

TNEC QUARTERLY REPORT TO MIAC

REPORT PERIOD	October, November, December 2024	DATE: 12/19/2024	
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Name	Position	Tribal Nation Represented
Laurie Harper	TNEC Chairperson	Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
Beth Tepper	TNEC Vice-chair	Twin Cities Representative
Billie Annette	Secretary	Minnesota Chippewa Tribe
Jennifer Murray	Treasurer	Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
Vondalee Carr	TNEC Representative	Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
Carissa Picket	TNEC Representative	Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
Dana Goodwin	TNEC Representative	White Earth Nation
Raina Killspotted	TNEC Representative	Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
Johnny Johnson	TNEC Representative	Prairie Island Indian Community
Jesse Kodet	TNEC Representative	Lower Sioux Indian Community
Carrie Trutna	TNEC Representative	Upper Sioux Indian Community
Glenda Martin	TNEC Representative	Red Lake Nation
Maria Burnett	TNEC Representative	Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
Recommendation Pending	Twin Cities Metro Representative	
Vacant	Greater Minnesota Representative	
Leanne Hoffman	Alternate Representative	Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
Jackie Probst	Alternate Representative	Lower Sioux Indian Community
Roberta Bjerkeset	Alternate Representative	Upper Sioux Indian Community
Dorothy Robinson	Alternate Representative	Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
Dan Morgan	Alternate Representative	Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
Trista Ayers	Alternate Representative	White Earth Nation
Tara Dupis	Alternate Representative	Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
Annamarie Hill	Alternate Representative	Red Lake Nation

QUARTERLY ACTIVITIES October – December 2024

TNEC met with the following persons/organizations:

- John Eggers, 100% Graduation Rate
- Scholastic Books: Michael Haggen, VP of Collections & Peter Helberg
- American Institutes for Research (AIR): Traci Karageorge, Nara Nayar, Marissa Spang
- Minnesota Department of Education (MDE): Jennifer Dugan, Director of Academic Standards, Instruction and Assessment
- Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Commissioner’s Office: Melanie Franks, Tribal Liaison/Director of Tribal Government Relations
- Office of Higher Education (OHE): Commissioner Rafael Eubanks, Tribal Liaison
- Minnesota Department of Education, Office of American Indian Education: Dr. Jane Harstad, Director of OAIE
- PELSB (Professional Educators Licensing Standards Board)
- DEED (Minnesota Department of Economic) James Whirlwind Soldier
- MDE – Commissioner Jett – quarterly consultation November 20, 2024

100% Graduation Rate:

John Eggers presented information to TNEC on the low graduation rates for American Indian students; nothing the tribes and TNEC are not already aware of. While TNEC expressed their appreciation for his efforts, they also asked for his plan for achieving 100% graduation rate or a timeline and he did not have any plan nor did he have a timeline.

Mr. Eggers’ ask of TNEC is to form a working group with him to work on this project, wants TNEC endorsement for the 100% graduation rate goal and wants TNEC to spread the word about this initiative.

Scholastic Books: Native Voices Collection:

Discussion centered on Scholastic’s efforts to diversify children’s books with an emphasis on their “Rising Voices” collection. They want to include positive representation of diverse protagonists including expending their effort to include STEAM, women of color, and American Indian stories. Their story types will include comic books, graphic novels and bilingual books. Scholastic understands the lack of books that authentically represent American Indian tribes and our lived experiences. Their goal is to have 100% American Indian writers and illustrators for the American Indian collection. TNEC offered several local writers’ names to Scholastic.

