



Indian Education

ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

NATIVE AMERICAN SEALS & STOLE AWARD 2026 – 2027



ALBUQUERQUE
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A MESSAGE TO OUR NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENT

Your Future Starts With You!

On behalf of the APS Indian Education Department, we want to encourage and celebrate **ALL Native American students** as you work toward your junior and senior years!

Your high school years are an important time to set goals, discover your strengths, and prepare for the future you want. We challenge you to take advantage of every opportunity available to you, including working toward earning **one or more of the Native American Seals**.

Earning a Seal is a special accomplishment and a meaningful honor! You will have the opportunity to proudly wear this recognition at your senior-year commencement and celebrate your hard work, dedication, and achievements with your family, friends, teachers, and community.

You do not have to do this alone. The APS Indian Education Department is here to support you every step of the way. If you have questions, need help getting started, or simply need someone to encourage you, please reach out to our staff. We can guide you through the process or connect you with one of our Indian Education teachers who can provide additional support and encouragement.

We believe in you, and we want to see you succeed! Whether your dreams include college, a career, the military, technical training, entrepreneurship, or another path after graduation, we are here to help you take the next step toward your goals.

Set a goal. Take the challenge. Earn your Seal.

Celebrate your accomplishments and let your Native pride shine!

We look forward to supporting you throughout your journey and celebrating your success at graduation!

With pride and encouragement,

Estella Montoya (*Pueblo of Sandia*)
Senior Director of APS Indian Education
(505) 884-6392 | indianed@aps.edu



WHAT IS THE SEALS AND STOLES AWARD?



The APS Indian Education Department Seals & Stoles Award is a special recognition for Native American students who demonstrate their knowledge, accomplishments, cultural connection, community involvement, and/or Native language skills.

Through this program, students have the opportunity to earn one, two, three, or all four seals, with each seal recognizing a different area of achievement. Students can choose the seals that best reflect their interests, experiences, strengths, and goals.

The four seals provide opportunities to explore and celebrate your Native identity, contribute to your community, and learn or demonstrate Navajo or Zuni language skills.

Students who earn at least one seal will receive an official APS Native American stole to proudly wear with their cap and gown at their commencement ceremony. Wearing the stole is a special honor that recognizes your hard work, accomplishments, cultural connection, and commitment to your community.

The Seals & Stoles Award is more than a graduation honor, it is an opportunity to celebrate who you are, where you come from, what you have accomplished, and where you are going.

We encourage every Native American student to take the challenge, explore the four seals, and make this achievement part of your graduation story.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Native American high school seniors who:

- Are enrolled in APS.
- Have a complete 506 and CIB (Certificate of Indian Blood – student, parent, or grandparent) form on file with the APS Indian Education Department.
- Have a flat cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.0 or higher by the end of fall semester senior year.
- Have no more than 10 unexcused absences in their senior year. Absences that are recorded as family emergency, illness, and cultural observation are not calculated in that number.



EXPLORE THE FOUR SEALS YOU CAN EARN



The APS Indian Education Department offers four opportunities for Native American students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, experiences, culture, and accomplishments. Each seal recognizes a different area of achievement. You may choose to pursue one seal or multiple seals, depending on your interests, goals, and eligibility.

Seal	What Does It Recognize?	What Do I Need to Do?	Language Requirement
Tribal Seal	Your Native identity, lived experiences, learning, and personal growth	Complete a personal reflection/essay exploring tribal identity, culture, community, language, history, and resilience	No specific language proficiency required
Distinguished Learning Seal	Your commitment to community service and connection to culture	Complete at least 30 volunteer hours with one or more organizations and connect your experience to your culture	No specific language proficiency required
APS Native American Bilingual Seal	Your basic understanding and use of a Native language	Demonstrate basic language skills through an introduction, identifying objects, and answering questions	Basic Navajo or Zuni
New Mexico State Seal of Bilingualism-Biliteracy	Your proficiency in a Native language	Demonstrate language proficiency as determined by the tribe	Navajo proficiency currently offered through the Navajo Nation

WHICH SEAL IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

- Love learning about your identity and culture? Consider the Tribal Seal.
- Enjoy helping others and giving back to your community? Consider the Distinguished Learning Seal.
- Speak or are learning Navajo or Zuni? Consider the APS Native American Bilingual Seal.
- Are you proficient in Navajo? Consider the New Mexico State Seal of Bilingualism-Biliteracy.





