

# School Board's Response to the 2024-2025 Vote and Resolution of Non-Concurrence

<b>1. Recommendation</b>	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.
<b>Response</b>	<p>Sheila White, American Indian Coordinator, will set up tours and invite interested parties. The following action steps have been planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sheila White requested detailed weekly schedules from all 6 Liaisons by February 11, 2025. All schedules were received and reviewed to begin planning for the tour for mid-to-late April.</li> <li>• Tour times will be scheduled when Liaisons are not meeting with their students. A google poll will be sent to the AIPAC and invited stakeholders to choose the dates/times that will work for them.</li> <li>• The tours will take place on Thursday, May 8, 2025.</li> <li>• Tentative plans: There will be 2 tour groups; Morning Group 1 West side schools; Laura MacArthur, Stowe, Denfeld HS, Lincoln Park and Afternoon Group 2 East side schools; East HS, Ordean East, ALC. Sheila will lead the tours and document participants and debrief with the groups after each visit; AIPAC questions include: Where are liaisons and American Indian Education staff located? Do they have adequate space? Are they sharing space with other programs? Do the spaces appear to represent and be inclusive to the indigenous cultures they are supporting?</li> <li>• The Duluth Indigenous Commission accepted an invitation to tour at a date to be determined. We are still waiting to hear back from Fond Du Lac Tribal. Also, several Board members have expressed an interest at this point.</li> <li>• Sheila White will present responses from the tour to the AIPAC at the May/June meeting.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Recommendation</b>	We recommend implementing an action plan by the 4th quarter of SY 2024-2025 that identifies American Indian students who need additional transportation support and utilize district vans/drivers to intentionally target American Indian students that need additional transportation support to get to school.
<b>Response</b>	In late May, the district will initiate a survey asking American Indian families K-12 and secondary students to share if they have transportation challenges. This data will be used to determine the viability of additional transportation options.

<b>3. Recommendation</b>	We recommend utilizing the American Indian Education Coordinator, the various American Indian parent committee members, and the local Indigenous community such as AICHO, local Tribal Urban Offices, and The Duluth Indigenous Commission to assist in vetting Professional Development opportunities and curriculum. District wide Professional Development (PD) must not solely come out of American Indian Education Aid funds and must be used proportionally while achievement gaps exist.
<b>Response</b>	Sheila White and Annie Schilling will collaborate to develop the Professional Development (PD) plans for the final PD of the year which is on May 27, 2025 and the initial PD Plan draft for the school year 2025-2026. Funding of all PD Opportunities on PD Days (including American Indian focused PD) will be consistently funded from the General PD budget. Plans and development of American Indian focused PD offerings throughout SY 2025-26 will be vetted and sourced in collaboration with AICHO, local Tribal Union Offices, and other area Indigenous organizations.
<b>4. Recommendation</b>	Minnesota Statute 122A.70 requires retention strategies for American Indian educators within the school district. An HR plan has not been shared or discussed with the American Indian parent committees. We recommend providing the statistics within the district about how many American Indian staff we currently employ, how many American Indian applications were received that met minimum qualifications and were not offered interviews, and how many American Indian staff we have lost within the past 2 years.
<b>Response</b>	<p>Sheila White will work with our Human Resources Department to ensure timely posting of vacancies. Please find below comments and initial action steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A copy of the District's draft Recruitment and Retention Plan was shared with the committee on April 1, 2025. This plan includes specific strategies tailored to recruiting and retaining American Indian educators and staff. Theresa Severance attended the AIPAC meeting on April 9, 2025 where she received feedback for plan modifications.</li> <li>● The District currently employs 29 American Indian staff, which represents 1.79% of our total staff.</li> <li>● To date for this school year postings, we have received 16 American Indian applications.</li> <li>● There are 13 American Indian employees that left the District from January 2023 to date.</li> <li>● Due to Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) guidelines, we are unable to delineate which applications met minimum qualifications and were not offered interviews. EEO data, which includes race and ethnicity, is kept separate from the application review process to ensure impartiality and prevent any potential bias. This separation is standard practice and helps us maintain a fair and equitable hiring process for all applicants. We understand the importance of transparency and are committed to providing you with information we can, while also adhering to legal and ethical guidelines.</li> <li>● We are dedicated to working collaboratively with the AIPAC committee to ensure the successful recruitment and retention of American Indian staff across all positions within our district.</li> </ul>

