



**Board Meeting Date:** 11/19/24

**Title:** American Indian Programming Update

**Type:** Discussion

**Presenter(s):** Dr. Frannie Becquer, Director of Achievement Equity and Multilingual Learner Programming; and Duane Huisentruit, American Indian Cultural Specialist

**Description:** Edina Public Schools is required to maintain an American Indian Parent Advisory Committee (AIPAC) as Minnesota statute mandates that any district serving more than 10 American Indian students must establish an AIPAC. With approximately 100 American Indian students currently enrolled, AIPAC acts in an advisory role to the district regarding American Indian education programs and culturally responsive educational opportunities.

Following the annual program review of Edina's Indian Education programming in the 2023-24 school year, AIPAC presented a vote of non-concurrence on March 26, 2024, accompanied by 15 specific recommendations for improving educational services for American Indian students. Director of Achievement Equity and Multilingual Learner Programming, Frannie Becquer, PhD, provided a comprehensive update to the School Board on April 23, 2024, addressing these recommendations and outlining proposed responses and action steps. In accordance with Minnesota Statutes section 124D.78, subdivision 1, which requires a written response within 60 days of receiving a non-concurrence vote, the Board presented its formal response during the May 13, 2024 board meeting.

This report details the Achievement Equity and Multilingual Learning Programming department's systematic progress in addressing each of AIPAC's 15 recommendations. The response reflects our ongoing commitment to serving our American Indian students and families while strengthening our educational practices to ensure culturally relevant and equitable learning experiences.

**Recommendation:** No recommendation is being made at this time. This presentation is an informational update for the board.

**Desired Outcome(s) from the Board:** Read information and be prepared to share reactions.

**Attachments:**

[Link to May 13, 2024 board report for reference](#)

Report follows

**AIPAC recommendation 1: Hire a full-time American Indian Cultural Liaison who will interact and engage with our students and create culturally relevant programming throughout the districts**

Our district is taking a significant step forward by bringing on Duane Huisentruit, enrolled member of the Bois Forte band of MN Chippewa, as our full-time American Indian Cultural Specialist. This thoughtful appointment represents our commitment to building a comprehensive, sustainable program that authentically supports and celebrates our Native American students.

Duane will serve as an inspiring cultural model while working directly with students through regular engagement at all levels. His involvement includes monthly sessions at our elementary schools, bi-monthly activities at the middle school, and dedicated Check and Connect meetings at the high school, including college visit coordination.

Parents and guardians have been informed of these upcoming cultural education initiatives and have been provided the opportunity to opt out of their children's participation in cultural lessons and activities. We respect each family's choice while encouraging broad participation in these enriching educational experiences.

We're particularly excited about his plans to develop rich, culturally-relevant educational experiences through sourcing authentic cultural materials, creating hands-on learning boxes, and incorporating literature from Native American authors into lesson plans.

This initiative reflects our long-term vision of fostering genuine cultural understanding and appreciation, moving well beyond surface-level solutions to create meaningful, lasting connections between our Native American heritage, our students, and our entire school community.

**AIPAC Recommendation #2: The District will create a welcoming space for Indigenous students and their families. Elders, Community culture, language and knowledge keepers, families are invited and welcome in the schools both formally and informally**

The school board's response from May 13, 2024 addresses this matter comprehensively. There is no additional information to provide at this time.

*District Response: Edina Public Schools is committed to ensuring that each and every student and family feels welcome in our schools, this unequivocally includes our American Indian students and families. Ongoing conversations around creating welcoming spaces for our American Indian students and families will take place between the American Indian cultural liaison, the Director of Achievement*

*Equity and Multilingual Learner Programming, and the American Indian Parent Advisory Committee. This work will begin, continue and be monitored throughout the 2024-2025 school year.*

**AIPAC Recommendation #3: Native American District employees must be fairly compensated for their time when they are being asked to do additional work for native students outside their job description**

The school board's response from May 13, 2024 addresses this matter comprehensively. We have no additional information to provide at this time.

*District Response: Any Edina Public School employee doing work outside of their contractual time to support American Indian students will continue to be paid for the additional work.*

**AIPAC Recommendation #4. Edina district staff will complete the MDE Tribal Relations Trainings. The District will provide for regular all-staff training for working with American Indian students and understanding American Indian culture**

Our district has embraced a comprehensive approach to cultural competency that extends well beyond the basic MDE Tribal Relations training requirements for teacher licensure. We're proud that our American Indian cultural specialist has already begun delivering professional development across multiple formats, including whole-staff sessions, classroom-specific training, and individualized teacher consultations. His expertise is being actively integrated into curriculum development, and teachers are enthusiastically inviting him into their classrooms to share authentic cultural perspectives. This multi-layered approach ensures that our staff receives ongoing, practical guidance in supporting American Indian students while deepening their understanding of American Indian culture through direct engagement with our cultural specialist.