Seals & Stoles Award – Student Steps

01 COMPLETE THE ONLINE APPLICATION

Applications open September 14, 2026, with a deadline to submit on December 11, 2026, at 5:00 PM

02 ATTEND A Seals & Stoles WORKSHOP

Workshops will help students prepare their **essays, presentations, and demonstrations** for the Seals & Stoles application process.

Workshop Dates:

- **Wednesday, October 21, 2026 | 6:00–8:00 PM** APS City Center
- **Saturday, November 14, 2026 | 10:00 AM–12:00 PM** APS City Center

03 WRITE ESSAY(S) AND CREATE A GOOGLE SLIDE PRESENTATION

Due dates vary by seal. Please review the requirements for each seal carefully to make sure you meet all deadlines.

04 SUBMIT LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Due dates vary by seal. Please review the requirements for each seal carefully to make sure you meet all deadlines.

05 COMPLETE IN PERSON PRESENTATIONS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

Presentations and demonstrations will be held March 24–26, 2027, at APS City Center. **Presentation sign-up begins: March 8, 2027**

Be prepared to share your knowledge, experiences, accomplishments, and Native identity with pride!

06 ATTEND THE SENIOR AWARDS BANQUET

The date, time, and location of the Class of 2027 Indian Education Senior Awards Banquet is to be determined. Information will be updated and shared as soon as it is available.



WEAR YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENT WITH PRIDE!

PROUDLY WEAR YOUR NATIVE APS STOLE AND TRADITIONAL ATTIRE ON GRADUATION DAY!

Celebrate your hard work, accomplishments, culture, and community as you walk across the stage and into your future. We are proud of you and can't wait to celebrate your success!

IMPORTANT DATES & DEADLINES

EVENT / MILESTONE	DATE & TIME DETAILS	LOCATION / NOTES
<u>Online Application Window</u>	Opens September 14, 2026 Deadline: December 11, 2026 at 5:00 PM	Online Application. Completing application gives access to Seals & Stole Google Classroom.
Senior Information Night	Wednesday, October 21, 2026 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	APS City Center
Seals & Stole Workshop #1	Saturday, November 14, 2026 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM	APS City Center
Seals & Stole Workshop #2	Tuesday, December 1, 2026 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	APS City Center
APS Bilingual Seal Introductions	December 18, 2026	Submissions required for students applying for the APS Bilingual Seal.
Tribal Seal Submissions	January 29, 2027	Essay, Google Slide presentation, and recommendation letter due in Google Classroom.
Distinguished Learning Seal Submissions	February 26, 2027	Essay, Google Slide presentation, and recommendation letter due in Google Classroom.
Sign-up for Presentations	Begins March 8, 2027	Online / Google Classroom
Presentations & Demonstrations	March 24, March 25, and March 26, 2027 (Times TBD)	APS City Center
Senior Awards Banquet	May 2027 (Date, time, and location TBD)	Details to be announced

Earning YOUR TRIBAL Seal



The Tribal Seal gives you an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge and share your unique lived experiences as a Native student.

You will explore the theme of tribal identity, how it is formed, preserved, challenged, and celebrated; through the lens of your learning, experiences, and personal growth.

As you reflect on your journey, consider how cultural traditions, community, language, history, and resilience have shaped your sense of identity and how exploring these ideas has influenced your future pathway.

This is more than an academic essay. It is a personal reflection on what you have learned, experienced, and discovered about yourself—and how those experiences have helped shape who you are and who you hope to become.

