planning because they had completed lesson planning in fall 2021, before the study began. They reported using the Integration Guide as a source of resources to integrate into existing lesson plans and as a resource to reflect on their instructional practices. One teacher shared a goal: “My goal was just once a month to do something. Lakota [language], that was my goal.”

Challenges Using the Integration Guide

Figure 3. Challenges using the Integration Guide



All participants reported that they were able to use the **Integration Guide** without assistance. However, initially, many of the participating teachers encountered difficulties in using the **Integration Guide**. Most challenges were associated with the organization of the resources and were reported in the initial study months. In the interviews, most teachers also agreed that available resources are more geared to high-school levels and that adding more resources for

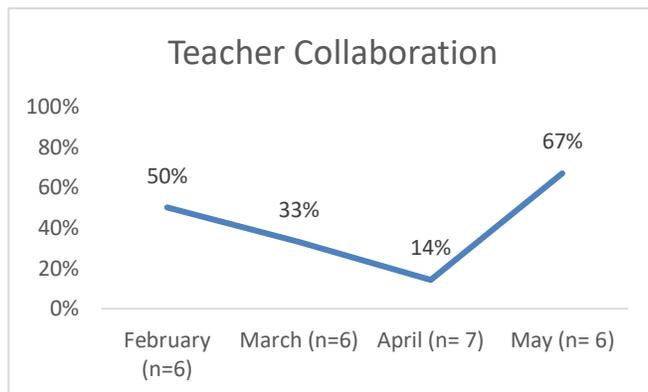
elementary grades would be useful. Some also asked for more “ready to use” resources organized by age/grade level, such as lesson plans, classroom materials, and elder videos.

- » “I am really struggling with some of the content. I know that other teachers will not spend the time to search through all the material. I have a vested interest because I am in this workgroup. The map needs to have several lesson plans made with the age group that it is for.”

Most were not able to access local elders or did not have honorary funds for elders to provide storytelling or cultural activities in classrooms or schoolwide events, which is also listed as an **Integration Guide** component.

Collaboration

Figure 4. Teacher Collaboration



Five participants reported collaborating with other colleagues at least once over the course of the study. One teacher worked with a group of colleagues, introducing them to the **Integration Guide** and asking them to see where they are (a self-assessment activity) in their integration of OSEUS. Several participants reported assisting colleagues with using the **Integration Guide** and sharing resources: “I showed them the IC Map [Integration Guide], and I asked them for

permission. I needed them to think that this was important, instead of me just telling them.” Others reported collaborating with colleagues to assess school and classroom spaces for visuals reflecting Native American communities: “I was able to take two groups of grade teams and look around our school and see what our school offered our Native [American] students.”

Additional collaboration examples included working with district resource staff, community members and partner organizations to create classroom activities; and supporting school-wide events that incorporate tribal languages and traditional practices, such as growing medicinal plants.

OSEUS Resources

The Integration Guide provides links to OSEUS resources, including the WoLakota website lesson plans, elder videos, and other sites that offer curated Native American resource materials. When asked to provide examples of how the Integration Guide helped teachers integrate the OSEUS, most respondents identified the linked resources. The most appreciated resources were those that provided help with visuals for classroom and school spaces, general information about the OSEUS, and working with elders: “They gave ideas/examples of things, like that community piece that was going to achieve evidence-based practices, it was a guide for going out in the community when you were further along in that work.”

Other teachers mentioned the organization and clarity of instructional design concepts in the Integration Guide that can inform the integration of the OSEUS: “It made me more aware of where my curriculum and my classes could more easily incorporate the OSEUS.”

Professional Learning Supports

All participants suggested professional learning supports and resources for scaling the OSEUS implementation work with educators across South Dakota. These included building teachers’ general knowledge about tribal communities: “General knowledge is needed, there's a lot of general rules, statements that are not quite as kind as they could be, just an awareness class would be helpful.” Using the community’s language when the teacher is not fluent in the language was a barrier to the OSEUS implementation, as experienced by multiple teachers: “One thing... I wanted to bring up is a lot of people are hesitant and afraid to speak the language in case they speak it wrong.” Several participants indicated that building teacher confidence and ownership to implement OSEUS was especially important for teachers without tribal connection because they will have these concerns: “Am I doing this right?” or “Should I be doing this?” Another participant reported

- » “I did this work with teachers for a long time, provided PD and coursework, and what I consistently heard is, I don't want to do it because I don't know how to do it, I don't want to offend, and I don't know enough.”

