



TNEC
Tribal Nations Education Committee

Position on Education

Education for American Indians is a treaty right.

The Commerce Clause of the United States Constitution affirms that tribes are sovereign entities that are not subordinate to states, therefore the relationship between tribes and states must be government-to-government. The Tribal Nations Education Committee (TNEC) was established to remedy the lack of government-to-government communication, cooperation and consultation between the State of Minnesota and tribal nations related to education.

It is the mission of the TNEC to strengthen, protect and advance the overall education experience and opportunities for all American Indian students, families and communities of Minnesota. The TNEC is formally endorsed by both the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Tribal Executive Committee and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council.

The TNEC requests State agencies to work in close consultation with us to identify and implement strategies to improve the educational outcomes for all American Indian students within all Minnesota-based education programs. Tribal nations and the State of Minnesota must continue to work towards strengthening and advancing the educational experiences for all American Indian students, educators, families and communities of Minnesota. The TNEC acknowledges the wide range of current investments and budget proposals that aim to benefit young children and families, the TNEC requests specific priority across all policy and budget proposal for American Indian students and educators.

The State of Minnesota has one of the lowest graduation rates for American Indian students in the Nation. Recent data released by the Minnesota Department of Education shows the graduation rate for American Indian students has decreased from 62.82% in 2017 to 58.64% in 2021, all other student groups have increased their rates at a much quicker pace, which has only widened the academic achievement gap. This is unacceptable.

Tribal Nation Education Committee Members:

Vondalee Carr –**Bois Forte**; Jennifer Murray –**Fond du Lac**; Maria Burnett –**Grand Portage**; Laurie Harper –**Leech Lake**; Jacqueline Probst –**Lower Sioux**; Baabiitaw Boyd –**Mille Lacs**; Paul Dressen –**Prairie Island**; Glenda Martin –**Red Lake**; Lisa Tittle –**Shakopee**; Carrie Trutna –**Upper Sioux**; Dana Goodwin –**White Earth**; Billie Annette –**MCT**;
Vacant – **Twin Cities Metro**; Edye Washington – **Greater Minnesota**



EARLY LEARNING

Support for Early Learning programs is an investment. Research shows the benefits of birth to age 5 programs. There is convincing evidence that high quality early learning experiences give American Indian children the tools to be ready to learn when they begin kindergarten. It is the framework for children to develop strong foundational cognitive skills, develop social emotional competence and establish patterns of engagement in school and learning.

In order to ensure that all American Indian children have access to quality early learning programming, the Minnesota Legislature must:

- Continue a tribal set-aside for early learning scholarships.
- Designate state appropriated funds to increase slots for tribal Head Start and Early Head Start programs.
- Extended year funding for Head Start and EHS.
- Expand access to Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) funds to reach all tribal communities.
- Expand access to Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) funds to reach all tribal communities.
- Recommend increasing the universe of service providers to include tribal referral networks.
- Appropriate additional funding to recruit and retain high quality early childhood teachers in high need areas.
- Appropriate additional funding to further develop the infrastructure with funding specifically for the design and construction of new early learning facilities

PRE-K THROUGH GRADE 12

The American Indian Education Act of 1988 is legislation intended to provide for American Indian education programs specially designed to meet unique educational or culturally related academic needs of American Indian children. ***The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) must inform and hold all school districts within the State accountable to these laws.***

The TNEC requests the Minnesota Department of Education and school districts to:

- Remove barriers for participation in extracurricular activities such as transportation and fees.
- Implement “American Indian Education for All” including curriculum and instruction of American Indian history, government, culture, science, arts and other contributions of American Indians in all Minnesota schools for all students.
- Coordinate efforts to increase support American Indian students and communities.



- Provide increased training and technical assistance to American Indian communities.
- Coordinate technical assistance efforts within MDE to ensure American Indian students meet all state proficiency standards.
- Provide Historical Trauma/Trauma Informed Training and Tribal State Relations Training as Professional Development for ALL district staff.