- You must submit a [Seals & Stole Application](#) between Tuesday September 14, 2026, and December 11, 2026.
- This initial Seals & Stole Application will give you access to APS Indian Education Google Classroom.
- Only one Seals & Stole Application is requested. All students need to indicate which seal they are applying for.

TO EARN THE TRIBAL SEAL, YOU WILL COMPLETE FOUR COMPONENTS:

1. **Reflective Essay** — Explore your understanding of tribal identity and how your learning and experiences have shaped you.
2. **Google Slides Presentation** — Research and present information about a tribe, cultural tradition, practice, or topic connected to tribal identity.
3. **Cultural Demonstration** — Prepare and present a cultural or tribal demonstration that connects to your learning and reflection.
4. **Recommendation Letter or Form** — Obtain a recommendation from a teacher, counselor, employer, tribal leader, or another appropriate adult who can speak to your character, growth, and/or accomplishments.

Each component gives you a different way to demonstrate your knowledge, identity, experiences, growth, and connection to your community.

Most importantly, this process is about telling your story and showing how your experiences as a Native student have helped shape where you come from, who you are, and where you are going.



TRIBAL Seal STEP 1: REFLECTIVE ESSAY

This reflective essay will explore the theme of tribal identity: how identity is formed, preserved, challenged, and celebrated. You will reflect on what you have learned through your research, classroom experiences, family and community connections, and personal growth. As you write, consider how cultural traditions, community, language, history, family, and resilience shape your understanding of identity. Think about how exploring these topics has influenced your goals, interests, and future pathway. This is not just an academic essay. It is an opportunity to share what you have learned, what you think and feel about it, and how your learning has shaped you.

Your Essay Should Address:

1. **Your Identity and Background:** What tribal clans or family connections are important to you? Where do you come from? How does your family recognize or express tribal identity? What personal hobbies, interests, or activities connect to who you are?
2. **A Meaningful Example or Story:** Describe one specific example that helped shape your understanding of tribal identity. This could be a tribe, tradition, individual, historical event, or issue that you researched or learned about.
3. **How Your Thinking Changed:** How did this learning affect your thinking, beliefs, or assumptions? Did you learn something that surprised you? Did your perspective change or become deeper?
4. **Honoring and Preserving Indigenous Identity:** Why is it important to honor and preserve Indigenous identities and cultures? Explain how your cultural demonstration connects to this idea.
5. **Your Personal Connection:** How does this topic connect to your own identity, family, community, or sense of belonging? Why is this meaningful to you?
6. **Specific Evidence and Examples:** Support your reflection with specific examples from Class readings, Research, Presentations, Interviews, Family or community experiences, and Other reliable sources.
7. **A Thoughtful Conclusion:** Explain how this topic will stay with you after high school. How might what you learned influence your future, your community, or the way you understand yourself?

Essay Requirements

- Write **2–3 pages**, using **double spacing**, and **Times New Roman, 12-point font**.
- Include a header in the **top-right corner** with your full name, Tribe(s), and School, and **page numbers in the bottom-right corner**.
- Write in **first person**. For example “I learned...”, “I felt...”, and “I now understand...”.
- Cite the sources you use, including interviews, books, websites, class materials, family discussions, and news articles

Before You Submit

1. Use the **Spelling and Grammar** check under the **Tools** tab.
2. Have a **teacher proofread your essay** and make any necessary corrections before you submit it.
3. At the end of your essay, write the **name of the teacher who proofread your essay**.

TRIBAL SEAL STEP 2: a GOOGLE SLIDE PRESENTATION

DUE JANUARY 29, 2027

Slide 1: Title Slide

- Presentation title
- Your name
- Name of the tribe you're focusing on

Slide 2: Introduction

- Basic background on the tribe (location, language, any historical facts that matter)
- Why you chose this specific demonstration or tradition

Slide 3–4: The Tribal Demonstration

- Describe the tradition or practice
- Explain what it looks like, sounds like, or feels like (include photos or video clips if appropriate)
- How is it performed, used, or passed down?

