

Wind River Reservation  
Standards for  
Culturally Responsive Schools

Project of the Wind River Rural System Initiative and Math Science Partnership

NATIVE WAYS OF KNOWING

Wind River Indian Reservation

Wyoming

*Proposal for:*

Cultural Standards for Students, Educators, Curriculum,  
Schools & Communities

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## Preface

[to include entries from Native Ways of Knowing contributing members]

The standards in this document are meant to be guidelines for creating and maintaining a healthy, multi-cultural environment in our Wyoming schools. Although built largely on Native American cultural realities, these standards are all-inclusive; embracing any and all cultural groups.

Throughout this document the term Elder is used. In traditional Native knowledge Elder is someone older who has responsibility for you or your children. This is a term of respect, regardless of the color of one's hair.

# Wind River Reservation Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools

## Cultural Standards for STUDENTS

A: Culturally-knowledgeable students are well grounded in the cultural heritage and traditions of their community.

Students who meet this cultural standard are able to:

1. assume responsibility for their role in relation to the well-being of the cultural community and their life-long obligations as a community member;
2. recount their own genealogy and family history;
3. acquire and pass on the traditions of their community through oral and written history;
4. practice their traditional responsibilities to the surrounding environment;
5. reflect through their own actions the critical role that their traditional language plays in fostering a sense of who they are and how they understand the world around them;
6. live a life in accordance with the cultural values and traditions of the local community and integrate them into their everyday behavior;
7. determine the place of their cultural community in the regional, state, national and international political and economic systems;

**B:** Culturally-knowledgeable students are able to build on the knowledge and skills of the local cultural community as a foundation from which to achieve life-long personal and academic success.

Students who meet this cultural standard are able to:

1. acquire insights from other cultures without diminishing the integrity of their own;
2. make effective use of the knowledge, skills and ways of knowing from their own cultural traditions to learn about the larger world in which they live;
3. make appropriate choices regarding the long-term consequences of their actions;
4. identify appropriate forms of technology and anticipate the consequences of their use for improving the quality of life in the community.

**C:** Culturally-knowledgeable students are able to participate actively in various cultural environments.

Students who meet this cultural standard are able to:

1. perform subsistence activities in ways that are appropriate to local cultural norms;
2. make constructive contributions to the governance of their community and the well-being of their family;
3. attain a healthy lifestyle through which they are able to maintain their own social, emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual well-being;
4. enter into and function effectively in a variety of cultural settings.

D: Culturally-knowledgeable students are able to engage effectively in learning activities that are based on traditional ways of knowing and learning.

Students who meet this cultural standard are able to:

1. acquire in-depth cultural knowledge through active participation and meaningful interaction with Elders;
2. participate in and make constructive contributions to the learning activities associated with a traditional camp environment;
3. interact with Elders in a loving and respectful way that demonstrates an appreciation of their role as culture-bearers and educators in the community;
4. gather oral and written history information from the local community and provide an appropriate interpretation of its cultural meaning and significance;
5. identify and utilize appropriate sources of cultural knowledge to find solutions to everyday problems;
6. engage in a realistic self-assessment to identify strengths and needs and make appropriate decisions to enhance life skills.

E: Culturally-knowledgeable students demonstrate an awareness and appreciation of the relationships and processes of interaction of all elements and seasons in the world around them.

Students who meet this cultural standard are able to:

1. recognize and build upon the inter-relationships that exist among the spiritual, natural and human realms in the world around them, as reflected in their own cultural traditions and beliefs as well as those of others;

2. understand the ecology and geography of the bioregion they inhabit;
3. demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between world view and the way knowledge is formed and used;
4. determine how ideas and concepts from one knowledge system relate to those derived from other knowledge systems;
5. recognize how and why cultures change over time;
6. anticipate the changes that occur when different cultural systems come in contact with one another;
7. determine how cultural values and beliefs influence the interaction of people from different cultural backgrounds;
8. identify and appreciate who they are and their place in the world.

