



Dream Catcher Project Annual Report 2021-2022

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Academic year 2021-2022 marked the seventh year of the Dream Catcher Project, supported by the Minnesota Department of Education. This year, as the COVID-19 pandemic continued into its third school year, schools returned to in-person school. However, the impact of the pandemic continued to affect schools, teaching staff, families, and communities in many ways. This report will summarize how the Dream Catcher project-maintained connection points, and responded to district-level needs for support and information gathered in the annual evaluation process

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DC Overview

The Dream Catcher (DC) Project provides a variety of opportunities for professional development, training, connection, and support. These include a fall kickoff training, in-person and virtual workshops, weekly chats, regular DC Team meetings, and a winter gathering. Through these different avenues, we create spaces with intentionality to leverage community knowledge, challenge systemic barriers and create a fairer process of intervention for all students.

DC Weekly Zoom meetings. A reliance on providing support and connection opportunities through virtual formats increased in March 2020 when schools first shut down during the COVID-19 pandemic. This year based on feedback from the previous year, the DC Weekly Zooms continued as a way to increase access, share updates and strategies, problem solve, share resources, and build community.

- Govinda Budrow and Donna Patterson held weekly meetings via Zoom. Invites were sent out through email and posted on social media.
- There were forty-two meetings, planned for 60 minutes each (8/26/2021-6/15/2022). Oftentimes, the meetings ran 15-30 minutes longer than the scheduled time due to high engagement of participants in the topic.
- Average weekly attendance was thirty-three, with a range of 10 to 58.
- Each week participants discussed timely topics and questions from school personnel, and a variety of topics were brought forward each week. Occasionally, an invited guest would join to lead on a specific topic more often, conversation and community knowledge was shared in an emergent manner. A variety of MDE staff and other administrators joined regularly and were an important and direct link between frontline workers and state-level information. For example, a district superintendent joined us to gather insight on a pending and controversial school board decision. In another meeting, a vice-president in the MN state-college system joined to learn from community members how to better support Native American students, faculty, and program development.
- We gathered feedback on the DC Weekly chats in our end-of-the year DC Survey. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with requests that we continue them next school year. Some of the comments received and themes that emerged included:
 - **A feeling of not being alone:** Although schools remained open for much of the time this year, participants reported that the weekly chats provided a safe place to have deep and honest conversations. Indeed, some reported this space as the ONLY place they were having these conversations around systems of oppression.
 - **A place for information and resources:** The weekly time together continued to be a place to gather information, build community and problem-solve. The

amount of knowledge and combined level of expertise and insight came out during often unplanned conversations. Sometimes we would have a specific topic, but often it was a gathering place where people spoke their hearts and oftentimes the conversation went to unexpected places and depth. Most of the DC Weekly Chats are recorded and archived into a [Google document](#), so that people who could not make the meetings could go back and review the recording or access the resources. Many reported that they used this resource regularly.

- **Meeting time:** At the start of the academic year, we moved our time to 7:00-8:00 am (compared to 8:30-9:30 am the previous year). With students returning to the brick-and mortar setting, we felt the earlier time would allow more to join before students arrived. After winter break, and based on some feedback, we switched back to a time of 8:00-9:00 am. Each time slot offered an opportunity for different people to be able to join. However, when we looked at the attendance analytics, the 7:00-8:00 averaged at 41, while the 8:00-9:00 time averaged at 26, a whopping 37% decrease! Based on these numbers, we will likely move back to an earlier time when we resume in fall 2022. Noted by several in the survey by several people was the availability of the recordings and resources in the archive, which they assessed regularly.
- **DC Annual Survey Feedback on weekly meetings:**
 - Thank you for making weekly information available through email/archived sessions. I referenced several resources.
 - I enjoyed the meetings. Especially when we had the chance to laugh and to just be ourselves. I looked forward to our weekly time together. Lots of info in a short period of time.
 - They were great, but hard to get to during the day
 - I really enjoy them, and I try to attend as many as possible, so I am glad they are recorded!!! There are many times I would attend with something on my mind, and someone would bring it up!!! I very much enjoy the conversations.
 - The weekly zoom chats were very helpful! It's great to be able to connect with such great resources and support systems on a frequent basis.
 - It is an amazing collaboration with accurate feedback on relevant topics. This group has enhanced my abilities to work in a culturally appropriate way with students, families, and staff. It is a community that works in a good way and lends support across MN to many of the AIE staff who may feel isolated in their own school district.
 - I enjoy participating when I can, mostly when we have two-hour late starts twice a month. Otherwise, my room is full of kids at 8am and I prioritize their needs since it's such a frequent meeting
 - 8 a.m. was too early this year for me, so I had to drop off my daughter at school. Next year the time is good.
 - Hit or miss with information that was helpful
 - I have enjoyed meeting everyone and listening to stories of the Native American experience & meeting new people I normally would not meet.
 - It was wonderful! I would like to do it again
 - Every meeting was a new discussion with valued input from all participants. I prefer to have the meetings early. I would have fewer interruptions. (I value this meeting so highly, I prefer to meet early.)