Scholastic’s ask of TNEC was for suggestions for Native authors, illustrators and publishers and **asked that TNEC share resources that TNEC chooses to share.**

American Institutes for Research:

Discussion by AIR about their project supporting Indigenous educators through the Indigenous Educators State Leaders Network (IESLN). The project seeks to engage with states, tribes and districts to share promising practices and address barriers in data sharing. Through this project, AIR aims to improve student identification policies and practices by focusing on inclusive counts and tribal affiliation data. Minnesota is considered exemplar in inclusive counts. Importance of consultation and data sharing was discussed and how important they are to effective partnerships. AIR is wanting to increase collaboration among stakeholders and support SEAs’ capacity to help. They discussed inclusive counts and increasing the visibility of American Indian students, increasing eligibility for federal funds, and improving data accuracy. AIR discussed their survey for interested participants, followed by interviews or potentially focus groups. All information is anonymous and no identifying information will be shared.

AIR’s request to TNEC was to let AIR know if anyone would be interested in participating.

MDE – Academic Standards, Instruction, and Assessments

Jennifer Dugan, Director of ASIA presented on the development of the Health standards in Minnesota and the formation

of the affiliated health standards committee, the redesign of assessment reports and survey and focus groups. Health Standards committee will be formed and TNEC members are asked to participate, TNEC will receive advance notice and there will be a general public application to serve on Health Standards Committee that will open separately. Process will formally start in the 24-25 school year and meeting details and dates are pending. Invitations will go out in March, meetings to commence in summer 1-3 days total.

Jen Dugan was asked about the number of TNEC that can serve on the committee – she said it is usually two; TNEC responded that they had an agreement in place with former Director of ASIA and former commissioner that included 2 seats for Ojibwe and 2 seats for Dakota folks on the standards committees; Jen replied that she would check into that agreement and report back to TNEC via email or at October's meeting.

TNEC had several questions regarding the Community Review Committees. The Community Review Committees are discrete committees as they are not recurring/ongoing committees. They review very specific grade-level content. The Community Review Committees help create the MCA tests and questions.

Jen was asked if she knows how many MCA questions are related to the Minnesota Tribal nations and communities, regarding those standards. She replied that MDE does not track by context, they track by their alignment to individual benchmarks.

TNEC asked how Jen Dugan would know if there are questions about tribes or tribal experiences within those benchmarks on the MCA tests. She replied that MDE would know the benchmarks based off of a blueprint. The blueprint goes to the strand level. The instruction is aligned to the standard.

TNEC asked if the Community Review Committee will review the test questions and Jen Dugan replied that that was correct; the CRC reviews all of the content before a student sees it. The CRC looks at all of the benchmarks, all of the passages, all of the science phenomena. These committees look at everything, sometimes twice in the case of phenomena and passages.

Health Standards is broken down by subject area and grade level; there is roughly 30 of these.

TNEC asked if there was any way for the CRCs to know if anything is mentioned for American Indians or Native Americans in the standards: Jen Dugan replied that the CRCs look at that as part of their work all throughout the process. They look at subsets of content, not all at once.

Jen Dugan also discussed the Statewide Assessment Reports Redesign. She said the redesign will take 9-12 months. Phase 1 was a survey; the link for feedback was provided to TNEC. Phase 2 was focus groups that finished in August. They were still going through the data. Phase 3 focus groups timeline was under development still. She said that a lot of time is being spent on data that resonates with users. TNEC will be notified when the opportunity to participate is opened.

Jen Dugan reported the following:

- **Arts and Physical Education:** first year of implementation was 23-24.
- **Science:** first year of implementation is 24-25.
- All use the standards and benchmarks that include the Tribal Nations of Minnesota in 2023.
- **English Language Arts:** first year of implementation is 25-26.
- **Social Studies:** first year of implementation is 26-27.
- **Math:** first year of implementation is 27-28. Still in rulemaking.
- All will use standards and benchmarks that include the Tribal Nations of Minnesota.
- Computer Science working group has concluded and their report is posted to the legislative reports page.
- **Holocaust, Genocide of Indigenous People, and Other Genocides working group** met in August. They are in

the process of finalizing paperwork for an interagency agreement for external facilitation.