## Cultural Standards for EDUCATORS

A. culturally-responsive educators incorporate local ways of knowing and teaching in their work.

Educators who met this cultural standard:

1. recognize the validity and integrity of traditional knowledge systems;
2. utilize Elders' expertise in multiple ways in their teaching;
3. provide opportunities and time for students to learn in settings where local cultural knowledge and skills are naturally relevant;
4. provide opportunities for students to learn through observation and hands-on demonstration of cultural knowledge and skills;
5. adhere to the cultural and intellectual property rights that pertain to all aspects of the local knowledge they are addressing;
6. continually involve themselves in learning about the local culture.

B. Culturally-responsive educators use the local environment and community resources on a regular basis to link what they are teaching to the everyday lives of the students.

Educators who meet this cultural standard:

1. regularly engage students in appropriate projects and experiential learning activities in the surrounding environment;
2. utilize traditional settings such as camps as learning environments for transmitting both cultural and academic knowledge and skills;

3. provide integrated learning activities organized around themes of local significance and across subject areas;
4. are knowledgeable in all the areas of local history and cultural tradition that may have bearing on their work as a teacher, including the appropriate times for certain knowledge to be taught;
5. seek to ground all teaching in a constructive process built on a local cultural foundation.

C. Culturally-responsive educators participate in community events and activities in an appropriate and supportive way.

Educators who met this cultural standard:

1. become active members of the community in which they teach and make positive and culturally-appropriate contributions to the well being of that community;
2. exercise professional responsibilities in the context of local cultural traditions and expectations;
3. maintain a close working relationship with and make appropriate use of the cultural and professional expertise of their co-workers from the local community.

C. Culturally-responsive educators work closely with families to achieve a high level of complementary educational expectations between home and school.

Educators who met this cultural standard:

1. promote extensive community and family interaction by involvement in their children's education and living environment;
2. involve Elders, families and local leaders in all aspects of instructional planning and implementation;

3. seek continually to learn about and build upon the cultural knowledge that students bring with them from their homes and community;
4. seek to learn the local heritage language and promote its use in their teaching.

E. Culturally-responsive educators recognize the full educational potential of each student and provide the challenges necessary for them to achieve that potential.

Educators who met this cultural standard:

1. recognize cultural differences as positive attributes around which to build appropriate educational experiences;
2. provide learning opportunities that help students recognize the integrity of the knowledge they bring with them and use that knowledge as a springboard to new understandings;
3. reinforce the student's sense of cultural identity and place in the world;
4. acquaint students with the world beyond their home community in ways that expand their horizons while strengthening their own identities;
5. recognize the need for all people to understand the importance of learning about other cultures and appreciating what each has to offer.

## Cultural Standards for CURRICULUM

A. A culturally-responsive curriculum reinforces the integrity of the cultural knowledge that students bring with them.

A curriculum that meets this cultural standard:

1. recognizes that all knowledge is imbedded in a larger system of cultural beliefs, values and practices, each with its own integrity and interconnectedness;
2. insures that students acquire not only the surface knowledge of their culture, but are also well grounded in the deeper aspects of the associated beliefs and practices;
3. incorporates contemporary adaptations along with the historical and traditional aspects of the local culture;
4. respects and validates knowledge that has been derived from a variety of cultural traditions;
5. provides opportunities for students to study all subjects starting from a base in the local knowledge system.

B. A culturally-responsive curriculum recognizes cultural knowledge as part of a living and constantly adapting system that is grounded in the past, but continues to grow through the present and into the future.

A curriculum that meets this cultural standard:

1. recognizes the contemporary validity of much of the traditional cultural knowledge, values and beliefs, and grounds students' learning in the principles and practices associated with that knowledge;

2. provides students with an understanding of the dynamics of cultural systems as they change over time, and as they are impacted by external forces;
3. incorporates the in-depth study of unique elements of contemporary life on the Wind River Reservation, such as subsistence, sovereignty, self-determination, and treaties;
4. includes visits to cultural and historical sites and museums.