DC Professional Development

DC Fall Kick-Off (Virtual): In the fall, we held a virtual kick off for our partner districts. New and returning districts were invited, as the virtual format allowed for greater capacity. The format of the kick-off was bookend gatherings, with an opportunity to complete at least one online class in the two weeks between. We had a full agenda, and attendees for part 1 = 97, and for part 2 = 125. This year, we created a [Dream Catcher Planning Guide](#) to assist district teams in planning for implementation. We found this guide to be helpful for teams, as well as for us to be able to support teams in making progress in their goals.

Dream Catcher Virtual Kickoff - Fall 2021

A 2-Part Series

Part 1:

For new districts and staff, but open to all for connection; it will focus on the foundations of the Dream Catcher project.

In this opening session, participants will receive:

- foundational understanding of the what and why behind the Dream Catcher project
- an overview of issues of bias and disproportionately in special education
- participation in small group activities that explore differing perceptions, communication gaps caused by racial differences, and differences in professional training and background

Date: Wednesday, September 29th, 2021

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Location: Session will be held live via Zoom

Dream Catcher Virtual Kickoff - Fall 2021

A 2-Part Series

Part 2:

Who should attend: All partner district Dream Catcher teams; focus on team planning for this coming year.

This session will allow time for teams to:

- explore how Dream Catcher is individualized to your local context
- set goals for the coming year
- review data and evaluation for the program
- share opportunities for staff development and other support that will be offered

Date: Tuesday, October 12th, 2021

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Location: Session will be held live via Zoom

DC Online courses: This year we continued with the two previous online courses and added a third. Participants in the kickoff chose at least one of the courses to complete during the two-weeks between the kickoff dates. The feedback on the course content was good, and we will continue to use these courses in the future for basic-level training in non-biased observation and fair evaluation. See the [DC Snapshot](#) for more details.

- *DC1 Observations Essentials Course*: created and proctored by Donna and Govinda, this course is self-paced and designed to take about four hours to complete. The course covers the foundations of unbiased observation, as well as foundational special education law. participants registered for the class, with completing the course to date. Most people who completed the DC Observations Essential class conducted at least one observation. This is a great outcome, especially since many reported fewer evaluations this year.
- *DC2 Promoting Fair Evaluations Essentials*: created and proctored by Dr. Don Stovall, this course is self-paced and designed to take about six hours to complete. The goal of this course and fair assessments is to promote the appropriate use of screening, assessment, and evaluation practices that are fair for American Indian students, African American students, Black students, and students from under-represented populations. participants registered for this course, with fully completing the course to date.
- *DC3: Sociocultural Factors Checklist Essentials*: This course is an introduction to the Sociocultural Factors Checklist and provides activities to explore the tool and its use. This course provides a brief history and background of the Sociocultural Factors Checklist, an opportunity to explore the content of the checklist and the accompanying guide and consider how the tool might be used most effectively in your setting.

Special Education Foundations Course

The special education foundations course is offered at Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College as a three-credit college course with summer and fall enrollment. The summer session has been offered consistently and the fall session is offered when enrollment allows. The course is supported with a \$300 scholarship from the Minnesota Department of Education to participants that meet criteria. The scholarship covers about half the tuition and fees costs for enrollment. The Eligibility criteria is:

- Working in Indian Education in a Minnesota school involved with special education -OR-
- Working with Native American students and families in an outreach, advocacy, or instructional role -OR-
- An employee of a tribe or nonprofit organization whose primary responsibility is to work with students and families -OR-
- A caregiver to a Native American child with a disability

Last summer 2021, eight students received the scholarship. Seven of the students were American Indian Liaisons in Minnesota School Districts and one student was a parent of Native American child with a disability. Six of the students successfully completed the semester with a C or higher. The review of the course by the participants was positive and specific comments can be viewed in the [Summer 2021 Session Feedback](#).

Currently in summer 2022, seven students are enrolled in the course using the MDE scholarship. Six of the students are American Indian Home School Liaisons and one student is a tribal charter school employee.

Professional Development Workshops:

This year we were able to return to face-to-face workshops, as well as continuing with several virtual workshops. See [DC Professional Development](#) for more information on these workshops.

