

## 2. Culturally Responsive Teaching:

New teachers who are a part of the WoLakota Circle receive a great deal of support, modeling and practice in implementing the OSEU and many culturally responsive ways of being in the classroom. The WoLakota Project staff also support schools and districts who are ready to implement the OSEU and develop culturally responsive approaches to learning and teaching through staff P.D., modeling and conferencing. The WoLakota Project staff have helped schools and districts across South Dakota to use the OSEU and the extensive Elder video interviews housed on the [www.wolakotaproject.org](http://www.wolakotaproject.org) site, to build lessons at all grade levels, in any subject area, aligned to the OSEU, and to develop more culturally responsive classroom approaches.

### Links:

[wolakotaproject.org](http://wolakotaproject.org) | [tie.net](http://tie.net)  
[couragerenewal.org](http://couragerenewal.org) | [doe.sd.gov](http://doe.sd.gov)

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## RELATED TIE OFFERINGS

### Woope Sakowin

Developed by TIE Learning Specialist Tamera Miyasato, Woope Sakowin is a holistic classroom management system based upon the traditional Seven Lakota Virtues. Fitting for any classroom, this approach deeply supports the culturally responsive WoLakota Project model.

### Leading Together®

Developed by Center for Courage & Renewal® facilitators, and first implemented in Boston schools, Leading Together is a research-based approach for developing relational trust among the adults. Relational trust among teachers, administrators and other adults in a school is a key factor for student success.

### Courage to Teach®

Paralleling the WoLakota Project Circle, the Courage to Teach® Seasonal Retreat Series is a set of 4 retreats that span the school year. This retreat series accommodates 24 to 28 teachers, assisting with the bridging of “soul and role” and helping to prevent teacher burnout.



## CREATING CIRCLES OF UNDERSTANDING



## AROUND THE OCETI SAKOWIN ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS



In 2011, the WoLakota Project was born via a collaboration between the South Dakota Department of Education, the South

Dakota Office of Indian Education, the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota Elders who authored the Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings (OSEU) and Technology & Innovation in Education (TIE). The goals were to support the learning of all South Dakota students.

- The WoLakota Project improves learning among **Native students** by increasing the cultural appropriateness of classroom materials and supporting stability in the teaching staff thereby reducing things like the dropout rate and the achievement gap.
- The WoLakota Project increases learning among **non-Native students** by building awareness and authentic understanding of the indigenous people of our state through materials that are less biased and more holistic than the narrow, sanitized perspectives students often acquire from studying traditional history texts written by non-natives about Native culture and history.

- The WoLakota Project helps **educators, students**, and in many cases, **parents and community members** to develop safe spaces and respectful approaches for understanding between, among and within diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Essentially, the WoLakota Project supports the development of Culturally Responsive educational practices that value and make space for **all cultural and individual perspectives** in order to maximize the potential growth of ALL learners.

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[www.wolakotaproject.org](http://www.wolakotaproject.org)

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## Key Priorities

1. **Teacher retention**, particularly in high-needs schools with a high Native student population
2. The development of **Culturally Responsive Teaching** with a key focus on the implementation of the OSEU

## Addressing The Priorities

### 1. *Teacher Retention:*

Each year around 18 new teachers working in high-needs schools are invited to be a part of the WoLakota Circle. They are joined by 6 WoLakota Mentors (each mentor is assigned to 3 mentees) and this circle of 24 participates in 4 seasonal-themed retreats throughout the school year at Placerville Camp in the Black Hills. Each mentee also receives weekly contact from their mentor and three classroom visits during that same period. This combination of

- 1) Face-to-face retreats,
- 2) Ongoing distance mentoring
- 3) Classroom visits / conferencing

has proven to be exceptionally effective in supporting new teachers in their practice and insuring that they are more likely to continue to teach, even in our high-needs, high-challenge school settings. The retreats are based on the Circle of Trust® model developed by the Center for Courage & Renewal®. The Circle of Trust® is a globally recognized and research supported approach that informs all of the work of the WoLakota Project.

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