

The Essential Element is You!

Ignacio School District

Ignacio, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

When working with families of diverse backgrounds in the schools, it can be very powerful to tailor partnering activities to the needs of each group. In the Ignacio School District, one way that this is done is through *The Essential Element is You! Native American Parent/Family Engagement Conference*. The goal of this conference is to bring more Native American parents into the school and engage them in school activities.

This day-long conference, while spearheaded by the Ignacio School District, targets several different districts who have families of Native American background. It is also supported by several Native American tribes, and multiple community and government organizations. Families are encouraged to bring their children, and all conference expenses are covered.

Nationally known Native American leaders are invited to attend as keynote speakers. Breakout sessions are also planned for the day. Topics include information about college and career preparation, data-based decision-making, and challenges to secondary education for Native American students. All sessions are presented by experts in their fields.

This conference is important as it allows speakers to share what is happening in the school districts with families, resulting in families being better informed and able to take more active roles as advocates in their students' educations. The conference also provides families with the opportunity to share any concerns that they have.

In order to examine the success of the conference, evaluation forms were provided for every session. The team learns a great amount of information from these evaluations, and uses it going forward for future conferences.