
American Indian Parent Advisory Committee

Duluth Public Schools
709 Portia Johnson Drive
Duluth, Minnesota 55811

29th February 2024

ISD 709 SCHOOL BOARD

Duluth Public Schools
709 Portia Johnson Drive
Duluth, Minnesota 55811

This letter of support is intended to accompany the vote and resolution of non-concurrence that will be presented to the ISD 709 School Board on February 29, 2024.

Graduation rate is arguably the most objective and comprehensive metric to evaluate if the educational needs of students are being met. The most recent 4-year graduation rate for American Indian students as reported by Duluth Public Schools is 43.58*. This graduate rate follows the flat graduation rate trend recorded by MDE in the Minnesota Report Card. Utilizing data-based decision making and a rudimentary risk assessment, **it is not likely** that an American Indian student entering 9th grade in the Duluth Public School District will graduate on time. Therefore, this AIPAC cannot concur that the educational needs of our American Indian students are being met.

This AIPAC is sensitive to the fact that there has been a significant change in leadership within the Duluth Public School District American Indian Education Department and we are motivated to support the district in meeting the unique educational and cultural needs of its American Indian students. We have convened, as a committee, to discuss the vote, the resolution statement, and formulate recommendations for improvement. Many of these recommendations may be currently in process but have been included as they are not easily identifiable.

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1. We recommend providing the opportunity for AIPAC committee members to tour all sites where we currently have American Indian Liaisons. We recommend inviting school board members to attend the tour alongside the advisory board. We recommend inviting other interested parties, i.e. the Duluth Indigenous Commission, to attend the tour.
 2. We recommend identifying transportation supports or a transportation alternative for American Indian students.
 3. We recommend PD for all staff w/ respect to American Indian history/culture/contributions.
 4. We recommend the HR Department create an action plan for recruitment/retention specific to American Indian teachers, administration and staff.
 5. We recommend trialing a pilot school w/i a school program to foster internal support and community for American Indian students.
 6. We recommend ensuring a manageable case-load ratio for American Indian Liaisons based on the most accurate count of American Indian students being served by the district.
 7. We recommend identifying a support person whose role it would be to collect and disseminate information re: opportunities for scholarships/career training and other opportunities for American Indian students who are both enrolled & descendents
 8. We recommend reserving dedicated space for the American Indian Education Program in Duluth Public Schools.
 9. We recommend dedicating district resources to directly support American Indian students' attendance and academics and utilizing American Indian Education funds to supplement the district plan goals.
 10. We recommend district funding to create two American Indian Curriculum, Academic and Integration Specialists to provide educational and cultural support.
 11. We recommend providing the AIPAC with regular updates, at least biannual updates, on growth and movement of goals that target American Indian students.
 12. We recommend that the district collaborate with its AIPAC to share and review data pertaining to American Indian students.

*Source document - 2023 World's Best Workforce

Dear American Indian Parent Advisory Committee Members,

This letter is in response to the American Indian Parent Advisory Committee's vote of non concurrence. The Board has reviewed the twelve recommendations thoroughly with district leadership and developed a response to each recommendation. Please refer to the attachment.

The Board has the deepest gratitude to the members of the American Indian Parent Advisory Committee (AIPAC) for the valuable recommendations you have provided to improve academic outcomes for our American Indian students. Your commitment to ensuring culturally relevant and equitable education opportunities is vital, and your advisory role contributes immensely to the success and achievement of American Indian students who attend Duluth Public Schools.

We sincerely acknowledge the invaluable presence, input, and knowledge that the AIPAC brings to our district and family partnerships. Your insights and perspectives play a crucial role in shaping the educational experiences of our American Indian students, and we are grateful for the guidance you provide. By working collaboratively, we can create an inclusive and empowering educational environment that meets the unique needs of all our students.

To assist in your decision-making process, we are committed to providing you with the necessary information and data. It is essential for the AIPAC to access comprehensive and accurate information, including testing data, attendance records, graduation rates, and student count information. This data will enable you to make recommendations backed by evidence and ensure informed decisions that prioritize the educational advancement of our American Indian students.

We recognize the importance of transparency and open communication, and we are dedicated to strengthening our partnership with the AIPAC. Your contributions are invaluable and we want to ensure that all stakeholders have access to the necessary information to foster positive change in our educational system.

In line with our shared commitment to improving academic outcomes, we invite you to engage in regular meetings and conversations with us. These interactions will provide opportunities for meaningful dialogue, exchange of ideas, and collaborative problem-solving, all aimed at enhancing the educational experiences of our American Indian students.

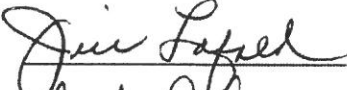
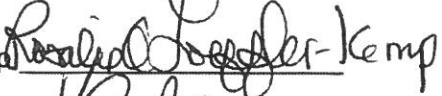
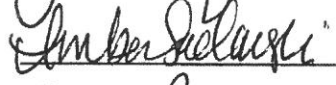


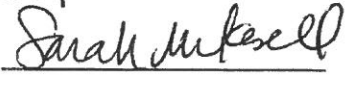

In closing, we would like to express our sincere appreciation for the dedication and commitment shown by the AIPAC members. Working in partnership, we will continue to champion the rights of our American Indian students, foster cultural appreciation, and work toward equitable educational opportunities that will positively shape their futures.