<p><b>5. Recommendation</b></p>	<p>AIPAC is unaware of the funding amount that has been earmarked for the pilot school within a school program known as the “Denfeld Indigenous Cohort”. There has been little to no collaboration or status updates with the American Indian Parent committees. We would like to ensure that the Indigenous Cohort is supported by a licensed American Indian Language and Culture teacher. We recommend providing the criteria for admitting American Indian students into the Indigenous Cohort, the policy for removal from the cohort, and include any additional support for success given to American Indian students after removal and/or prior to removal.</p>
<p><b>Response</b></p>	<p>Doreen Atatise-Skinaway and Sheila White will partner to ensure AIPAC is well informed and the cohort is adequately supported. Please find below comments and initial actions steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cohort teacher is paid from the general budget and the Liaison is paid by Title VI. AIE pays for snacks and has paid for 1 field trip to the movie theatre to watch Star Wars in Ojibwe.</li> <li>• The cohort PLC team consists of Amanda Horton, Ojibwe Language Teacher; Jamie De La Cruz, Liaison; Memegwesiikwe, Ojibwe Language Teacher; Aakawe’aashiik, Ojibwe Language and Cultural Coordinator; and Sheila White, Coordinator of American Indian Education. The cohort team attended the April 9, 2025 AIPAC meeting where they shared a program update. They are also presenting at the May Committee Of the Whole (COW) meeting.</li> <li>• The cohort teacher is a licensed teacher in Communication Arts/Literature, Master of Education and credentials to teach Anishinaabe Language From the Red Cliff Nation. She is also currently in the process of obtaining her Anishinaabe Language, Culture and History licensure (K-12).</li> <li>• Students and caregiver(s) in the cohort were given program guidelines and a contract to sign.</li> <li>• The school guidance department works with the cohort program and provides all necessary support.</li> <li>• The Cohort team meets every Thursday to work on reviewing guidelines/policy, areas of improvement and program planning.</li> <li>• Team members have been trained on Educlimber, an interactive system that integrates all whole child data.</li> <li>• Dr. Mary Owen and Mangan H. Golden advise on community based relationships and provide assistance with data collection on focus groups, qualitative data from students,staff, parents and community members.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Recommendation</b></p>	<p>We recommend prioritized hiring of open American Indian liaisons and American Indian education department positions and increasing the number of positions hired to ensure manageable caseloads per student count in each building in accordance with current evidence-based literature recommendations. Most evidence-based recommendations are 1/30 students per caseload or less.</p>

<b>Response</b>	<p>Sheila White will work with our Human Resources Department to ensure timely posting of vacancies. Please find below comments and initial action steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Anthony Bonds, Assistant Superintendent, has started discussions with HR on the requirements for hiring a permanent full-time Coordinator for the AIE Department.</li> <li>● One American Indian Home School Liaison position was posted on Frontline on March 17, 2025 with a deadline on March 31, 2025. The posting deadline was extended until April 8, 2025.</li> <li>● Sheila White will meet with Liaisons for their input on a manageable caseload for their building.</li> <li>● Sheila White will research and reach out to other districts about manageable caseloads for liaisons.</li> <li>● Review and update all American Indian Department positions.</li> </ul>
<b>7. Recommendation</b>	<p>We recommend counselors implement an action plan to identify the American Indian students within their caseload, identify the Tribal Nation these students belong to and provide targeted opportunities for scholarships and career training to both enrollees and descendants.</p>
<b>Response</b>	<p>Jen Larva and Sheila White will work together to develop an action plan. Please find below comments and initial actions steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identification of these students are limited by self identification by families in our Infinite Campus system. Additional identification options will be explored with the database programming specialist.</li> <li>● Counselors will be required to meet with these students individually, informing them that they are welcome to invite family members or liaisons to these meetings or information sessions, as well.</li> <li>● Lists of scholarship opportunities are always available but Career Centers will be asked to identify those open to students who are tribal enrollees and/or descendants.</li> <li>● The district has purchased Career Advisement professional development “seats” for all counselors, career center staff, Integration Specialists, Check and Connect Mentors and American Indian Home School Liaisons. Sheila will ensure that the liaisons are provided with time to complete the necessary training and monitor their usage of the tool.</li> </ul>
<b>8. Recommendation</b>	<p>We are unaware of the locations of dedicated spaces that have been set aside to be utilized by American Indian liaisons and/or American Indian staff. Due to the repurposing of DNT storage, the American Indian Education Department is fiscally responsible for paying for an external storage unit for our materials, records, supplies and cultural items that should be more easily accessible to all American Indian Education staff and students. We recommend the school district assist with an accurate inventory of all American Indian Education Department program materials and supplies, i.e. cultural materials, books, sewing machines, etc and</p>