The TNEC requests all professional boards and associations:

- Be inclusive of Tribal Schools in membership, trainings and resources.
- Require school administrators, including but not limited to Superintendents, Principals, Counselors and School Board Members, to earn clock hours in Tribal Sovereignty, Tribal Communities and Tribal students in order to better meet the needs of American Indian students.

The TNEC requests the State of Minnesota to:

- Continue using the state definition of American Indian student.
- To require **ALL MDE** departments to utilize the state definition of AI Students.
- Recognize American Indian as the primary default for students choosing American Indian as one of the “two or more” category.
- Require MDE to clarify to districts the MDE Report Card differences between State and Federal counts and how that affects American Indian resources, programming and planning.
- Adjust and maintain an equitable level of funding to commensurate the cost of inflation. The current cap is \$3,230 per pupil state equalization funding for BIE schools.
- Increase the Office of Indian Education personnel to previous staffing levels prior to 2012 and fiscal capacity of the Minnesota Office of Indian Education in order to:
- Provide increased technical assistance and guidance to Early Childhood Programs and K-12 public, charter, and Bureau of Indian Education-funded schools.
- Continue to provide training and support to Indian Home/School Liaisons, Indian Education professionals, program staff, and American Indian Parent Advisory Committees.
- Provide additional cultural competence training activities to administrators, school boards, school staff, support staff and American Parent Advisory Committees.



HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is a necessity and is no longer an option. The TNEC is committed to making a full range of higher education options available and easily accessible for all American Indian students in Minnesota.

The TNEC requests that the State of Minnesota:

- Initiate action to increase the drastically underrepresented number of American Indian school teachers in our public-school systems by:
- Providing incentive aid to school districts to encourage recruitment, employment, and retention of American Indian K-12 certified, licensed teachers, principals and superintendents.
- Adequately and equitably fund the Minnesota Indian Teacher Training Program.
- Support the Commissioner of MDE and the Commissioner of the Office of Higher Education to ensure that colleges and universities have complied with the request to modify teacher training programs to include curriculum with specific content regarding tribal sovereignty, history and culture of the 11 Tribal Nations of Minnesota, for all students entering the teaching field.
- Support a tuition and fee waiver for all American Indian students attending Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and University of Minnesota institutions in order to increase access.
- Support equalization funds for Minnesota Tribal Colleges in order to stabilize core institutional funding.
- Support research to better serve the diverse demographic needs of American Indian students that are eligible for the Minnesota Indian Scholarship program.

The TNEC requests the Minnesota State Colleges & University System (MNSCU), the University of Minnesota, Minnesota's Private Colleges, and Tribal Colleges to:

- Identify, develop and implement strategies to address the issue of historically low retention of American Indian students.
- Submit an annual report to tribes on the status of these and other efforts related to the outcomes of American Indian students in higher education systems prior to July 31 each year.
- Modify teacher training programs to include curriculum with specific content regarding tribal sovereignty, history and culture for all students entering the field of education by 2024.
- Require licensed teachers to enroll in continuing education courses in these content areas every five years in order to maintain their teaching licensure.
- Require licensed teachers to complete a minimum of 8 hours in continuing education courses in these content areas for every license renewal cycle.



- Require all Minnesota Indian Teacher Training Programs (MITTP) to include specific and integrated instruction to better prepare teachers to meet the needs of American Indian students. TNEC recommends that MITTP funding be straight scholarship, non-need based and continue to expand further with using funds for recruitment and retention of students.
- Support collaborations between Minnesota Tribal Colleges and other higher education institutions (articulations agreements, two-plus-two programs, etc.).

LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION & IMMERSION

Education and Language Revitalization are essential within our communities and are key to improving the lives of our people. Research indicates that American Indian students achieve at higher rates when taught through comprehensive, full-day language immersion programs that incorporate environment, culture and language and in traditional schools which imbed environment, culture and language.