Slide 5: Cultural Meaning

- What does this tradition mean to the tribe?
- How does it reflect their values, beliefs, or way of life?
- Is it spiritual, social, artistic, or practical?

Slide 6: History and Change

- Is this tradition ancient or more recent?
- Has it changed over time?
- How has colonization or modern life affected it?
- Are there efforts today to preserve or revive it?

Slide 7: Personal Reflection

- What did you learn that stuck with you?
- Did anything surprise you or change your thinking?
- Why do you think it's important that traditions like this are remembered and respected?

Slide 8: Sources

- List the resources you used (websites, books, videos, interviews)
- Use a clear and respectful format—MLA, APA, or bullet points with links/titles

Presentation Guidelines:

- Time: 5–7 minutes
- Speak clearly and confidently, don't read every word on the slides
- Make eye contact and engage your audience
- Use visuals: images, art, maps, or short video clips to help judges understand
- Practice ahead of time!



TRIBAL Seal STEP 3: PREPARE a CULTURAL DEMONSTRATION

THIS DEMONSTRATION WILL BE PRESENTED IN MARCH DURING YOUR SCHEDULED PRESENTATION TIME

Prepare a tribal demonstration

(i.e., dance, music, food, quilt work, tying a hair bun, storytelling, history, clan system.) Students are encouraged to wear regalia for demonstration.

Tips for a Strong Project:

- Choose a tradition you truly find interesting
- Be respectful in how you represent the tribe and culture
- Think about why this matters—not just to the tribe, but to you and the world

You are welcome to create and use a video, but you need to upload it to YouTube. (You can make it private). You can use the YouTube link to show it to the judges.



TRIBAL Seal STEP 4: RECOMMENDATION LETTER/FORM

- Have someone write a recommendation letter or complete a recommendation form (back of this booklet or on Indian Education website).
- Upload it into the google classroom by January 29, 2027.
- Recommendation letters can be from teachers, counselors, employers, tribal leaders, etc. It cannot be from a family member.

EARNING YOUR DISTINGUISHED LEARNING SEAL

Give Back Through Community Service

The **Distinguished Learning Seal** recognizes students who demonstrate a commitment to their community through service and volunteerism.

To earn this seal, students must complete **at least 30 hours of volunteer service** with one or more organizations and connect their service experience to their **Native culture, community, values, or lived experiences**.



This is an opportunity to demonstrate how you are making a difference in your community while reflecting on what you have learned through your service.

- You must submit a [Seals & Stole Application](#) between Tuesday September 14, 2026, and December 11, 2026.
- This initial Seals & Stole Application will give you access to APS Indian Education Google Classroom.
- Only one Seals & Stole Application is requested. All students need to indicate which seal they are applying for.

TO EARN THE DISTINGUISHED LEARNING SEAL, YOU WILL COMPLETE FOUR COMPONENTS:

1. **Volunteer Work** – Select an organization or school club/organization that you can complete a supervised 30 hours of volunteer time.
2. **Reflective Essay** — Explore how your volunteer experience helped you build a connection with your community.
3. **Google Slides Presentation** — Research and present information about your volunteer organization and the work that you did during your time with the organization.
4. **Recommendation Letter or Form** — Obtain a recommendation from a teacher, counselor, employer, tribal leader, or another appropriate adult who can speak to your character, growth, and/or accomplishments.

Both the Distinguished Learning Seal Essay and Google Slide Presentation are due on Friday, February 26, 2027 in the Seals & Stole Google Classroom.



DISTINGUISHED Learning Seals

STEP 1: COMPLETE A MINIMUM OF 30 HOURS OF VOLUNTEER WORK

Volunteer Requirement: Complete a minimum of 30 hours of volunteer service between January of your junior year and January of your senior year.

- **Cultural Focus:** Students are strongly encouraged to choose volunteer opportunities that are culturally relevant.
- **Restrictions:** Hours cannot be paid, receive a stipend, earn course credit, or be double counted for another award.

