

Monthly Committee of the Whole Board Meeting

Duluth Public Schools, ISD 709

Agenda

Thursday, February 5, 2026

District Services Center

709 Portia Johnson Dr.

Duluth, MN 55811

4:45 PM

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

2. **ROLL CALL**

3. **AGENDA ITEMS**

A. Strategic Plan Alignment

1) Advancing Equity

a. **American Indian Education, The Resolution of Concurrence or Nonconcurrence** 2

b. **American Indian Education, The Resolution of Concurrence or Nonconcurrence-Verbal Presentation** 10

2) Supporting Every Student

a. Artificial Intelligence Implementation 11

b. Special Education Update 23

3) Improving Systems - N/A

B. Teaching, Learning, and Equity Board Summary Report - N/A

C. Budget Update - N/A

D. Other

4. **ADJOURN**

COW Agenda Cover Sheet

Meeting Date: February 5, 2026

Topic: American Indian Education, The Resolution of Concurrence or Nonconcurrence

Presenter(s): Marisa Garverick Herrera

Attachment: [Concurrence Non-Concurrence, Slides](#) to be presented at meeting

Brief Summary of Presentation or Topic (no more than a few sentences):

I will provide a brief update on our collaboration strategy with AIPAC, covering our current status and processes, prior to their vote of concurrence.

This Requires School Board Approval : No

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		Sheila White, American Indian Coordinator, will set up tours and invite interested parties. The following action steps have been planned: <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, Orlean 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. 	<p>A tour occurred on May 8th, 2025 and was attended by several AIPAC members and School board members.</p>
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 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.	<p>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.</p>

3	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.	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>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	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.	Sheila White will work with our Human Resources Department to ensure timely posting of vacancies. Please find below comments and initial action steps: <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?

COW Agenda Cover Sheet

Meeting Date: February 5, 2026

Topic: American Indian Education, The Resolution of Concurrence or Nonconcurrence

Presenter(s): American Indian Parent Advisory Committee (AIPAC)

Attachment: It will be provided at the meeting.

Brief Summary of Presentation or Topic (no more than a few sentences):

According to MDE guidelines, "Prior to March 1 of each year, the AIPAC must meet to discuss whether or not they concur with the educational offerings that have been extended by the district to American Indian students. If the AIPAC finds that the district and/or school board have been meeting the needs of American Indian students, they issue a vote and resolution of concurrence. If they find that the district and/or school board have not been meeting the needs of American Indian students, they issue a vote and resolution of nonconcurrence.

The vote and resolution must be presented to the school board by one or more members of the AIPAC. If the vote is one of nonconcurrence, the AIPAC must also provide written recommendations for improvement to the school board at the time of the presentation. The school board does not "approve" the resolution. They receive the information, and it is reflected within the board minutes. In the case of nonconcurrence, the school board is given 60 days in which to respond, in writing, to the AIPAC recommendations. The board response must be signed by the entire school board and be provided to the AIPAC and submitted to the Office of American Indian Education"

Source: <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/indian/parent/>

This Requires School Board Approval : No

COW Agenda Cover Sheet

Meeting Date: Feb 5, 2026

Topic: AI (Artificial Intelligence) Implementation

Presenter(s): Jen Larva, Cindy Miller, Greg Krueger

Attachment: [Artificial Intelligence Implementation - COW Presentation Slides](#)

Brief Summary of Presentation or Topic:

This presentation discusses the district's rollout of AI, providing an overview of how staff and students are being prepared to meaningfully and responsibly use AI. The presentation also summarizes why the district is pursuing our AI rollout, how we are striving to increase the AI literacy of our students, and how stakeholder input will be considered as our use of AI evolves.

This Requires School Board Approval : No

Artificial Intelligence in Duluth Public Schools

Greg Krueger, Jen Larva, and Cindy Miller

Core Purpose: To provide a **structured**, **ethical**, and **rigorous** framework for AI literacy integration in Duluth Public Schools



BELIEFS



1. INCLUSIVE DIGITAL FUTURES

We believe in ensuring inclusive digital futures. AI literacy can reduce inequities and expand opportunities.



2. HUMAN-CENTERED APPROACH

We believe in a **human-centered approach** where AI is a tool to support the irreplaceable role of educators.



3. ETHICAL & SUSTAINABLE AI

We commit to using only ethically responsible AI tools that are **safe, private, and environmentally sustainable**.



Program Objectives and Goals



Empowering educators to utilize AI as a high-level classroom assistant.



Preparing secondary students with skills to navigate the "Age of AI."



Establishing a "Walled Garden" for safe, acceptable AI learning.



Acknowledging current student access and use of AI tools.

Why & Importance



Responsibility to build students' AI literacy



Preparation for college and career opportunities beyond ISD709



Equitable access to educational tools and information



AI is not perfect; students must be prepared to scrutinize information in the age of AI



Sustaining curiosity, confidence and thoughtful AI use across system

What is AI Literacy



AI Literacy means knowing how to use AI tools effectively and ethically.

