



The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma: Jones Academy

**2022 The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma: Jones Academy Native American Library
Services Enhancement Application
Library Services Plan**

Project Justification

For our FY22 Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Library Enhancement grant the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) has focused our efforts on Goal 2, “improving education programs related to specific topics and content areas of interest to library patrons and community-based users.” Our objectives will be focused on supporting “the identification of the needs and interests of learners” (Objective 2.1) and “the development and implementation of classes, events, teaching tools, resources, and other educational services” (Objective 2.2). To achieve this, CNO is requesting funding to purchase supplies for Library activities and events and more books. Additional funds are requested to update the Jones Academy (JA) Library’s furniture to more interactive and child-friendly options. This update will make the Library more accessible to JA students and further instill a life-long love of learning and reading.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is a federally recognized Tribe, with a 10,992 sq. mile tribal reservation comprised of a 13-county service area. According to CNO’s Tribal Research department, the reservation hosts a Native American population of 57,340¹, of which 45,547² are Choctaw, accounting for more than 75 percent of the population in many communities. The remaining Native American population is made up of as many as 29 different tribes, making this a diverse region with many languages, dialects, and cultures.

This rural region struggles with extreme poverty, unemployment, and low educational attainment. In fact, southeastern Oklahoma has some of the poorest counties in the state, and the entire U.S.; all counties in the CNO have been designated as USDA StrikeForce areas, which consists of “*the country’s most economically challenged areas*”. With this funding, CNO and our tribal residential school, Jones Academy, seek to address the systemic issues that our tribal students face due to the region’s socioeconomic challenges, and the failures of the education system to address the cultural needs of Native American students. The staff at Jones Academy feel the best way to meet these challenges head on and provide students with meaningful solutions is to improve their relationship and engagement with reading and learning through the Jones Academy Library and its related programing.

Literacy has been shown to have a large impact on the mental and emotional wellbeing of students, as “*pupils with poor literacy skills are much more likely to be excluded from school than their peers.*”³ This social isolation may snowball and prevent students from truly enjoying learning. Furthermore, “*children who are behind their peers in reading struggle with low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy,*”⁴ and these feelings of shame and deficient self-worth can

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). American Community Survey 5-year Estimates Detailed Tables. <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=United%20States&t=American%20Indian%20and%20Alaska%20Native&g=0500000US40005,40013,40023,40029,40061,40063,40077,40079,40089,40121,40127&y=2020>

² Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Tribal Membership, Internal Choctaw Membership Report, Retrieved March 9, 2022.

³ Every Child a Chance Trust: The Long-Term Cost of Literacy Difficulties, 2nd Edition by Jean Gross, Daniel Price, Colin Hudson (Published January 2009)

⁴ The Children’s Reading Foundation: What’s the Impact



often spiral into greater systemic problems. A lack of confidence in reading can lead to students struggling throughout their entire time in the education system; *“academically, children who are not reading on grade level by the end of third grade struggle in every class, year after year, because over 85 percent of the curriculum is taught by reading.”*⁵ Being unable to engage or understand lessons can be frustrating and isolating. Because they can’t engage with the learning itself, students become withdrawn and could fall through the cracks.

Native American students face unique, and broad challenges, with educational institutions often failing to meet their unique literacy needs. In 2019, 80% of American Indian students scored below proficient in their reading level⁶. Literacy is a gateway for better peer relationships, good mental health, academic success, and sustainable employment. Why then is the gateway acting as a barrier to Native students succeeding?

It is CNO and JA’s hope that cultivating an engaging Library, with books, resources, and furnishings that spark an interest among students, as well as a dedicated and invested staff, is the key to helping Native students enter through this literacy gateway. Jones Academy is nestled among 540 acres of rolling pasture and trees at the foot of the San Bois Mountain range in southeastern Oklahoma, five miles northeast of Hartshorne, OK. Jones continues the tradition of serving and educating Native American children and can be considered “home” by up to 200 students, representing 22 tribes from 8 states. The campus provides onsite schooling for grades 1st – 6th, with students in grades 7th – 12th attending nearby Hartshorne High School. As a residential school, all students live on campus full-time during the school year.