	anything bought from American Indian Education Department funds. All items in American Indian Education Department storage need to be inventoried to ensure maximum availability and utilization of previously spent funds on these materials.
<b>Response</b>	<p>Sheila White will work with the facilities department leadership team to ensure proper storage of materials and artifacts. Please find below comments and initial action steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sheila White rented a storage unit with the Title VI budget to have all AIE resources and materials moved from the DNT storage.</li> <li>● Facilities moved 2 truck loads of pallets so far and will be letting the AIE department know when they can move the rest.</li> <li>● Once all AIE materials are moved into the storage unit, Sheila White, the AIE clerical and AIPAC volunteers will sort and bar code all materials.</li> <li>● Sheila White is looking for a space to store all cataloged materials so that they can be signed out by teachers, students and AIPAC.</li> </ul>
<b>9. Recommendation</b>	We recommend providing regular district reports to the AIPAC regarding direct services for American Indian students attendance and academics.
<b>Response</b>	Sheila White will be trained using Educlimber to provide regular attendance and academic reports to AIPAC and work with the Liaisons to support students who are struggling or missing school. All American Indian Home School Liaisons will monitor their students' attendance and academics and provide a monthly report to the AIPAC.
<b>10. Recommendation</b>	American Indian Education Aid is for American Indian students specifically, until accountability factors are the same or better than non- American Indian peers. We recommend integration specialists intentionally target American Indian students within their caseloads and provide the data about the number of American Indian students that are being served to the AIPAC.
<b>Response</b>	Integration Specialists are funded through the Achievement and Integration (A&I) plan and allocation. Like the AIE Aid, the A&I Plan has State Statutes that must be followed. The A&I plan supports all marginalized students, including American Indian students. Many American Indian students are supported by Integration Specialists. Sheila White will share A&I case load data with the AIPAC at a future meeting.

<b>11. Recommendation</b>	<p>AIPAC has not received updates from the district in accordance with the MDE timeline. We have not received full meaningful collaboration from the district with meeting minutes, tabling opportunities, events, Tribal Consultation meetings, nor with reserving spaces within the district for meetings, work sessions and posting our meetings on the district website, calendar, social media or parentsquare. We recommend meetings with district representatives and AIPAC members be completed in compliance with the EASIE Title VI Meaningful Collaboration Chart. Per MDE, AIPAC was not provided with ESSA data when developing the American Indian Education plan and budget</p>
<b>Response</b>	<p>Sheila White will continue to partner with the AIPAC to ensure proper communication and statutory compliance. Regarding AIPAC's concerns regarding communication, timelines, and collaboration, we acknowledge that there is room for growth and are dedicated to continued improvement.</p> <p>Regarding the assertion of a lack of meaningful collaboration, we recognize there are areas for improvement and remain committed to these efforts. We remain committed to enhancing our communication protocols and ensuring adherence to established timelines, including those outlined by the MDE. We also acknowledge that two recent changes in district program leaders have impacted our ability to consistently meet these timelines.</p> <p>We commit to a review of our communication practices, including meeting minutes, tabling opportunities, event coordination, Tribal Consultation meetings, and the use of district resources like website postings and ParentSquare. We acknowledge that there was at one rescheduled tribal consultation meeting where an AIPAC member was not invited after the initial meeting was postponed and will ensure that this does not happen again. We will also continue to ensure compliance with the EASIE Title VI Meaningful Collaboration Chart and provide timely access to necessary data, including ESSA data, for the development of the American Indian Education plan and budget. We remain deeply dedicated to rebuilding trust and fostering a more productive partnership.</p>
<b>12. Recommendation</b>	<p>We recommend ethical stewardship of funding for AI students to ensure program fidelity and accountability. The previous American Indian Education coordinator was not present at the OCT 8th,, 2024 quarterly American Indian Education Budget meeting. It is absolutely necessary for the American Indian Education coordinator to be present at such meetings. AIPAC needs to know total salary and fringe for each American Indian Education Department employee by FTE, building and program code. And any reimbursements received from Special Education. As for all other expenses, each building needs to be designated per expense code, not just district wide 005. 005 should only be used if it is truly a district wide expense. All P-card purchases and purchase orders need to be brought forward monthly to AIPAC with receipts to ensure fiscal responsibility and fidelity with American Indian Education funds.</p>