- The **Ethnic Studies working group** meets for the last time next Tuesday. Recommendations and resources will be presented to the Commissioner by October 31st.
- The **Personal Finance Course Working Group** is open for public comment through September 23rd. That group's last meeting is on October 29th. Notification was sent to the committee last week.

TNEC asked Jen Dugan how was her department aligning tribal resources to Indigenous education for all?

She replied, "Our team, depending on the content area, would go through the resource and look at content alignment, when a resource is submitted."

MDE – ASIA request of TNEC: nominations for TNEC representatives to serve on the committee. Jennifer Dugan's follow up are as follows:

- Send details on the health standards committee nomination process and honorarium amount
- Provide a link to released test content
- Provide a link to details on the reporting redesign focus groups
- Double check the number of TNEC representatives that can serve on Standards Committees
- Look into any agreement made regarding a specified number of Ojibwe and Dakota members on a committee.

MDE – Tribal Relations/Tribal Liaison

- Communication and Collaboration:
 - There's a need for improved communication and information sharing between MDE, the Office of American Indian Education (OAIE), and TNEC.
 - TNEC requested more concrete examples of MDE's goals for American Indian students and data on their progress.
 - MDE committed to sharing updates with both TNEC and OAIE.
- Tribal Relations Training:
 - MDE proposed an ongoing Tribal Relations Training Program for educators, administrators, and staff.
 - Funding is needed to support this program.
- Mascots:
 - TNEC discussed the issue of mascots, particularly the Red Wing school district.
 - MDE is working on revising current mascot legislation based on tribal feedback.
 - TNEC & PIIC held a meeting which the Tribal Relations Director attended. It was shared during the discussion that MIAC had made a decision and had relied on the MDE Tribal Relations Director to share the information with TNEC, this did not happen.
- Individual Learning Plans:
 - TNEC raised concerns about districts' lack of compliance with creating Individual Learning Plans for students.
 - MDE will discuss this issue with the Commissioner.
- Mediation:
 - TNEC discussed a mediation between Bois Forte, Fond du Lac, and ISD 2142.
 - MDE offered to facilitate a day-long discussion between the parties involved.
- ESSA Consultation:
 - TNEC expressed concerns about the lack of accountability for school districts in ESSA consultation.
 - They discussed the possibility of working with federal elected officials to update ESSA consultation legislation.

Office of American Indian Education (OAIE)

Indigenous Education for All (IEFA):

- MDE is seeking tribal input on the needs and funding requirements for IEFA through a legislative report.
- TNEC reviewed and approved the email draft to be sent to tribes.
- Emphasis is on the importance of thoughtful responses to the questions posed.

Legislative Proposals:

- TNEC supported several legislative proposals, including increased funding for IEFA, inclusion of tribal contract schools in language revitalization grants, and funding for districts to address mascot changes.

Tribal Equalization Dollars:

- MDE explained the formula for allocating tribal equalization dollars, which sometimes results in no state funding for tribal contract schools due to federal funding exceeding the state allocation.
- TNEC raised concerns about the complexity and transparency of this formula.

Native Language Revitalization Grants:

- OAIE is working on fully implementing Native Language Revitalization Grants and clarifying the definition of true language revitalization.
- OAIE is seeking to add three staff members to its team.

Staffing Concerns:

- TNEC expressed concerns about the inadequate staffing levels of the OAIE, particularly in light of its expanded responsibilities.
- Questions were raised about the lack of progress in restoring the OAIE to its previous staffing levels.
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Office of Higher Education (OHE) Raphael Eubanks, Tribal Liaison

Provided an update on the Office of Higher Education activities and the number of tribal consultations that have been completed for the quarter. Raphael offered assistance on grant reading for the Native Languages Revitalization grants.

DEED (Minnesota Department of Economic) James Whirlwind Soldier

James presented information on the Minnesota Indigenous Workforce Initiative (MIWI), which is designed to integrate Native talent into Minnesota's economy through partnerships with businesses, workforce developers, and educators. Its aim is to address the underrepresentation of Native people in the workforce, overcome historical economic barriers, and build generational wealth within Native communities. Community engagement and input is ongoing, and James will return to the committee to present new information as it's amassed.

