



# Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor



OREGON  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

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**Colt Gill**  
Director

January 28, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

For many, high school graduation is a major milestone and achievement. It is a time of celebration and a time for us to convene to honor the accomplishments of our students, families and the diverse communities they belong to. As we join across the state to celebrate the hard work and achievements of our students this May, I encourage you to consider adopting policies and practices that recognize the diversity of our students and families to promote cultural inclusivity and equity. The Oregon Department of Education fully supports policies and practices that promote cultural autonomy and gives students the ability to wear items of cultural significance honoring their unique and diverse cultures.

Please spend time reviewing your local policies and practices. Please explore and promote opportunities for students to honor their heritages during this significant milestone in their lives and in the lives of their families. The Oregon Department of Education recommends engaging communities within your district to gain a better understanding of local needs and thoughts pertaining to graduation ceremonies. When centering the graduation needs of American Indian students and their families, a cultural practice of many is the wearing of culturally significant items such as eagle feathers, beaded caps, tribal insignias, moccasins and stoles during ceremonies.

The Oregon Department of Education is committed to fostering distinct government-to-government relationships with Oregon's federally recognized tribes. We have heard from tribal partners and other American Indian students and families how meaningful it is to wear cultural items during graduation ceremonies as a means of honoring their tribe, their community and their heritage.

As you review the policies and practices within your schools, you may wish to talk with tribal leaders and/or American Indian communities to expand your knowledge of cultural practices and traditions. High school graduation is a time of excitement and a time to honor the accomplishment of students, families and our communities as a whole. As we celebrate the hard work and achievements of our students, I encourage you to consider adopting policies that honor culturally inclusive ceremonies and reflect and acknowledge the diversity of our students and families.

The Oregon Department of Education wishes to appreciate all you do to support educational equity in our state and to create a school environment that is culturally honoring and inclusive of our diverse students, families and communities.

Respectfully,

Colt Gill, Director of the Oregon Department of Education  
cc: April Campbell, Indian Education Advisor