The TNEC requests that the State of Minnesota:

- Continue to support Native language revitalization efforts funded through the Minnesota Legacy Amendment.
- Commit financial resources to support current Native language programs, immersion models, curriculum development and program development.
- Appropriate funding for tribally community-based programs that will strengthen the Native language revitalization movement.
- Appropriate funding for a comprehensive report on best replicable practices of programs that are creating successful speakers of Ojibwe and Dakota languages

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Tribes know their unique needs best. Minnesota Tribal Nations were acutely aware that Minnesota was not consulting with them through a true government-to-government relationship. As a result, they acted by creating and authorizing their own independent education committee to work directly with state agencies. As a result, Tribal Nations are once again recognized within the Minnesota Department of Education and cited in state statute. A respectful relationship between Tribes and the State is now growing. The TNEC submits its Position on Education to the State annually and continues to build relationships with State agencies which allow for meaningful consultation with results. The following are some of the accomplishments either initiated and/or supported by Minnesota Tribal Nations as a result of exercising our sovereignty:

- The establishment of the Tribal Nations Education Committee (TNEC)
- Updated TNEC website that includes meeting dates, ZOOM link and calendar.



- Formatted TNEC report process for MIAC quarterly meetings.
- Secured \$150,000.00 from MDE for TNEC capacity building.
- Created a position for a TNEC Executive Assistant.
- MDE has designated a budget for Indigenous Education for All curriculum.
- MDE and the 11 Tribal Nations have the opportunity to enter into a Joint Powers Agreement for Indigenous Education for All curriculum.
- Solidified 4 TNEC seats for MDE's Academic Standards Committees.
- MDE will hold an Indian Education Summit each year for key stakeholders, to include but not limited to tribal administrators, Tribal Colleges, school administrators, educators, Indian Education staff parents and students, on relevant issues facing Indian Education in the State of Minnesota.
- The relationship between MDE and the TNEC is codified in state statute with the following language: The commissioner shall seek consultation with the TNEC on all issues relating to American Indian Education.
- MDE earmarked \$500,000.00 for Tribal State Relations Training.
- MDE and the 11 Tribal Nations have an American Indian student Data Sharing Agreement.
- The Office of Indian Education was reinstated in 2012 with the hiring of an Indian Education Director, and the position became permanent per state statute. MDE has added 5 staff to the Office of Indian Education. MDE has 6 more staffing positions to fill before it is at the 2004 capacity.
- The Minnesota Legislature has funded all-day every-day kindergarten programs across the state, thus making kindergarten available for all Minnesota children.
- The Minnesota Legislature supported Governor Dayton's proposed funding for School Bullying Prevention.
- An increased appropriation for the Minnesota Indian Scholarship Program.
- Expanded the Minnesota Indian Teacher Training Program by increasing scholarships and two new grantee schools.
- Developed a 5-year strategic plan.
- As a result of the 2015 special session, the competitive Success for the Future grant program was eliminated and replaced with a formula aid program that provides funding on a per-pupil basis to 136 public school districts, charter schools, and BIE schools, serving nearly 95% of our American Indian students in Minnesota. The formula now provides a minimum funding floor of \$20,000 to any school district that enrolls at least 20 American Indian students as well as \$358



for every American Indian student enrolled over 20. The funding and program has essentially quadrupled with a biennial appropriation of over \$17.6 million and an expansion of eligible districts and schools from 32 to 136. In addition, TNEC consulted with MDE to update the American Indian Aid guidance.

- In addition to this change, the \$1500 per pupil cap on state equalization funding for BIE schools was lifted and a new cap of \$3,230 was established, more than doubling the per pupil equalization funding the state provides.
- MDE opened up state education grant applications to BIE schools.
- Provided Tribal Consultations to 10 Schools Districts not within 50 miles of a MN Tribal Community.
- BIE school board membership requests were accepted by the Minnesota Schools Board Association as non-voting members.
- Presented at MIEA.
- Consulted on the reinterpretation of the Integration & Achievement funding in regards to American Indian student count.
- The Office of Indian Education now reports directly to Minnesota Commissioner of Education.

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