Minnesota Department of Education: Quarterly Consultation - Commissioner Jett**General Concerns, Comments, Discussion****Agenda Item 1: Impact Aid**

- Prairie Island Indian Community (PIIC) met with MDE regarding impact aid and it not being beneficial to Native students.
- Aid goes through schools from the federal government.
- Concern is expressed about the stability of the funding due to the president-elect's stance on the Department of Education. It's noted that the federal government is unlikely to successfully eliminate the DOE because it would take congressional action.
- Johnny is interested in knowing experience other tribes have had with the aid.
- Laurie offered that Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe (LLBO) has been approached with policy related to the aid, and that most students in districts near them receive the aid.
- Commissioner Jett noted the importance of tribal officials understanding this aid on a deeper level and suggested that attending the 2025 Impact Aid conference could be beneficial.
- Glenda noted that TrekNorth is the only school that contacted Red Lake regarding Impact Aid funding. Some Red Lake school board members attend the conference. It's critical to educate ourselves on the topic.

- **Q:** Does Impact Aid surpass the amount they lose from taxes?
A: No, it's like a pie and parsed out.
- The [conference is March 9-11, 2025](#), in Washington DC.

Agenda Item 2: Office of American Indian Education's Staffing and Capacity

- **Commissioner Jett:** The division's staffing levels and its capacity are an ongoing concern, the need for additional staff is recognized. MDE has had discussions about this issue with the governor's office, and I'm hopeful that we can make progress during the upcoming session. Dr. Harstad has been clear about their workload challenges. We asked for three additional staff and acknowledge that that may not be enough.
- **Q:** How does MDE evaluate a new division to determine its staffing needs and levels? MDE can fund new programs pretty quickly, but we're being told as tribes that there is no accountability, that LEAs can't/won't be held accountable. We continue to beg to increase the capacity of the OAIE. There are 500 staff at MDE – How many are American Indian?
- **Response-Commissioner:** I will ask HR for that data. Regarding your comments about new divisions and staffing levels – as an example, the office of inspector general was prioritized by the legislature in response to the Feeding our Future scandal. We can advise them about priorities, but we will need the committee's help in order for this ask to be taken seriously.
- We have been asking for increased staff for many years. We can partner and ask, but we also need you, as Commissioner, to defend that ask at the upper echelon. Graduation rates are poor for American Indian students, but MDE acts as though minimal improvements are a testament to things being done well when in reality they are not.
- 25% of American Indian students are in special education, and they are also overrepresented in alternative learning centers, so when we're looking at rates the data is deceptive.
- **Response-Commissioner:** Regarding advocacy, I have and will continue to advocate for this division. It's not about graduation rates. There are many reasons increased staffing is needed.
- It's also the achievement gap, which is growing at an alarming rate. There are other indicators. It's concerning and we need to do things differently.
- Johnny notes that at yesterday's consultation, PIIC brought up additional staffing for the OAIE. PIIC favors increasing their capacity.
- Dana offers that White Earth formally supports this as well.
- **Q:** Is this something we should bring up at the MIAC meeting so that they can formally endorse the staffing recommendation?
A: Yes, we've done that. The tribal relations division at the governor's level was not happy with that.
- The data is alarming and there needs to be more than just a call for change. We need strategies to move the needle, including increasing the capacity of the OAIE.
- **Q:** Glenda, can you take this request to the Red Lake governing board? To support the OAIE staffing increase formally?
A: Yes.
- **Q:** Billie, can you take this to MCT and prepare a resolution for the subcommittee?
A: Yes. No problem. The next meeting is in January.
- **Q:** Did MDE only ask for three additional staff?
- **Response-Commissioner:** We asked for more but we were permitted to put forth a request for three.
- **Q:** How many staff would ideally be needed, and in what roles would they serve?
- **Response-Commissioner:** Dr. Harstad has likely identified some specific needs and roles. What the legislature wants to know is how this will impact their districts specifically.
- Dr. Harstad offers that while she is grateful for her current team, they could integrate programs and actualize change with additional staff. Simply reiterating the ask hasn't helped. Impacts at the school level are clear, and the division can provide examples of exactly how this impacts the district and its students.