We look forward to further collaboration and to progress toward achieving our shared goals. Should you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership.

Sincerely,

Duluth Public School Board

Jill Lofald		Rosie Loeffler-Kemp	
Amber Sadowski		Kelly Durick Eder	
Henry Banks		Sarah Mikesell	
Stephanie Williams			

2023-2024 Response to Vote and Resolution of Non-Concurrence	
1. Recommendation	AIPAC committee members tour sites with American Indian Liaisons to get a better feel for what the Liaisons do for our students.
Response	We are working to schedule tours for each of the 8 committee members. The committee members will each be paired with a liaison during a day and time that works best for the committee members. We are also reaching out to the Duluth Indigenous Commission to get a list of member contacts to set up tours as well.
2. Recommendation	We recommend identifying transportation supports or a transportation alternative for American Indian students.
Response	We continue to explore ways to enhance transportation for students. This year, we reduced the transportation access distance for high school students from 2 miles to 1 mile. In addition, we entered into a pilot program with the Duluth Transit Authority to provide free rides to high school students. Both efforts have resulted in increased ridership and access to reliable transportation for all students. Vans were purchased and provided to the schools to assist with transporting students. Also, an additional Families in Transition (FIT) position was added to support unhoused and foster care students with transportation needs.
3. Recommendation	We recommend PD for all staff with respect to American Indian history/culture/contributions.
Response	The Teaching, Learning, and Equity department leaders will identify professional development resources and training that focus on American Indian history, culture, and contributions. The PD will be offered through various ways and coordinated by the PD coordinator.
4. Recommendation	We recommend the HR department create an action plan for recruitment/retention specific to American Indian teachers, administration and staff.
Response	Human Resources is in the process of developing a specific recruitment/retention plan for American Indian teachers, administration and staff. We are hoping to have the plan completed by the end of this school year. We have a draft that we are currently refining.
5. Recommendation	We recommend trialing a pilot school within a school program to foster internal support and community for American Indian

	students.
Response	A planning team met bi-weekly over a two month period to map out what a pilot program entails. At the end of April the team will know what funding has been earmarked for this program and plans for implementation will be finalized by the end of the school year 2024.
6. Recommendation	We recommend ensuring a manageable case-load ratio for American Indian Liaisons based on the most accurate count of American Indian students being served by the district.
Response	The MDE (American Indian Education) State Aid has increased, enabling the AIE Department to hire additional American Indian Liaison positions.
7. Recommendation	We recommend identifying a support person whose role it would be to collect and disseminate information re: opportunities for scholarships/career training and other opportunities for American Indian students who are both enrolled and descendants.
Response	Denfeld and East School Counselors should provide information and a plan to the American Indian Education (AIE) Department. This will ensure that the AIE Department, specifically the High School Liaisons can provide information and support to American Indian students. And, we have submitted a grant request for Minnesota's Closing Opportunity Grants that, if approved, would add a Licensed School Counselor (preference to BIPOC) to support this work. Significant additional funding for adding opportunities for student and family events and experiences and training for school staff is also included. Grant notification should come by June 2024 for funding to be used in the 24-25 and 25-26 school years.
8. Recommendation	We recommend reserving dedicated space for the American Indian Education Program in Duluth Public Schools.
Response	The Coordinator of American Indian Education has been invited to principal support meetings at both the secondary and elementary level to walk different spaces in the building and to hear the decision making behind where programming is located.
9. Recommendation	We recommend dedicating district resources to directly support American Indian students' attendance and academics and utilizing American Indian Education funds to supplement the district plan goals.
Response	The district currently provides support staff (reading interventionists, math interventionists, and mentors etc.) to assist many students with academics, attendance, and social emotional well being. We will continue to provide these kinds of support positions for American Indian students who need the additional support.
10. Recommendation	We recommend district funding to create two American Indian Curriculum, Academic and Integration Specialists to provide educational and cultural support.
Response	The district has created a new Ojibwe Language and Culture Coordinator position. The coordinator will be a districtwide leadership position for the programming and curriculum for Ojibwe language which includes Oshki-Inwewin, the Misaabekong Immersion program and Ojibwe Language courses in the Duluth Public Schools.
11. Recommendation	We recommend providing the AIPAC with regular updates, at least bi-annual updates. On growth and movement of goals that target American Indian students.
Response	The Coordinator of American Indian Education will work with the assistant superintendent to ensure that the AIPAC will have the data needed to make informed recommendations and are kept apprised of progress made towards goals for American Indian students. Updates will align with the MDE timeline and also as requested by the AIPAC as needed.
12. Recommendation	We recommend that the district collaborate with its' AIPAC to share and review data pertaining to American Indian students.
Response	The assistant superintendent will identify TLE members and a school board member to attend monthly AIPAC meetings .