**AIPAC Recommendation #5. Continued work on curriculum development to provide more areas of Indigenous inclusion in our classrooms, libraries and book rooms**

The ongoing curriculum development efforts focus on expanding Indigenous inclusion across classrooms and libraries through both targeted and systematic approaches. To achieve this goal, the American Indian Cultural Specialist actively collaborates with individual teachers and media specialists while also implementing district-wide initiatives

to ensure comprehensive reach. Their work emphasizes the use of primary sources and Native authors while ensuring the accuracy of all Indigenous-related educational resources. Beyond individual teacher support, the program includes training sessions for staff. This structured approach ensures that Indigenous perspectives and materials reach every classroom, not just those who actively seek assistance.

**AIPAC Recommendation #6. District will create visible representation throughout district building that recognizes and honors the unique contributions of tribal nations**

The district is making progress in creating visible representations that celebrate tribal nations' contributions, beginning with an innovative project at Valley View's media center. Under the guidance of the Cultural specialist and the Media Center Specialist, the site is developing an engaging mural display that showcases accomplished American Indian authors, musicians, and actors. The Cultural specialist's expertise ensures research accuracy and authenticity in the representation. This initiative serves as a model for future projects across other district sites, demonstrating the district's commitment to honoring and elevating Indigenous voices and achievements.

**AIPAC Recommendation #7. All family night events need to start after all schools have dismissed to enable full family and student and participation**

**AIPAC Recommendation #8. AIPAC meetings will be scheduled by AIPAC for the school year. Any Family and districtwide events will be organized in partnership with AIPAC**

**AIPAC Recommendation #15. District will collaborate with AIPAC to host all-district cultural events, such as round dances, traditional arts and crafts, drumming,**

Edina Schools has an evolving partnership with AIPAC as they take leadership in the scheduling of their meetings and community cultural programming, with the district providing venue support and resource allocation. This collaborative approach ensures AIPAC has a greater voice in planning events that best serve our Native American families and students. Looking forward, we are actively exploring meaningful opportunities to collaborate on district-wide cultural celebrations that could include traditional arts, round dances, drumming, and other rich cultural experiences.

**AIPAC Recommendation #9. The up-to-date AIPAC budget will be provided to AIPAC members at every meeting**

In collaboration with the Director of Finance, the AIPAC budget is generated monthly and shared with American Indian families. This financial update is distributed directly to families as part of our regular communication.

**AIPAC Recommendation #10. The AIPAC budget will be used in accordance to MDE guidelines and Minnesota State Statutes**

The AIEA application focuses on six essential goals: supporting students' post-secondary preparation, strengthening academic achievement of American Indian students, creating curriculum that reflects students' cultural heritage and interests, building positive self-image among American Indian students, fostering awareness across our school community including students, parents, and staff, and supplementing existing state and federal educational and co-curricular programs. The budget aligns with these goals and is submitted to MDE for approval, with ongoing oversight to ensure funds support these objectives in accordance with state guidelines.

**AIPAC Recommendation #11. Communication from the District to families and students needs to be clear and Consistent**

All AIPAC communications are sent through School Messenger, providing consistent and direct outreach to our American Indian families and students.

**AIPAC Recommendation #12. As per Minnesota State law, Edina Public Schools will publicly celebrate Indigenous People's Day throughout the district**

Edina Public Schools is committed to enhancing its celebration of Indigenous People's Day district-wide. While acknowledging the inconsistencies in our 2024 observance and the confusion between the October 14, 2024 celebration and Indigenous People's Month activities, we are taking proactive steps for improvement. The district is developing a comprehensive plan for the 2025-26 school year, working closely with the cultural proficiency advisory team to ensure meaningful and consistent celebrations across all schools. This collaborative approach will help us better honor this important day and meet both the spirit and requirements of Minnesota State law.

**AIPAC Recommendation #13. The District will create a land acknowledgment statement for the district as promised more than four years ago by Randy Smasal**

The school board's response from May 13, 2024 addresses this matter comprehensively. There is no additional information to provide at this time.

*District Response: Representatives from the school board, the Director of Achievement Equity and Multilingual Learner Programming, the District's American Indian cultural liaison and the American Indian Parent Advisory Committee will work in partnership to discuss this request. Work will begin in the fall 2024.*

**AIPAC Recommendation #14. The academic outcomes of Native students will meet or exceed those of their peers**

The school board's response from May 13, 2024 addresses this matter comprehensively. There is no additional information to provide at this time

*District Response: Edina Public Schools is committed to academic achievement for each and every student as indicated in our district's vision for Each and Every Student to Discover their Possibilities and Thrive and our strategic plan Strategy A: Advance Academic Excellence, Growth, and Readiness and Strategy B: Ensure an Equitable and Inclusive School Culture. Counselors, teachers, administrators, the school board, the American Indian cultural liaison, and the Director of Achievement Equity and Multilingual Learner Programming will work in partnership with American Indian students and families to ensure that student needs are*