C. A culturally-responsive curriculum uses the local language and cultural knowledge as a foundation for the rest of the curriculum.

A curriculum that meets this cultural standard:

1. utilizes the local languages as a base from which to learn the deeper meanings of the local cultural knowledge, values, beliefs and practices throughout all academic disciplines;
2. recognizes the depth of knowledge that is associated with the long inhabitation of a particular place and utilizes the study of “place” as a basis for the comparative analysis of contemporary social, political and economic systems;
3. incorporates language and cultural immersion experiences wherever in-depth cultural understanding is necessary;
4. views all community members as potential teachers and all events in the community as potential learning opportunities;
5. treats local cultural knowledge as a means to acquire the curriculum content as outlined in state standards, as well as an end in itself;
6. makes appropriate use of modern tools and technology to help document and transmit traditional cultural knowledge;

7. is sensitive to traditional cultural protocol, including role of spirituality, as it relates to appropriate uses of local knowledge.

D. A culturally-responsive curriculum fosters a complementary relationship across diverse knowledge systems.

A curriculum that meets this cultural standard:

1. draws parallels between knowledge derived from oral tradition and that derived from books;
2. engages students in the construction of new knowledge and understands that contribute to an ever-expanding view of the world;

E. A culturally-responsive curriculum situates local knowledge and actions in a global context.

A curriculum that meets this cultural standard:

1. encourages students to consider the inter-relationship between their local circumstances and the global community;
2. conveys to students that every culture and community contributes to, and receives from the global knowledge base;
3. prepares students to “think globally, act locally.”

## Cultural Standards for SCHOOLS

A. A culturally-responsive school fosters the on-going participation of Elders in all aspects of the schooling process.

A school that meets this cultural standard:

1. Invites Elders to interact formally and informally with students at all times;
2. provides opportunities for students to engage regularly in the documenting of Elders' cultural knowledge and produce appropriate print and multimedia materials that share this knowledge with others;
3. includes explicit statements regarding the cultural values that are fostered in the community and integrates those values in all aspects of the school program and operation;
4. utilizes educational models that are grounded in the traditional world view and ways of knowing associated with the cultural knowledge system reflected in the community.

B. A culturally-responsive school provides multiple avenues for students to access the learning that is offered, as well as multiple forms of assessment for students to demonstrate what they have learned.

A school that meets this cultural standard:

1. utilizes a broad range of culturally-appropriate performance standards to assess student knowledge and skills;
2. encourages and supports experientially oriented approaches to education that makes extensive use of community-based resources and expertise;
3. provides cultural and language immersion programs in which students acquire in-depth understanding of the culture of which they are members;

4. helps students develop the capacity to assess their own strengths and weaknesses and make appropriate decisions based on such a self-assessment.

C. A culturally-responsive school provides opportunities for students to learn in and/or about their heritage language.

A school that meets this cultural standard:

1. provides language immersion opportunities for students who wish to learn in their heritage language.
2. offers courses that acquaint all students with the heritage language of the local community;
3. makes available reading materials, resources and courses through which students can acquire literacy in the heritage language;
4. provides opportunities for teachers to gain familiarity with the heritage language of the students they teach through summer immersion experiences.

D. A culturally-responsive school has a high level of involvement of professional staff who are of the same cultural background as the students with whom they are working.

A school that meets this cultural standard:

1. encourages and supports the professional development of local personnel to secure teaching and administrative roles in the school;
2. recruits and hires teachers whose background is similar to that of the students they will be teaching;

3. provides a cultural orientation camp and mentoring program for new teachers to learn about and adjust to the cultural expectations and practices of the community and school;
4. fosters and supports opportunities for teachers to participate in professional activities and associations that help them expand their repertoire of cultural knowledge and pedagogical skills.

E. A culturally-responsive school consists of facilities that are compatible with the community environment in which they are situated.

A school that meets this cultural standard:

1. provides a physical environment that is inviting and readily accessible for local people to enter and utilize;
2. makes use of facilities throughout the community to demonstrate that education is a community-wide process involving everyone as teachers;
3. utilizes local expertise, including students, to provide culturally-appropriate displays of arts, crafts and other forms of decoration and space design.