- It isn't just a tech skill; it's a human superpower that **balances** understanding how the technology works with knowing how it impacts our world.

ETHICAL LANGUAGE AND DIGITAL GUARDRAILS IN EDUCATION

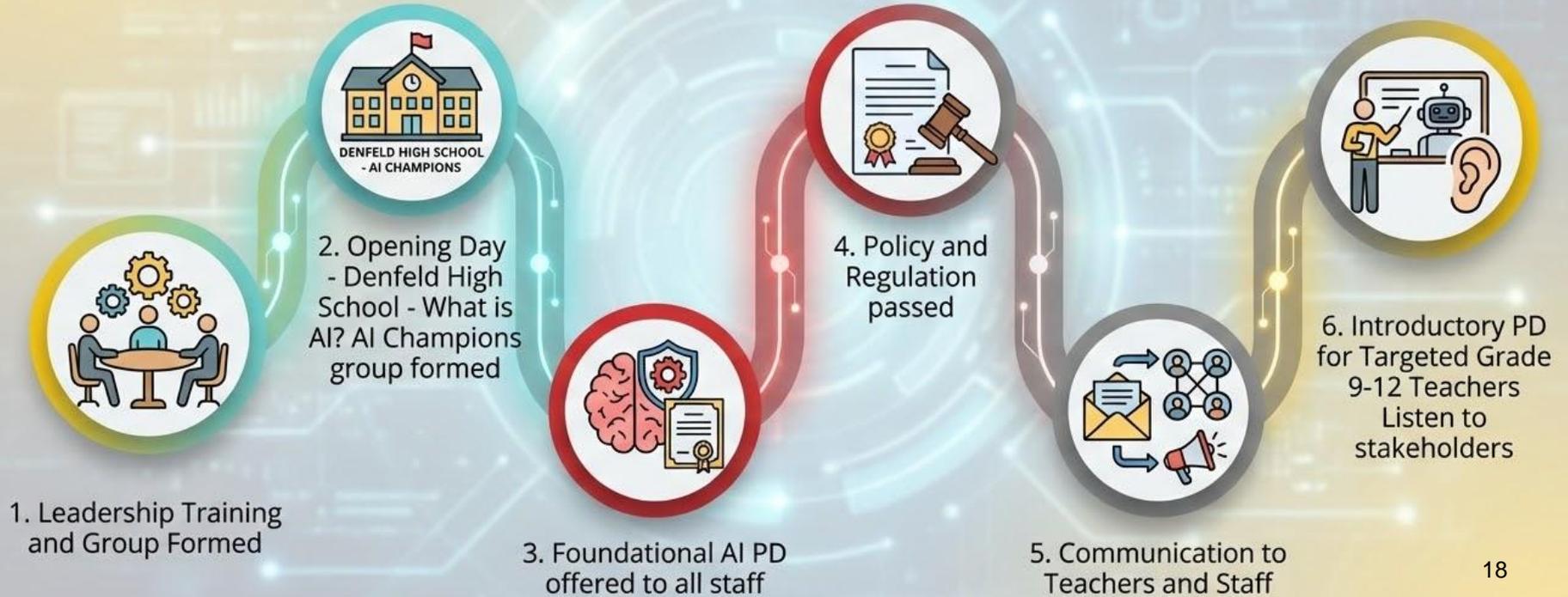


Strategic Long-Term Vision

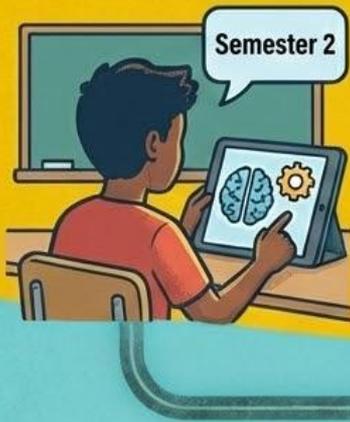
- Consistent ethical "Common Language" across departments.
- Alignment with state and university technology leaders.
- Robust governance through updated policies and digital guardrails.
- Compliance with student ¹⁷ data privacy laws

Timeline

Phase 1: Spring - Fall 2025



AI IMPLEMENTATION ROLLOUT & NEXT STEPS



Student Readiness (Semester 2): High school teachers in the target subject areas are currently delivering introductory AI lessons to ensure students understand responsible use before gaining tool access.



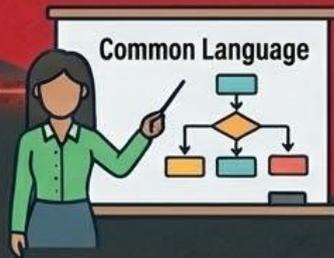
Public Transparency

A dedicated Instructional Technology webpage—featuring a Parent/Community One-Pager and an AI FAQ—is scheduled for publication to ensure community clarity prior to student rollout.