All students use the Library at Jones Academy, both during and after school hours. The Library has regular hours, Monday through Friday from 8:00am to 4:30pm. The Library provides an important and critical gathering place for students of all ages to read, use computers, and learn about people like themselves as well as learn about other people from diverse cultures, other societies, and the world. The Library at Jones also serves as an important academic cornerstone for students and offers an engaging source for knowledge, tutoring, and other activities that cultivate inclusivity and create positive learning experiences. The Library, which includes a story-telling room and an outdoor reading porch with a view of the wooded hillside, is an environment where students of all ages enjoy learning and exploring new ideas.

This year’s IMLS Library Enhancement grant will mainly focus on our 1st-6th grade students (up to 90 students), with 7th-12th grade students (up to 110 students) receiving secondary benefits from the Library’s environment and resources after school and on weekends. Both our primary and secondary target audiences have been very involved in providing the current Librarian with suggestions and feedback for how the Library can improve and grow. This has been achieved formally through surveys from our students under our most recent IMLS grants and personally with the Librarian’s invested connection with the Jones Academy students she serves.

The faculty and staff at Jones Academy consider their students future tribal leaders and work diligently to foster their love of learning; however, due to limited resources, the Jones Academy

⁵ The Children’s Reading Foundation: What’s the Impact

⁶ Annie C. Casey Foundation: Kids Count Data Center-Fourth Graders who scored below proficient reading level by race in the United States.



Library has not had updated furniture since 2006. The current furniture is not best suited to accommodate the needs of younger readers and its book selection could be further expanded to engage all students at all reading levels. *“Motivation is the key in promoting a love of literacy in children,”* and that motivation often takes its form in a shelf filled with books that match students’ interests and reading levels.⁷ The library staff wants students to create meaningful connections with readers that leave lasting impressions on their young minds. Alongside expanding the Library’s collections, the Library’s programming will include crafts, special events, and other tactile, creative activities to increase participation among students. Additional consumable materials like glue, paper, and other craft supplies will be used to engage students at the Library in tailored activities centered around reading.

Creating a captivating environment will also be critical to shaping JA student’s relationship with literacy. Our younger students need shelves that make choosing the right book for them easy, exciting, and safe and reading spaces that draw them in. Colorful, lightweight, mobile furniture would better accommodate the fluid way that these students engage with the Library and literacy. For the older students at JA, who attend classes at Hartshorne but reside at Jones Academy, the Library is in many ways their home library. Having books available to them to read is necessary to normalize reading for leisure and ensure they create a life-long passion for learning.

There are multiple beneficiaries for the program. Funding will give Jones Academy the faculty and tools to provide the best library experience to their students as possible. Our current Librarian, Sierra McAfee, has truly transformed the Library into a space that students love. By providing her with a Teaching Assistant (TA), Ms. McAfee will be free to engage with students more often, with the TA providing relief from shelving and organizing books. Furthermore, having both a Librarian and Teaching Assistant present to help children find the books that interest them and design engaging library activities will result in more student needs being met.

New furniture will make it easier to structure events in the library and provide students with a new library experience. Updating the furniture will allow Ms. McAfee to create special reading spaces that draw current students in and foster a new relationship with reading for many of them. Beyond current staff and students, future students who attend Jones Academy will also receive the same benefits from the expanded collection and updated furniture.

These long-term benefactors are evidence of the Project’s sustainability and impact well beyond the grant period. Beyond the immediate improvement for both staff and students, the Project will leave a lasting impression on the community through the students it was able to inspire. Each student who develops a passion for reading while at Jones Academy is a potential educator, parent, or community leader who can share their love of reading with others.

Project Work Plan

The purpose of the program is to make the Library more inviting and accessible to Jones Academy students, as well as improve student participation in the Library’s events and activities. To accomplish this the Program will implement the following activities in the order listed:

⁷ Edutopia: Developing a Love of Reading in Students by Kathryn Starke (Published 01/31/2020)