Multiple participants suggested providing guidance on how to effectively use the Integration Guide and creating structures for teachers to plan for implementation and to reflect:

- » “Let's start with where you are on this kind of scale [in the Integration Guide], and figure out where your starting point is, which is kind of a self-assessment. I do think that given the right resources, certain things could be incorporated fairly easily, like lesson plans.”

Several participants suggested offering professional learning support to help teachers and administrators understand the importance of the OSEUS especially for connecting with students: “In terms of professional development... at some point... staff and teachers have to have that understanding of the importance of them [OSEUS] and how they connect to the students.”

Additional suggestions for professional learning were to offer place-based, experiential learning opportunities in tribal communities, creating a repository of carefully curated virtual resources and video training options (for example, elder stories, IC Map [Integration Guide], lesson plans, and language and other resources): “Teachers at this point want to just pull a lesson that's ready to go.”

Systemic Barriers

Perspectives about systemic barriers implementation study teachers experienced with the OSEUS implementation were abundant. Familiarity and experience with the OSEUS were barriers shared by several participants: “My lack of knowledge was a barrier. My lack of experience was a barrier.”

Others shared that not having curriculum directors was a barrier for teachers finding support for integrating the OSEUS: “Some schools just don't have curriculum. They don't have a curriculum director. They don't have a central repository for resources.” One elaborated:

- » “We get these [directives] from the district, and then there was no direction, leading to teachers that are teaching the OSEUS as [a] separate class, a separate lesson plan from the content areas they teach.”

Another shared that guidance from the state would support implementation: “In terms of systemic, start at the top... and start talking about why American Indians have been written out of South Dakota history. So that's the big one, the elephant in the room.”

Participants also shared ideas for systems-level actions that would support increased implementation of the OSEUS. These included creating opportunities for sharing and learning with teachers from tribal rural communities as a method to help teachers who are new to the OSEUS and don't have an understanding or awareness about the Oceti Sakowin Oyate-the Seven Council Fires people (the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota people):

- » “I think the next level would be working and collaborating with the schools on the reservation, where you have a higher number of Native [American] students in their schools, you have these big C [culture] schools.”

Another participant suggested developing a list of elders from the local communities who are interested in collaborating with teachers and coming into classrooms to interact with students: “I think connections are important, if somehow you had a list of willing elders.”

Next Steps

The South Dakota Department of Education and the Office of Indian Education, Department of Tribal Relations plan to continue collaborating with the Region 11 Comprehensive Center to support educator implementation of the OSEUS. These partners are working to implement a pilot in the 2022–23 school year to further explore the feasibility of using the Integration Guide to support OSEUS implementation, as well as the resources and supports that are associated with OSEUS implementation with teams of educators in six schools.

The pilot will offer professional learning opportunities with community-based experts working with OSEUS, ongoing support, collaboration with colleagues, networking with other teacher teams, and participation-based stipends for elementary teachers in South Dakota schools.

References

Innovation Configurations. (n.d.). SEDL Archive.

https://sedl.org/cbam/innovation_configurations.html

Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings & Standards booklet (2018), Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings and Standards Work Groups, 2010-2016 (Merle Locke). South Dakota Department of Education, Office of Indian Education. <https://sdtribalrelations.sd.gov/indian-education/oceti-sakowin-project.aspx>

South Dakota Department of Education (2021). 2020-21 Report Card.

<https://doe.sd.gov/reportcard/>

Wóokiye Project, (n.d.). Office of Indian Education, South Dakota Department of Tribal Relations.

<https://sdtribalrelations.sd.gov/indian-education/initiatives.aspx>