

What is the Johnson-O'Malley Act?

Johnson O'Malley programs offered to American Indian and Alaska Native students vary and may include such programs as culture, language, academics and dropout prevention.

Johnson-O'Malley funds under this program may not be used for capital expenditures. Eligible applicants are tribal organizations, Indian corporations, school districts or States with eligible American Indian and Alaska Native children attending schools on Indian reservations or public school districts that have established Indian Education Committees to approve supplementary support programs that benefit American Indian and Alaska Native students. Eligible American Indian and Alaska Native students are enrolled members of a federally recognized tribe or at least one-fourth or more degree of Indian blood descendant of a member of a federally recognized Indian tribal government eligible for services from the Bureau. In addition, eligibility requires these children be between age 3 through grades 12, with priority given to children residing on or near an Indian reservation.

The Act works with local school districts, the States located in the United States, and Native American governments that run Charter Schools.

For example, All Tribes Charter School located on the Rincon Indian Reservation, Valley Center, California promotes higher learning standards for all tribal members. One of the messages is "Heavy doses of culture and language in the school are the anti-dote for the damage caused by the boarding schools and the public schools still perpetuating the colonialistic mentality. It is believed that there are three basic things that help students (all students) to be successful in school and as productive citizens. These three things are:

1) Having a positive self-image and all of the issues surrounding identity; 2) Having your culture affirmed; and 3) Just having someone who cares who there for you."

An important element to student success is relevance. If students see that material, curriculum, etc. are relevant to them, they will work to achieve success. If things are not relevant to them, they will give up and not try.

The Johnson O'Malley Act created financial incentives for the public school systems to accept Native American children in the education system. It helped abolish the segregated boarding school narrative.

- "Johnson-O'Malley." Johnson-O'Malley | Bureau of Indian Education. U.S Department of the Interior. Accessed April 5, 2021. <https://www.bie.edu/topic-page/johnson-omalley>.