

**Professional Judgment
Indian Education Achievement Gap Analysis
Expert Panel Report—August 12, 2005**

Background to Hold Separate Panel Meeting—

For American Indian students in the State, a quality education will provide a culturally responsive curriculum that allows them to achieve at a proficient academic level. The attitudes, beliefs and actions of the school must model respect for cultural diversity, celebrate the contributions of diverse groups, and foster understand and acceptance of racial and ethnic plurality. “The means and ends of schooling is a society that continues to advance toward social justice and equality of opportunity.”(Novick, 1996).

Culturally responsive teaching does not consist of a recipe or series of steps that teachers can follow, but instead relies on a positive disposition toward learners and their culture. The educational process is founded upon traditional tribal values and principles using the most appropriate concepts, technologies and content of modern education (Cajete, 1994). A culturally responsive curriculum will include a sequential K-12 native language program that allows students to meet the Montana World Language standards, which state “Language study is communication-based and requires a sequential curriculum that provides consistent and increasing contact with the language and culture.” To maximize efforts, the K-12 language program should coordinate with pre-school and tribal college work.

Identification of Schools to be Notified—The first group of schools identified as schools serving a high percentage of American Indian students looked for at least a 50% population. This produced a list of reservation-only schools in mostly homogeneous communities. The identification was refined to 30%, which provided a cross-section of schools with significant American Indian students and more broadly representative of the diversity of American Indian communities. It did, however leave out urban settings. By changing our lens from percentage to student count, we were able to identify urban settings with significant numbers of American Indian population.

The schools on this larger list were then selected for those from each of the MASS regions within the state, and additionally, for schools representing both American Indian high performance and low performance on reading proficiency. The reading scores were utilized as opposed to both reading and math. There is a strong similarity of the scores when you look at the range of schools. In other words, schools with low performance in math are also likely to have low performance in reading, and visa versa.

Please see the attached list of schools in Appendix ___ for the full list of schools to whom the survey form was sent.

Survey Form and Data Gathering—The schools were telephoned and emailed the survey form, Professional Judgment Instructions, a sample of a completed form, and a list of the schools being selected. The same form was used as in the larger Montana Professional Judgment survey.

In conversation with personnel responsible for completing the survey form, the conversion to a teacher/student ratio was a challenge. Of the twelve schools contacted to complete form, five completed the forms and one additional school completed the form. The data provided was widely disparate. This may in part be due to having schools with both high and low performing proficiency.

The data in Appendix ___ is a composite of the completed forms. In addition to the composite, the expert panel had a day-long discussion of the topic, process, and data concerning the closing of the American Indian achievement gap in Montana.

Expert Panel Invitations and Attendance, August 11, 2005—

Expert panel members were selected from recommendations within Indian educators to represent the regions of the state, rural schools, urban schools, Indian educators, and non-Indian educators with Indian students. Of the twelve people invited, only five were able to attend. The forms returned from the schools were used as discussion for their breadth of information. Closing the achievement gap of Montana American Indian students is a long-term discussion enlightened by recent increases in good information identifying the gap, and the many issues associated.

Presentation to Professional Judgment Expert Panel, August 12, 2005—In examining the issue of disparate programs and approaches to educating American Indian students, it was quickly a question of overlap between disaggregated assessment data. The Native American data overlaps with Limited English Proficient (as defined below) and Free and Reduced (ie: poverty). At the present time, Montana does not determine the overlap of students counted in the various disaggregated groups.

Within the panel of experts, two schools were able to provide a count to look at this overlap question. Actual numbers were used to determine that approximately 1/3 of students in each school (Arlee and Poplar) are identified as LEP, free and reduced lunch, and American Indian. When the numbers were re-examined as American Indian only, 2/3 were identified as both LEP and free and reduced lunch. This topic will require further data collection to determine if these proportions of overlap stay consistent in the context of the state. However, as a first indicator of this overlap, it will be useful to make some assumptions. The achievement gap of American Indian students is, in similarity to achievement gap of other students, related to poverty and literacy.

Certainly the issues that affect a student's ability to succeed include the influence of parents and community. As schools work to include Indian Education for All Montanans, the relationship between the school and parents may also benefit. Much in the history of the education of Indian students has a lingering detrimental impact for

education today. It will take intentional focus from all to address the achievement gap's many sources.

Summary—The following topics represent a consensus of topics related to the achievement gap. The following recommendations are based on the experience of individuals responsible for designing programs to enhance professional development and assist students in successful academic performance.