February 23, 2026

Student Launch:

The Technical Department is scheduled to grant Gemini access to all students in **grades 9-12 on February 23, 2026.**



March 2 PD Day

Instructional Integration: Following the **March 2 PD Day**, secondary departments will begin formal implementation of the "Common Language" tool to guide students in ethical AI use for every assignment.

Considering Stakeholder Input

In order to foster continuous improvement, we plan to:



Consult with higher ed,
Minnesota Department of
Education, other districts



Gather community feedback
in multiple formats



Gather student feedback
throughout implementation



Continuous Improvement



Publish contact information for AI implementation leaders on district website

Questions

Do you have any further questions for the team?



Google Gemini was used to enhance the appearance of these slides.

Appendix: MSBA Resources

[Strategic Use of AI in Education](#) (Presentation)

[Artificial Intelligence, ChatGPT, and the Future of Education](#) (Article)

COW Agenda Cover Sheet

Meeting Date: February 5, 2026

Topic: Special Education Update

Presenter(s): Jason Crane, Director
Lora Thurston, Assistant Director

Attachment:  Special Education Updates February 2026

Brief Summary of Presentation or Topic (no more than a few sentences):

Overview of Special Education services in ISD 709

This Requires School Board Approval :

N/A

Special Education Update

February 2026



DULUTH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Special
Services**

IDEA Law-34 CFR 300

Purpose - to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate education that emphasizes specially designed instruction and related services.

Specially designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of the eligible child, with the disability, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction.



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**Special
Services**

Budgetary Guidance from MDE

The state funds special education because it recognizes that special education services cost more than those provided to all children. Appropriations are based on the perception of the “excess costs” of special education. The term “excess cost” stems from the legislative assumption that general education revenue is used to cover basic costs for each child (including those with disabilities) and the legislative desire to share the burden of these extra costs with local educational agencies (LEAs).



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**Special
Services**

Special Service Support Team

- Director: Jason Crane
- Assistant Director: Lora Thurston
- 4 Administrative Clerical and Business Manager:
- Julie Venus TOSA: Supports PD, Mentors, Surrogacy, Assistive Technology
- 6 Supervisors:
 - Kathryn Hatfield-supports Setting 3 all levels
 - Rebecca Crane-Early Childhood Special Education
 - Sarah Arlt-Elementary Special Education
 - Kate Pahl-Secondary Special Education
 - Ashley Downey-STEPS Supervisor
 - Sonny Jenkins- Behavior Support Specialist



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**Special
Services**

Areas of District Identification:

- The federal Department of Education requires states to report annually on districts' efforts to implement the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). As part of the report, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) identifies districts as having disproportionate data related to indicators measuring activities potentially influenced by non compliant policies, procedures or practices within the district.
 - **Indicator 4:** Measures disproportionate rates of suspension/expulsion for children with disabilities.
 - **Indicator 9:** Measures disproportionate identification of racial and ethnic groups as needing special education services.
 - **Indicator 10:** Measures disproportionate identification of racial and ethnic groups as needing special education services in specific disability categories.



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**Special
Services**

Support and Leadership provided by Special Services

- MTSS - Compass
 - ADSIS Grant
- Suspension projects
 - Coordinated Early Intervening Supports - CEIS
- Advocacy response
- Special services support
 - Mentoring
 - Due Process Support
 - Individual Staff Support
 - Evaluations
- Professional Development
 - Science of Reading Training for Certified and Non-Certified
 - Licensure specific trainings

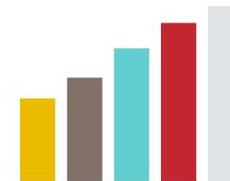


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**Special
Services**

Special Education Eligibility

	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26
Elementaries	551	528	586	791	837	807	880
Middle School	278	260	277	318	320	321	342
High School	432	422	442	484	552	567	576
Care and Treatment	61	56	43	58	123	165	164
Non-Public	14	31	26	42	48	38	47
ECSE	276	232	306	361	418	395	337
Total	1598	1498	1654	2012	2250	2293	2299



DULUTH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Special
Services**

Staffing Increases

	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26
Certified	132.50	134.50	149.10	162.90	172.90	172.30	174.40
Related Service	60.30	61.10	61.30	66.50	75.35	72.65	70.77
Non Certified	166.90	155.04	165.43	172.83	181.42	192.80	199.20
Support Staff	13.54	12.34	14.14	14.20	15.80	15.80	15.80
Total FTE	373.24	362.98	389.97	416.43	445.47	453.55	460.17



DULUTH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Special
Services**

Factors Impacting Budget

- Robust Health and Family Services provided in Duluth draws families and students to receive services and enroll in ISD709.
 - Rising demand and complexity of student needs
 - increased enrollment, including families in other districts being encouraged to seek services in Duluth
- Staffing Crisis - 29 licensure areas needed to support students with IEPs. Nationwide shortages in many areas of licensure.
- Increased funding costs
- Mandated early Identification and services provided until age 22.
- More Professional development opportunities



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**Special
Services**