- Additional staff for Indigenous Education for All (IEFA) and people skilled at culling data are needed to move towards improvements. There are many people needed to actually get the work done. A department of Indian Education is needed.
- **Commissioner:** More things were added in the last session, and more people are needed to execute the new priorities.
- There's a need for increased collaboration with schools. There are districts that do not understand our students or families.
- **Q:** More staff are needed, but how do we know how many when we don't have a plan to close the achievement gap?
- The schools lack leadership from MDE. They don't use data to make informed decisions. What does MDE do with all of that data? You should be able to look at the data and determine how many staff are needed. Maybe the staff in the OAIE can help provide insight?
- It's frustrating to keep asking for this repeatedly. It's the MDE responsibility to have a plan in place to support American Indian students and their achievement. The ask is making it to the table, but it's not going anywhere from there.
- We have data we have to use, but districts don't use it. There's no accountability for them to support our kids. We just have a bunch of rules that no one has to follow. There is no accountability at the school level.
- **Response-Commissioner:** I hear you. We need to be specific about what the additional staff will actually do. I understand the administrative path you're referring to. We need more FTEs to do the work, but it's still not enough. I acknowledge the ask for the dedicated Indian Education department, but that's a conversation for another time.
- There is a lot of American Indian student data. All schools collect data on our students. During consultations, LEAs are asked for their strategic plans, and they've been producing data. They have plans for all students and what we're asking is that they create this same type of plan for American Indian students using their specific data.
- MDE also needs to come to the table and use that data in this work. Our ask of MDE is to access that data that schools are reporting. It's going into their planning for funding. Possibly some is being used in American Indian Education Aid plans. It's there and being used and we want MDE to formally use the data and back us up in our requests.
- This needs to come from you as commissioner. Maybe introduce data as a topic in the superintendent or charter newsletters? Ask them to drill down into the demographic information. How are they achieving? How is this being addressed.
- **Response-Commissioner:** There are some districts that do this already. They do data dives. They usually do it in the fall and its site specific. They aren't necessarily doing that at the level you're referencing. It needs to be demonstrated to them. There are many districts that need assistance with data.
- **Committee Recommendation:** Consider adding a "data dive" style session to the Tribal Relations Training that Melanie oversees? This would be geared towards administrators, leaders, etc., not American Indian education staff.
- **Q:** How are AIEA districts creating plans without data?
A-Dr. Harstad: We focus on helping the AIPAC and American Indian education staff find the data needed to do the work without asking, as well as helping them to understand the data. We created a worksheet for American Indian education staff to fill out, so they had a "map" to the information. Something similar could be scaled up for Tribal Relations Training.
- **Q-Commissioner:** Has the OAIE taken data dive info or similar training to the Minnesota School Board Administrators (MSBA) conference?
A: We attended one time but were only permitted to do a table talk, rather than a presentation or training.
- **Response-Commissioner:** It would be beneficial for those with clout to push this issue.