- 1) Provide funding for the salary for a Librarian and Teaching Assistant (TA). The Librarian, Sierra McAfee, will directly implement the project activities. She has already been such a pivotal component in the Library's success. To allow Ms. McAfee more time for programmatic planning for events and activities, a Teaching Assistant will be hired to assist with daily library maintenance, such as shelving, organizing materials, and assisting students. (Objective 2.1 and 2.2)
- 2) In Year 1 of the Project, the Librarian will attend a professional development training, such as the National Conference for Librarians. Deepening Ms. McAfee's commitment and training in the profession will only continue to elevate the creativity and care she brings to JA students and the Library. (Objective 2.1 and 2.2)
- 3) Program staff will purchase new, mobile, open concept furniture for the Library to better engage student in grades 1-6 within the first 6 months of Year 1. The Library's furniture is dull and worn, as it has not been replaced in over 10 years. The shelves that are currently in use are also mounted to the wall which makes it difficult for Library staff to relocate or reorganize sections of the Library in a way that suits different reader needs. Overall, this new furniture will make the library more versatile and inviting which will make for a more useful and engaging environment for both students and staff alike. (Objective 2.1 and 2.2)
- 4) Each month during the school year, the Librarian will purchase new selections of books and resources appropriate for grades 1-12 for students to explore. This activity is vital to the success of the program because it ensures that the Library has more books of every genre and reading level. Providing a wide variety of options for students makes it easier for them to discover the books that interest them most and makes it more likely they will have a positive experience and return to the Library in search of other engaging material. After purchasing books, Program staff will ensure the books are cataloged in the Library's system and shelved within 2 months of their arrival at Jones Academy. This way new books can be searched for, and easily found by students. (Objective 2.1 and 2.2)
- 5) Each month, the Librarian will select a new book and/or subject matter that will be featured. The Librarian will create activities for the students, to engage them with subject matter and foster a love a learning in the Library space. These tailored activities will capitalize on the excitement of readers and establish a creative, tactile association with the books students read, and by doing so, make the experience all the more memorable. These events and activities will establish a positive association with reading among JA students. (Objective 2.1 and 2.2)
- 6) Additionally, once a week, the Librarian will prepare a craft project associated with a book and lead the students in preparing the craft to create an association with creative free thought, and the logical skill necessary for reading and advanced problem solving. This is intended to establish a creative, tactile association with the books students read, and give students a physical representation of their relationship to that reading experience. (Objective 2.2)
- 7) After each craft, the Librarian will display student creations in the Library to reward unique thought, and diligent work. Much like how the craft creates a positive correlation for students while they are making it, it will continue to give them a sense of pride as they see their work on display. It also makes the book a source of curiosity for students who see the crafts but have not yet read the book. Building positive associations with



reading is key to motivating students to choose a book over another activity. (Objective 2.2)

- 8) At the end of each school month, the Librarian will compile sign-in sheets filled out by students and use the data to determine if 85% of Jones Academy students are participating in Library activities and programming. (Objective 2.2)
- 9) At the end of each school quarter, the Librarian will distribute a survey to ensure the Library's programming and resources are meeting student needs. Students may also make suggestions through the survey regarding book titles they would enjoy, subject matter requests, and Library layout suggestions, such as moving shelves to create a reading nook by a window. Providing the students with meaningful participation in the Library's offerings will continue to build their relationship with literacy. By doing so, the Program can tell if their efforts are successful or have a clear indication on when to pivot and adjust program plans to ensure the needs of all students are being met. (Objective 2.1)

Careful planning has been undertaken to mitigate potential risks to program implementation. A major concern has been supply chain issues and product availability; to accommodate this, ample time has been allotted for books and furniture to be acquired. In the event that necessary items cannot be procured, Program staff will inform the funding agency, and an appropriate alternative will be selected. The rurality of JA has often been a concern in finding qualified staff; however, to combat this, competitive rates and substantial benefit packages are being used to attract the most qualified staff, quickly. Detailed program design and planning should mitigate foreseen risks, but in the event that problems do arise, JA staff are prepared thanks to the key personnel involved with the Project.

The Key Staff who will oversee, manage, and implement the Project are Joy Tribbey, Project Director, and Sierra McAfee, the Librarian. As Project Director, Ms. Tribbey will be responsible for communicating with the funding agency, submitting grant reports, facilitating grant purchases, and managing the Librarian and Teaching Assistant. Ms. Tribbey has served as a CNO Project Director since 2017, and is dedicated to serving at-risk, in need populations, and has extensive background working with federal grant programs. The Librarian, Sierra McAfee, will be responsible for gathering grant data and implementing program activities that directly impact students. Ms. McAfee has a master's in Library Media from East Central University and believes in the importance of developing a lifelong habit of reading, which she hopes to instill in her students. Ms. McAfee will also manage the Teaching Assistant and oversee purchasing and reporting under Ms. Tribbey.

