

Tribal Families Listening Sessions – Office of Early Learning

Swan Innovations LP



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION





Vision

All students prepared for post-secondary pathways, careers, and civic engagement.

Mission

Transform K–12 education to a system that is centered on closing opportunity gaps and is characterized by high expectations for all students and educators. We achieve this by developing equity-based policies and supports that empower educators, families, and communities.

Values

- Ensuring Equity
- Collaboration and Service
- Achieving Excellence through Continuous Improvement
- Focus on the Whole Child



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Equity Statement

Each student, family, and community possesses strengths and cultural knowledge that benefits their peers, educators, and schools.

Ensuring educational equity:

- Goes beyond equality; it requires education leaders to examine the ways current policies and practices result in disparate outcomes for our students of color, students living in poverty, students receiving special education and English Learner services, students who identify as LGBTQ+, and highly mobile student populations.
- Requires education leaders to develop an understanding of historical contexts; engage students, families, and community representatives as partners in decision-making; and actively dismantle systemic barriers, replacing them with policies and practices that ensure all students have access to the instruction and support they need to succeed in our schools.



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Swan Innovations

Swan Innovations is a Native American consulting business in the areas of Native Education, Language/Culture, and Behavioral Health.

- Dr. Whelshula brings a diverse array of knowledge, skills, and expertise. Her professional and educational background include principal investigator for national research grants; executive director of an inpatient adolescent treatment facility; president of a small tribal college, director of early childhood education; private practice in psychotherapy; education specialist; national trainer; national keynotes; and award winning innovative programming. As an educational and systems expert, Dr. Martina Whelshula has made significant contributions to the national discourse on transforming approaches to supporting families and children of diverse communities.
- Cree Whelshula builds relationships with language programs, native education programs, community members, and others interested in Native languages. She focuses her work in language revitalization and works to identify best practices for language knowledge transfer that affects change in fluency levels in different communities. She provides training and technical assistance through several modes such as email, phone, or in-person technical assistance and virtual or on-site training. Her background is primarily in early childhood education with a passion for mental health.

Purpose

Swan Innovations is working with the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instructions (OSPI) Office of Early Learning to collect and analyze data on what is working and what is missing in supporting the school transitions for Indigenous children and families in Washington State and to hear what Tribal families value in the education of their children.

Early learning is defined as birth to approximately 3rd grade, but this project is specifically looking at 3–5 year old students.



Transitions

- Transitions can be moving from one environment to another
 - From home to early learning
 - From early learning to public school
- Transitions can also be moving from one activity to another within a single day.



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Importance of Transitions

- The world is new and can be frightening for young children.
- Providing proper transitions in early childhood can...
 - Provide a sense of safety and predictability.
 - Provide sense of control and stability.
 - Allow children to develop autonomy and independence.
 - Impact learning long-term.
- If transitions are executed poorly, it can result in...
 - Anxiety and insecurity
 - Children's brain being in the "survival" center in the brain and unable to be in a state conducive to learning.
 - Impact learning long-term.



Tribal Voice

- Swan Innovations is tasked with holding listening sessions with Tribal families whose children are in early childhood programs in Washington State.
- There are 4 core questions to understand what is and isn't working from the perspective of the families.
- The responses will be anonymous and will be analyzed and interpreted.
- The analyzed and interpreted responses will be sent back to the families to review for accuracy and proper representation.
- The findings will be used to inform and improve transitional support.



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Needs

Swan Innovations needs support from Tribes in getting the contact information for early childhood schools and/or programs to set up listening sessions.