DC Ongoing Support

Project consultants continued to provide virtual support to individuals and teams as they moved forward in implementation and annual goals. Each Dream Catcher school begins implementation at a different point, and establishes annual goals based on the local context. There are four phases of implementation to the Dream Catcher Project; each phase of implementation may have multiple layers for a district to fully achieve.

Partner districts, both new and returning, typically participate in regular Zoom team meetings throughout the year. This year, those numbers were reduced, however there were several district teams that we met with regularly. The Wednesday morning chats offered a consistent and safe place to talk about specific challenges and gain ideas from colleagues across the state.

Dream Catcher Third Annual Winter Storytelling Gathering

In January of 2022, the third annual Winter Storytelling event, was held over the course of two half days as a virtual event, with ninety-four participants registered. Please see [Dream Catcher Winter Gathering Agenda](#) for a full list of topics and presenter biographies. .

A follow-up survey was sent out to participants for the two half-day virtual storytelling event. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Please see [DC Winter Gathering Survey](#) for a summary of all responses. Some comments are highlighted here:

- I thoroughly enjoyed this. I felt refreshed after the last meeting.
- It was great to hear others' stories and how positive and professional everyone was. It is very informational for me to hear others' stories and reminds me that our personal lives affect our professional lives even if we aren't completely conscious about it.
- The storytelling was wonderful to have shared and heard.
- Sharing Anishinaabemowin language in a teaching and learning way felt positive.
- The reminder that we have all walked different journeys in life, which shaped our values and who we are today.
- I really enjoyed listening to the stories.
- When you have a chance to listen to others tell stories, you learn your own connections.
- Having opportunities for Native communities to come together for this is also welcomed.

I appreciate it beyond measure.

- I am so grateful to have the opportunity to participate and learn more. All the breakouts I attended were meaningful ... Michael Walker, Susan Beaulieu, Ramona Stately and Keaw'e Bone. Thank you for organizing this gathering and learning opportunity.
- I appreciated having speakers who we could also tell this was not their norm (even zooming from the car) because they were making time for us. Miigwech!
- I absolutely enjoyed hearing from the speaker who shared her story regarding substance abuse recovery and her journey!
- It was nice to see the young storytellers too, as it is an art that is so nice to see being shared with the next generation.
- Susan Beaulieu and Roxanne Delille were inspirational and reminded me of the need to remember my purpose in life and start with self-care.
- Pazahiyaywen's Story of the Bdote: Hearing Ramona Stately's reading of her ancestor's story was especially impactful, the discussion tied together history and the present day.
- Michael Walker was great, and all of the guests were wonderful.
- I appreciated the number of different cultures that were represented in our speakers.
- This is a fantastic way to come together to relax, refresh and strengthen community networking.
- I love being a part of this group! It is always informative and refreshing!
- Appreciate the ability to share information and feelings, each week, with Dreamcatcher Wed meetings.....being alone in this position it allows valuable input on various fronts.
- This is by far my most favorite "workshop" to attend. I look forward to it next year as well. Thank you for all the hard work that was put into this Winter Gathering, it was very much appreciated!
- Thank you. It was great.

DC Evaluation

DC Annual Survey

DC Annual Survey: comments or suggestions on how the Dream Catcher Project can continue to partner with you in our shared purpose of moving closer to a FAIR educational system for all.

- Our district is in the process of hiring a Cultural Liaison. It will be essential for this person to understand the Dream Catcher Project. Continued training of staff and admin will help our students.
- It was great to know that all the schools react differently to the same things. For example, burning sage.
- Great program!
- I really feel my district needs to be putting Dreamcatcher as a close to #1 priority. Out of all our staff in five schools for our district, I am the only one that has had the training.....I want it to be realized what an amazing program this is for us to be sure

our kiddos are referred and evaluated fairly!

- I look forward to applying and hopefully our school being a part of this project.
- I am excited to have DC out to provide PD to our school staff before next school year. Hopefully, that will get staff to become more involved in our school's DC Team.
- Continuing to offer resources and training to help educators and student support offer creative solutions when kids are struggling in school.
- I appreciate how quickly you respond to emails and follow up to questions or concerns.
- More connection with us - we are going to train in the fall.
- In person staff training for a larger group.
- Thank you PDC for all you do.

DC Student Data Collection

This year schools were asked to submit the student data based on the students that they had contact with this year through the implementation of the Dream Catcher project. In years past, we collected this data separately from the annual survey and allowed for multiple formats (handwritten, google documents, etc.). This year the student data collection was turned into a survey format, and we did not provide an educational session just on the data collection as we did in the previous years. The student data survey was also sent with the annual survey. All of these factors, we believe, contributed to a significantly lower submission of student impact data. In years past, the DC project has had over one hundred student data points consistently even during COVID and this year had 6 student data points. We will continue to support improvement on seeing the impact of the project on individual students.