A great many things will be necessary to ensure grant activities are carried out swiftly and effectively. The Program will need a Librarian and Teaching Assistant to implement the Program. The Program will need to purchase books of all genres and reading levels for students each month, as well as select and purchase furniture to make the Library more accessible and inviting. Ample consumable craft materials are needed to conduct the activities as explained above. Additionally, IMLS requires mandatory grant training in both Year 1 and 2 of the Project.

Lessons learned will be shared with IMLS as well as other Library professionals as requested. Additionally, CNO has a Grant Services division dedicated to providing grant programs with support from inception to closeout. Sharing these lessons with Grant Services will be vital to ensuring that Program goals and measurables are being met and delivered on time.



Project Results

The main result CNO and JA will achieve is an 85% participation rate among Jones Academy students in Library activities and programming. This goal is intended to foster a joy of reading in students that will create lasting memories and attachments to stories, and as a result, ultimately improve the reading comprehension of all Jones Academy students. The goal will result in students interacting with the Library in new, unique ways and building skills that transfer from academic success into a lifelong love of learning.

The tangible results of the program are additional books becoming a part of Jones Academy's collection, and new furniture to innovate the way that students interact with the Library and its collection. These tangible products will have an enduring influence on the way students engage with the Library for years to come.

The Program staff will sustain the benefit of the project beyond the conclusion of the grant by utilizing the assets the Program purchased with grant funds. Due to the versatility of the furniture and books purchased for the Project, Jones Academy will be able to use them for years, long after the period of performance has ended. The enduring nature of these items ensures they can continuously improve the relationship students have with reading. The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and Jones Academy are deeply committed to fostering a love of learning in young Native American students and intend to work tirelessly in its pursuit.



Schedule of Completion for Program Year One: September 2022 through August 2023												
Activities	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A
The Program staff will purchase new, mobile, open concept furniture for the Library to better engage student in grades 1-6 within the first 6 months of the grant.						→						
Monthly, the Librarian will purchase new books and titles appropriate for grades 1-12 for students to explore.										→		
After purchasing books, Program staff will ensure the books are catalogued in the Library’s system and shelved within 2 months of their arrival at Jones Academy.		→				→		→				
Monthly, the Librarian will select a new book that will be featured in the Library and its programming.										→		
Once a week, the Librarian will prepare a craft, event, or activity project associated with a reading level appropriate book for each grade and lead the students in preparing the craft to create an association with creative free thought, and the logical skill necessary for reading and advanced problem solving.										→		
After each craft, the Librarian will display student creations in the Library to reward unique thought, and diligent work.										→		
At the end of each school month, the Librarian will compile sign-in sheets filled out by students and use the data to determine if 85% of Jones Academy students are participating in Library activities and programming.										→		
On a quarterly (academic calendar) basis, the Librarian will distribute surveys to ensure the Library’s programming and resources are meeting student needs. Students may also make suggestions through the survey regarding book titles they would enjoy, subject matter requests, and Library layout suggestions.										→		



Schedule of Completion for Program Year Two: September 2023 through August 2024												
Activities	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A
Monthly, the Librarian will purchase large selections of new books appropriate for grades 1-12 for students to explore	→											
After purchasing books, Program staff will ensure the books are catalogued in the Library’s system and shelved within 2 months of their arrival at Jones Academy.		→			→			→				
Monthly, the Librarian will select a new book that will be featured in the Library and its programming.	→											
Once a week, the Librarian will prepare a craft, event, or activity project associated with a reading level appropriate book for each grade and lead the students in preparing the craft to create an association with creative free thought, and the logical skill necessary for reading and advanced problem solving.	→											
After each craft, the Librarian will display student creations in the Library to reward unique thought, and diligent work.	→											
At the end of each school month, the Librarian will compile sign-in sheets filled out by students and use the data to determine if 85% of Jones Academy students are participating in Library activities and programming.	→											
On a quarterly (academic calendar) basis, the Librarian will distribute surveys to ensure the Library’s programming and resources are meeting student needs. Students may also make suggestions through the survey regarding book titles they would enjoy, subject matter requests, and Library layout suggestions.	→											