Agenda Item 3: School Trust Lands Funds

- **Commissioner:** The formula is in the constitution. Patty Hand and Kathy Erickson are the experts. Changes require a constitutional amendment. My role as commissioner is to facilitate and make recommendations. Patty and Kathy are supporting the Permanent School Fund (PSF) task force. Recommendations are due to the legislature by January 20, 2026.
- **Q:** Who are the four appointed members and are these meetings public?
A-Commissioner: I don't know if the meetings are public, but the notes from the meetings may be.
- Melanie offers to send the member names to the committee.
- **Q:** So you're saying this is a constitutional issue?
- **Response-Commissioner:** A constitutional amendment is needed to formally include the tribal schools.
- The commissioner has the authority to determine how the funds are distributed to recipients.
- **Response-Commissioner:** Tribal schools will not be formally included without the constitutional change.
- The committee continues to express concern about the exclusion of tribal contract schools in the trust lands funds. The funds are generated with the sale of stolen tribal lands and tribal schools receive no benefit, while districts and charters across the state receive significant funding.
- **Response-Commissioner:** I hear you.
- There are always loopholes in the law. Don't settle for quick and easy answers. We need to know that MDE is prepared to advocate, not just accept what they're told.
- **Response-Commissioner:** I hear what you're saying. I will look for ways to help American Indian students by any means necessary.

Action Item: Melanie Franks

- ✓ Provide the four members and information about the meetings.

Agenda Item 4: American Indian Education Aid Accountability

- **Commissioner:** In addition to the funding increase, there are new restrictions for non-Native students. The OAIE has cleaned up the UFARS codes and defined allowable expenses.
- Dr. Harstad: We guide people to the right thing. Once the money is distributed the districts can do what they want. There are districts that are not doing a good job. This has been going on for years. We've worked with mediators, and this just continues to happen. A better system is needed. We've made adjustments on our end. If there is more accountability for districts that would be helpful, but not at the expense of the students. We are trying to find that balance.
- Chair Harper references [Minnesota Statutes 127A.42](#) and provides a brief description of the statute as it pertains to the commissioner's authority related to funding and holding districts accountable to the law.
- **Q:** So you're telling us that accountability is ongoing and a work in progress?
A-Dr. Harstad: Yes. We try to provide technical assistance, so they do what is right. Wording is important. We are constantly working on this.

Agenda Item 5: Title III Funding

- **Commissioner:** This is a recurring question. I committed to the appropriate staff attending the quarterly meeting in January to answer questions. We're looking examples of how this is done in other states. If you know of states who are exemplars, please let them know.
- Regarding the question of the commissioner earmarking these funds, I am not aware of any authority for me to do this.

Agenda Item 6: TNEC Representation on Committees

- Several commissioners ago, the TNEC was promised a minimum of four seats on committees: two Dakota, two Ojibwe.
- We may not fill all four, but the option must be provided.

- Not all MDE divisions are aware of this and have given the committee push-back.
- **Committee Recommendation:** Issue a formal statement that confirms four seats for TNEC.
- **Response-Commissioner:** MDE is committed to having TNEC representation on committees and workgroups. The number of representatives can depend on the size of the committee. For example, if it's a five-person committee, we must consider whether four is appropriate. A larger committee may warrant four.
- The READ Act 2.0 comes to mind, also Health standards. Neither leader was aware of the four-seat agreement.
- We also had to advocate for more seats on the genocide workgroup.
- Regarding the READ Act, the committee was not included in the curriculum review and the resources were not appropriate. We were brought in too late in the process.

Agenda Item 7: The Definition of Tribal Contract Schools

- **Commissioner:** The four tribal contract schools are not non-public and should be considered public. They should be considered for funding and grants applicable to public schools, and we are working on language.
- Jennifer Dugan has pushed back on this definition.
- **Committee Recommendation:** Create and communicate a formal statement on tribal contract schools being public.

Action Item: Commissioner Jett

- Clarify with staff that tribal contract schools are public.

Agenda Item 8: The TNEC Retreat

- The commissioner has held the retreat on his calendar and will do his best to attend.

These are just a synopsis of TNEC meetings for the quarter; meeting minutes are posted on the TNEC website and can be found at <https://www.tnecmn.com/2024-meeting-materials1.html>

Report submitted to MIAC on December 22, 2024 by:
Laurie Harper, Chairwoman of TNEC