F. A culturally-responsive school fosters extensive on-going participation, communication and interaction between school and community personnel.

A school that meets this cultural standard:

1. holds regular formal and informal events bringing together students, parents, teachers and other school and community personnel to review, evaluate and plan the educational program that is being offered;
2. provides regular opportunities for local leadership deliberations and decision-making on policy, program and personnel issues related to the school;

3. sponsors on-going activities and events in the school and community that celebrate and provide opportunities for students to put into practice and display their knowledge of local cultural traditions;
4. designates and trains a school/community cultural liaison as a staff resource person.

## Cultural Standards for COMMUNITIES

A. A culturally-supportive community incorporates the practice of local cultural traditions in its everyday affairs.

A community that meets this cultural standard:

1. provides respected Elders with a place of honor in community functions;
2. models culturally-appropriate behavior in the day-to-day life of the community;
3. utilizes traditional child-rearing and parenting practices that reinforce a sense of identity and belonging;
4. organizes and encourages participation of members from all ages in regular community-wide, family-oriented events;
5. incorporates and reinforces traditional cultural values and beliefs in all formal and informal community functions.

B. A culturally-supportive community nurtures the use of the local heritage language.

A community that meets this cultural standard:

1. recognizes the role that language plays in conveying the deeper aspects of cultural knowledge and traditions;
2. sponsors local heritage language immersion opportunities for young children when they are at the critical age for language learning;

3. encourages the use of the local heritage language whenever possible in the everyday affairs of the community, including meetings, cultural events, print materials and broadcast media;
4. assists in the preparation of curriculum resource material in the local heritage language for use in the schools;
5. provides simultaneous translation services for public meetings where persons unfamiliar with the local heritage language are participants.

C. A culturally-supportive community takes an active role in the education of all its members.

A community that meets this cultural standard:

1. encourages broad-based participation of families in all aspects of their children's education, both in and out of school;
2. insures active participation by community members in review all local, regional and state initiatives that have bearing on the education of their children;
3. encourages and supports members of the local community who wish to pursue further education to secure teaching and administrative roles in the school;
4. engages in subsistence activities, sponsors cultural camps and hosts community events that provide an opportunity for children to participate actively in and learn appropriate cultural values and behavior;
5. provides opportunities for all community members to acquire and practice the appropriate knowledge and skills associated with local cultural traditions.

D. A culturally-supportive community nurtures family responsibility, sense of belonging and cultural identity.

A community that meets this cultural standard:

1. fosters cross-generational sharing of parenting and child-rearing practices;
2. creates a supportive environment for youth to participate in local affairs and acquire the skills to be contributing members of the community;
3. adopts the adage, "It takes the whole village to raise a child."

E. A culturally-supportive community assists teachers in learning and utilizing local cultural traditions and practices.

A community that meets this cultural standard:

1. sponsors a cultural orientation camp and community mentoring program for teachers to learn about and adjust to the cultural expectations and practices of the community;
2. encourages teachers to make use of facilities and expertise in the community to demonstrate that education is a community-wide process involving everyone as teachers;
3. sponsors regular community/school gatherings to celebrate the work of students and teachers and to promote on-going interaction and communication between teachers and families;
4. articulates the cultural knowledge, values and beliefs that it wishes teachers to incorporate into the school curriculum;
5. establishes a program to insure the availability of Elders' expertise in all aspects of the educational program in the school;

6. supports language and cultural immersion for school staff.

F. A culturally-supportive community contributes to all aspects of curriculum design and implementation in the local school.

A community that meets this cultural standard:

1. takes an active part in the development of the mission, goals and content of the local educational program;
2. promotes the active involvement of students with Elders in the documentation and preservation of traditional knowledge through a variety of print and multimedia formats;
3. facilitates teacher involvement in community activities and encourages the use of the local environment as a curricular resource;
4. promotes family involvement in all aspects of their children's educational experience.