



# Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor



OREGON  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

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**Colt Gill**

Director of the Oregon Department of Education

May 6, 2019

Dear Colleagues,

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 fully supports policies allowing students to outwardly wear items honoring their unique cultures. Please spend time reviewing your local policies and exploring opportunities for students to honor their heritage. 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.

A topic of great interest to many of our American Indian students and their families is the wearing of items of cultural significance such as eagle feathers, beaded caps, tribal insignias and stoles during graduation ceremonies. As you review policies, you may wish to meet with tribal leaders and/or American Indian communities to expand your knowledge of their traditions.

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 be granted permission to wear cultural items during graduation ceremonies as a means of honoring their tribe, their community and their heritage. For example, similar to many African Americans that wear African Kente cloths, Mexican Americans wearing a serape, or Muslim women wearing a hijab.

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 and communities.

Respectfully,

Colt Gill  
Director of the Oregon Department of Education

Cc: April Campbell, Indian Education Advisor