Mandatory Workshop: Attend one of the following Seals & Stole Workshops:

- Option A: Saturday, November 14, 2026 | 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
- Option B: Tuesday, December 1, 2026 | 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

STEP 2: WRITTEN REFLECTION ESSAY – DUE FEBRUARY 26, 2027

Write a 2 to 3-page reflective essay addressing the following prompt points:

1. **Introduction & Overview:** Introduce yourself and identify the site(s) where you volunteered.
2. **Motivation & Duties:** Explain why you selected your volunteer site(s) and describe the specific activities you assisted with.
3. **Personal Reflection:**
 - a. What key lessons did you learn from this experience?
 - b. How did your service impact you personally?
 - c. What, if anything, would you do differently next time?
4. **Cultural Connection:** Select one Native American Value and explain how it directly connects to your service-learning experience.

STEP 3: GOOGLE SLIDE PRESENTATION – DUE FEBRUARY 26, 2027

Create a Google Slides presentation summarizing your service-learning journey. Ensure your presentation includes:

- **Personal Intro:** A brief introduction of who you are.
- **Service Breakdown:** Where you volunteered, why you chose those locations, and your primary duties.
- **Impact & Reflection:** What you learned from the experience and how it personally impacted you.
- **Cultural Connection:** Highlight one Native American value and explain its connection to your volunteer work.
- **Visuals:** Photos showcasing your involvement and service work.

STEP 4: RECOMMENDATION LETTER/FORM

- Have someone write a recommendation letter or complete a recommendation form.
- Upload it into the google classroom by February 26, 2027
- Recommendation letters can be from teachers, counselors, employers, tribal leaders, etc. It cannot be from a family member.



Native American Values

OHIYESA

Generosity

(sharing, show kindness, friendliness)

How have you been nice to others?

How do you include others in what you do?

Have you spent time with someone who is in need?

How do you help during cultural activities?

How have you put other's needs first?

Belonging
(to greet, compliment, include, & share)

Name your tribe or tribes.

Name your clan.

How do you introduce yourself?

What is the proper way to greeting others?

How can you show you are Native?

WISDOM

How do you care for Mother Earth?

How do you show leadership?

How have you kept a promise?

In what cultural events have you participated?

How can you come ready to learn?

Independence
(doing it on your own)

Name a skill you have taught someone.

Name the values you have learned.

Name the four elements of the earth.

Name the four directions.

Name the four seasons.

Mastery

(able, knowing, skills, proficient)

Earning Your APS Native American Bilingual Seal

The **APS Native American Bilingual Seal** recognizes students who demonstrate a **basic understanding and use of the Navajo or Zuni language**.

Students will demonstrate their language skills through activities that may include:

- Introducing yourself in your home language
- Identifying common objects in the language
- Answering questions in the language



This seal celebrates your connection to language and recognizes your efforts to learn, use, preserve, and strengthen your Native language.

- You must submit a [Seals & Stole Application](#) between Tuesday September 14, 2026, and December 11, 2026.
- This initial Seals & Stole Application will give you access to APS Indian Education Google Classroom.
- Only one Seals & Stole Application is requested. All students need to indicate which seal they are applying for.

STEP 1: COMPLETE REQUIRED LANGUAGE COURSEWORK

Course Requirement: Successfully complete **Navajo I & II OR Zuni I & II**.

- **Transfers & Equivalencies:** Equivalent coursework completed at other accredited schools is accepted. Transcripts must be submitted for review and verification.

STEP 2: SUBMIT TRIBAL LANGUAGE INTRODUCTION – DECEMBER 18, 2026

Submit a personal introduction in your tribal language as either a **written document** or a **short video**.

- **Required Elements:** Your introduction must include clan affiliations, grandparents and parents, siblings, age and current school, and hometown.
- **Cultural Accommodations:** Alternate arrangements will be made for students from tribes with cultural protocols that restrict written language or audio/video recordings.

