

Director of Advancing Equity

American Indian Education Update

OUR MISSION

Every student, every day will be empowered with learning opportunities for growth, creativity and curiosity, in preparation for their future in a global community.

OUR VISION

Duluth Public Schools provides an academically engaging, safe and inclusive environment with high expectations and responsible use of resources.

OUR CORE VALUES

Learning



Developing a love of learning through life-long inquiry.

Excellence



Having high standards for all through accountability, integrity and authenticity.

Equity



Creating conditions of justice, fairness and inclusion so all students have access to the opportunities to learn and develop to their fullest potential.

Collaboration



Working in partnership with staff, families, students and community.

Belonging



Providing a welcoming and accessible environment where everyone feels safe, seen and heard.

My Theory of Action

IF I prioritize authentic listening and deep relationship-building while educating ourselves myself on current legislation, historical context, and best practices,

THEN I will build necessary trust, sharpen our organizational focus, and create a culture of genuine collaboration,

SO THAT we can drive sustainable, meaningful progress for American Indian students and families.



My Approach

1. Listen

- Visited Schools
- Talked to principals
- Met with American Indian Home School Liaisons
- Attended AIPAC Meetings
- Met with AIPAC members

2. Learn

- Learned from conversations in meetings
- Met with MDE AIE Director
- Attended AIPAC training hosted by TNEC
- Currently working with expert Jen Murray
- Researched MDE AIE practices & policies
- Researched our geographic history

3. Partner

- Continue to clarify roles and responsibilities
- Arranging pre-meetings with chair members
- Working to align on goals and priorities



Concurrence Non-Concurrence

School Board's Response to the 2024-2025 Vote and Resolution of Non-Concurrence		Response	Status Update 1/20
Recommendation			
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.	<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"> 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. 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. The tours will take place on Thursday, May 8, 2025. 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? 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. Sheila White will present responses from the tour to the AIPAC at the May/June meeting. 	A tour occurred on May 8th, 2025 and was attended by several AIPAC members and School board members.
2	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.	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.	A safe routes to school survey for all families was disseminated in early December 2025. Our department is currently looking to better understand the needs lifted in this survey but also the specific needs of American Indian students.

3	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Annie has contracted with Ricky White to provide training. In progress. By the end of the school year, all certified staff and Principals and Paraprofessionals will have completed Cultural Competency. Paras will have completed Generational Trauma (Ricky DeFoe) and Treaty Rights History (Thomas Howes). All funding came from General Budget and/or Title II Funding.</p>
4	<p>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.</p>	<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"> 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. The District currently employs 29 American Indian staff, which represents 1.79% of our total staff. To date for this school year postings, we have received 16 American Indian applications. There are 13 American Indian employees that left the District from January 2023 to date. 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. 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. 	<p>The District currently employs 29 American Indian staff, which represents 1.5% of our total staff. We do not receive racial demographics for applicants, that information is kept separate from the application and applicants can choose not to respond. 11 American Indian employees have left the District since January 2024.</p>

A Path Forward

- Follow Guiding Light
 - State Aid Plan
- Consolidate Priorities
 - Align on key priorities
- Build from Ground Up
 - Systems and structures





Questions?

- Any questions?
- Comments?
- Concerns?
- Feedback?