<p><b>Response</b></p>	<p>Sheila White and the finance leadership team will continue to work together to ensure fiscal transparency and compliance. Please find below comments and initial action steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● American Indian Coordinator Sheila White has been attending weekly 30 minute meetings with the finance department, since the week of January 13, 2025. The meetings include Skyward and budget (Ufars) training.</li> <li>● Salary and Fringe request. This information has been provided. Please <u>see attached</u>.</li> <li>● The current explanation for the 005 District Wide designation is that the employees are working at different sites throughout the week.</li> <li>● After consultation with the AIE Minnesota Department of Education about bringing forward to the AIPAC all monthly P-card and POs, MDE said that we do not need to provide the AIPAC with that information, as it is outside of an advisory role.</li> <li>● To ensure fiscal transparency, we have requested a fiscal audit to be performed by MDE.</li> </ul>
<p><b>13. Recommendation</b></p>	<p>We recommend that the School Board has an appointed AIPAC delegate reserved for and invited to all school board meetings with an opportunity to have meaningful collaboration with our school board and administrators. We are requesting an official seat at the table.</p>
<p><b>Response</b></p>	<p>We deeply value the dedication and contributions of the American Indian Parent Advisory Committee to our school community. Regarding your request for an official seat at the School Board table, we must adhere to our established governance structure and Minnesota State Statute 123B.09, Subd.1 limiting board membership to six or seven elected members. As a School Board, our non-elected members are limited to our student representatives. This framework ensures compliance with established protocols and maintains the integrity of our decision-making processes.</p> <p>However, we understand the importance of maintaining a strong and collaborative relationship with AIPAC. To ensure thoughtful two-way communication and meaningful collaboration, we have designated a regular board member to serve as the primary liaison with AIPAC. Additionally, the board chair will act as the designated alternate. This assigned board member will regularly report to the full board on all AIPAC-related business, ensuring that your insights and concerns are effectively communicated and considered. We are committed to fostering open and transparent communication and believe this designated liaison will facilitate a productive and valuable partnership.</p>

<b>14.Recommendation</b>	AIPAC recommends that the district create additional pathways for student success in collaboration with AIPAC, AICHO, 1854 Treaty Authority, and local Tribal Urban Indian offices. These recommendations include; giving seat time to our students that participate in cultural activities offered by these agencies and offices (Assigned to Community Ed and principals); giving a civics credit to our AIPAC student reps that a mirror of AEO/ALC be offered at AICHO for our students at all levels of the district as an alternative to non-Indigenous spaces of learning. Also, to ensure full ability to participate in these programs by providing transportation via the vans purchased and mentioned in Recommendation #2 in this document for this purpose. (See above)
<b>Response</b>	Over the February break, Denfeld staff worked with students at AICHO and NYS to provide credit and attendance recovery opportunities. This will be repeated in April. MN state standards must be addressed for Civics credit. Also, the Community Education Department is working with curriculum leaders and principals to develop opportunities for students to earn service learning credit and additional elective credits. Additionally, Duluth Adult Education Department provides onsite programming at AICHO for GED and Diploma attainment. Due to licensing and curriculum requirements, a program mirroring ALC/AEO cannot be created at AICHO. However, an outreach program proving an AEO/ALC teacher could be created for after school credit support at AICHO.
<b>15.Recommendation</b>	AIPAC recommends restorative efforts be made to repair the trust relationship between the district and its American Indian Education parent committees. Volunteer AIPAC members provided more than 30 hours of supplemental meeting time at the district's request since losing our dedicated coordinator in November 2024. AIPAC was not presented with American Indian Education application documents in the appropriate format and/or with the appropriate allocation amount prior to February 11, 2025. Of concern is that budget amendments must be completed by March 1. Tribal consultation dates reported on federal documentation are false. Publicly available district audit information indicates JOM funds have passed through Fond-du-Lac for JOM program expenses, but Parent Committee members are told that we have not requested a JOM reimbursement from our fiscal agent (FDL) for the last 5 years. Publicly available district audit information indicates a restricted American Indian Education balance of \$114,974. Is this carry-over or is this a Special Education reimbursement for American Indian Education Liaisons? No explanation for these discrepancies have been provided.a. We recommend ensuring that numbers reported on the American Indian Education State Aid Grant application match the information and data provided to AIPAC. b. As part of the restorative process, we recommend providing annual AIPAC training to newly elected and returning committee members and district staff.
<b>Response</b>	Sheila White and the finance leadership team will continue to work together to ensure fiscal transparency and compliance. Please find below comments:



- Pass through language is an audit term that indicates another agency is the fiscal host. Our auditor has also given this statement: “The explanation of “passed-through” would be that the funding didn’t come directly from the U.S. Department of the Interior. It was first awarded to the Fiscal Agency and then “passed-through” to the District as a subrecipient.”
- JOM funds: The invoice and supporting receipts were sent to Fond Du Lac on September 3 of 2024. [\(click this link to the email\)](#). This information was also shared with JOM Chair Don Melton on January 29, 2025. [See email link:](#) A previous American Indian Education Coordinator was attempting to work with Fond du Lac to be the Fiscal Host and Agency and not have #709 as the pass through. This is why invoices had not been sent in a yearly process.
- The \$114, 974 dollars were unspent AIE state funds. These are not Special Education funds. Through the audit process MDE initiated a fund balance account to hold this number. MDE American Indian Education Director and Program Administrator met virtually on February 5, 2005 with the AIPAC, Sheila, and Anthony Bonds and MDE confirmed that unfortunately, we will not receive these funds as the district is in non-concurrence. Please see below:

#### Carry Forward Per MDE:

If a school district or Tribally Controlled School does not expend the full amount of the American Indian education aid in accordance with the plan in the designated fiscal year, they may carry forward and expend up to half of the remaining funds in the following fiscal year. See [Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 124D.81, subdivision 2b.](#)

#### Important Previous Year Information:

The carry forward process can be up to half of the previous school year’s unspent funds, not the current year. (Example: \$10,000 unspent, \$5000 may be eligible for carry forward)

To carry forward SY 2023-24 funds for the April 1, 2025 deadline, please submit:

- Carry forward request document
- Financial Expenditure report 320 for the previous year (FY 2023-24)
- Budget worksheet for the previous year (FY 2023-24)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We were recently made aware of a possible statue exception that might allow the district to receive some of the unspent funds. An update will be provided in the future.</li> <li>● Tribal consultation dates were held on January 9, 2023, May 8, 2023, October 23, 2023 and March 4, 2024 at the Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College.</li> <li>● MDE training - MDE will be attending the AIPAC meeting on May 7, 2025 to provide training to the AIPAC on roles and responsibilities to help strengthen district and parent partnerships.</li> <li>● As part of MDE training, we will include a focused conversation regarding ideas for restorative relationship building opportunities. We will provide an update after the meeting.</li> </ul>
<b>16.Recommendation</b>	<p>AIPAC recommends utilizing the Indigenous People’s Task Force endorsement of strengthening our communities and students by utilizing methods that are based in Indigenous values and ways of knowing. A vital way of doing this is returning to the first medicines and connecting our students and people to Indigenous healing traditions that have been passed down through the generations since time immemorial. A recent survey of middle school students in Duluth indicated that they were very interested in learning medicine. There is a local medicine gatherer that is willing to teach this. Her name is Natalie Smith.</p>
<b>Response</b>	<p>Sheila White will partner with American Indian staff and curriculum leaders to accomplish this request. Please find below comments and initial action steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Information about smudging was shared by Sheila White.</li> <li>● Doreen Atatise-Skinaway will contact College of St. Scholastica and other community partners to discuss opportunities to teach medicine gardening, including Smudging.</li> <li>● Doreen Atatise-Skinaway also reached out to Indigenous People’s Task Force to inquire about the Youth Program. The contact person is Brenna Depies.</li> <li>● There are two programs for high school students, Traditional Tobacco and Ikidowinan Theatre .The programs focus on mind, body and medicine for youth. Sheila White and I will visit the Indigenous Task Force in the cities to talk about “Train the Trainer” and continue to network with them to bring the programs to our district.</li> </ul>

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Dale Uselman is working with the Health Content Specialist and middle school health teachers to plan for embedding learning about first medicines and Indigenous healing traditions into middle school health classes.</li><li>● Doreen Atatise-Skinaway and Dale Uselman will continue to collaborate to look into the feasibility of implementing first medicines and Indigenous healing traditions into middle school health classes and/or other programming as possible.</li></ul> |
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