STEP 3: PRESENT LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TO COMMUNITY JUDGES

Demonstrate your tribal language fluency before a panel of community judges. Your evaluation will cover:

- **Personal Introduction:** Present your introduction fluently in your home language.
- **Vocabulary Identification:** Demonstrate your ability to name and identify common objects in your language.
- **Q&A Comprehension:** Answer conversational questions posed directly in your language.

Earning Your New Mexico State Seal of Bilingualism-Biliteracy

The **New Mexico State Seal of Bilingualism-Biliteracy** recognizes students who demonstrate **proficiency in a language as determined by the tribe**. Currently, the Navajo Nation is the only tribe offering this tribal language proficiency assessment.

To demonstrate proficiency, a student must be able to:

- Speak accurately and with ease
- Conjugate verbs correctly
- Convey meaning using complex sentences
- Communicate effectively and competently in Navajo



This seal represents a high level of Native language proficiency and honors the important role that language plays in culture, identity, community, and cultural preservation.

Seal of Navajo Bilingualism:

- Proficiency assessment for graduating high school seniors only.
- A form is sent to each school district to collect the names of the students, and their contact info and school names.
- Seniors must complete the assessment at one of scheduled locations and dates.
- Seniors have the option of retaking the assessment.
- Only those students who successfully pass the proficiency assessment will be recommended by their school official(s) to the State.



Content of Bilingual Seal Assessment:

- Appropriate introduction of self, clan, born for, maternal grandfathers, paternal grandfathers, where their mother's home area is, their parents and grandparents, related clans, personal interests, hobbies, goals, etc.
- Oral presentation on a given topic. Topics provided by Office of Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Development (OSCAD)
- Answer a set of questions. (Questions provided by OSCAD)
- Summary/analysis of a video clip on a cultural topic.
- Entire assessment must be performed in Navajo.

Scoring Criteria:

Scoring will be based on a language proficiency rubric in the following categories:

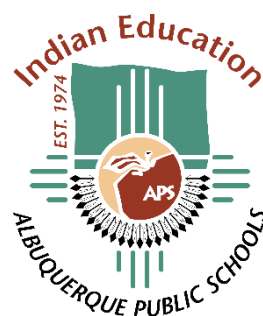
- Introduction
- Oral Presentation
- Answering Questions

every hour of volunteer service, every word of your tribal language spoken, and every reflection you write brings honor to who you are and where you come from.



you carry the wisdom of your ancestors and the hope of future generations. we see your hard work, we believe in your journey, and we can't wait to watch you walk across that stage with pride.

FINISH STRONG, CLASS OF 2027! ~ we are so proud of you.



ReCOMMendation FORM



ALBUQUERQUE
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Student's Name _____

Person Completing the Evaluation _____

Relationship _____
(teacher, counselor, supervisor)

As part of the application process, please rate the student by circling the category that best describes the student in the following areas:

	1 = Rarely		5 = Consistently		
Respect Shows deep respect for elders, peers, teachers, cultural protocols, and community members.	1	2	3	4	5
Responsibility & Reliability Follows through on commitments, attends obligations regularly, and takes ownership of learning and service hours.	1	2	3	4	5
Humility & Service Heart Serves others selflessly without expecting reward, demonstrating a true volunteer spirit and willingness to listen and learn.	1	2	3	4	5
Cultural & Heritage Connection Shows dedication to language acquisition, honors family line/clans, and actively engages with tribal/cultural traditions.	1	2	3	4	5
Perseverance & Initiative Overcomes challenges, shows self-motivation in projects, and strives for continuous growth.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments/Examples: _____

Signature

Date

VERIFICATION FORM FOR VOLUNTEER HOURS

Name

[illegible]

USE THIS FORM TO LOG HOURS FOR ONE OR MULTIPLE VOLUNTEER LOCATIONS.
MAKE ADDITIONAL COPIES AS NEEDED.