1. **Professional Development days**—The panel discussed a variety of topics that are associated with Indian education and requiring professional development for the school staff. The recommendation from schools that are impacting performance is to increase the number of professional development provided by the school by 2 to 5 days annually. (See attached list of recommended professional development topics.)
2. **Student/Teacher ratio**—Consistent with the recommendations of the larger Professional Judgment Panel, a smaller student/teacher ratio is recommended in all grades.
3. **Support staff**—Additional staff with good professional experience to assist the school to close the pervasive achievement gap for students includes guidance counselors, school psychologists, dropout prevention specialists, outreach advocates, career counselor, and cultural specialists. By applying the components of dropout prevention, students are supported in their positive choices for educational future. These resources assist in changing community expectations for youth. A particular concern was raised over inadequate credit and alternatives for students.
4. **High Expectations/Clearinghouse for resources**—High expectations should be coupled with well-trained staff and quality resources. It is not enough to expect more, the related supports need to be in place to reach the high expectations, and the staff members need to have a good understanding of the students's concerns and circumstances.
5. **Stable workforce/increase American Indian certified and non-certified**—All too often, reservation schools have high turnovers of administrators, teachers, and staff. This hinders continuity of focus and programs. In addition to a stable workforce, it is desirable for students to see themselves reflected in successful educators.

Grades K-2 Inputs

	Regular Education	Special Education	Free & Reduced Lunch	English Language Learners	American Indian Ach. Gap
Personnel					
Classroom Teachers					
Instructional aides					
Literacy or math specialists					
PE					
Arts/Music					
Other Teachers					
Librarians/Media Specialists					
Technology Specialists					
Pupil Support Staff					
- Guidance Counselors					1/300
- Nurses					
- Psychologists					1/500
-Speech pathologists					
-Occupational therapist					
-Physical therapist					
*-Dropout Prevention					300/1000 (st/st)
*-Outreach advocate					1/300
*-Career Counselor					1/1000
*-Cultural specialist					1/500
Principal					
Assistant Principal					
Clerical/Data Entry					
Substitutes					
Cooks/meals					
Custodian					
*-Curriculum Director					1/1000
*-Alternative academic program					1/100
Other Costs*					
Professional Development					
- Teachers					
- Instructional Aides					
-Pupil support staff					
-Principals & Administrators					
Instructional Supplies & Materials					
Equipment					
Technology					
Assessment					
Student Activities					
Safety & Security					
District Costs					
Personnel					
Superintendent					
District specialists					
Other personnel					
Other costs					

OR

Total costs on per-student basis

*For other costs and district costs you may use **per pupil amount, per teacher amount, or total school amount.**

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Recommended Professional Judgment to address the closing of the American Indian Achievement Gap:

2 days	Subject Specific (literacy, math, etc.)	
1	Framework for Understanding Poverty by Ruby Payne & Associates	
3	Language Knowledge (historic, acquisition, LEP, etc.)	
1	American Indian: student, family, community demographics	
3	Mental Health: counseling, drug/alcohol issues, etc.	
3	Data: program, curriculum development, presentation	
1	Teaching Style vs. Learning Style	
3	Curriculum/Standards alignment—assessment	
3	Cultural context of the community of the school	

LeName	Ss	EnrollCount	AmindPct	F&R perct	MassRegion	Subject	mtProficientAnd	System E-mail	Phone	Fax	First	Last	Title	Staff E-mail
Lodge Grass Elem	218	323	97.8%	90.4%	South Central	Reading	13.4%	lise@lodgegras.s.k12.mt.us	(406)639-2304	(406)639-2388	Dennis	Maasjo	Superintendent	
Browning H S	545	581	97.4%	88.6%	North Central	Reading	18.3%	gwyna@bps.k12.mt.us	(406)338-2715	(406)338-3200	Mary	Johnson	Superintendent	maryj@bps.k12.mt.us
Box Elder Elem	564	254	97.6%	73.2%	Hi Line	Reading	40.7%	kbarsotti@vohastewart@arlee.k12.mt.us	(406)352-4195	(406)352-3830	Robert	Heppner	Superintendent	gfriberg@arlee.k12.mt.us
Arlee Elem	601	316	67.7%	61.1%	West	Reading	34.2%	astewart@arlee.k12.mt.us	(406)726-3216	(406)726-3940	Gordon	Friberg	Superintendent	gfriberg@arlee.k12.mt.us
Arlee H S	601	135	54.8%	39.3%	West	Reading	55.0%	astewart@arlee.k12.mt.us	(406)726-3216	(406)726-3940	Gordon	Friberg	Superintendent	gfriberg@arlee.k12.mt.us
Poison Elem	603	1118	32.6%	48.5%	North West	Reading	62.1%	powen@poison.k12.mt.us	(406)883-6355	(406)883-6345	Sue	McCormick	Superintendent	smccormick@poison.k12.mt.us
Valier H S	775	75	32.0%	36.0%	North Central	Reading	73.3%	valprincipal@hotmail.com	(406)279-3613	(406)279-3764	Matt	Genger	Superintendent	valprincipal@yahoo.com
Brockton Elem	861	110	97.3%	89.1%	North East	Reading	8.3%	swestergard@brockton.k12.mt.us	(406)786-3195	(406)786-3121	Sherry	Westergard	Superintendent	swestergard@brockton.k12.mt.us
Camas Prairie Elem	881	12	58.3%	100.0%	West	Reading		camas@hotmail.com						
Medicine Lake K-12 Schools	887	105	37.1%	48.6%	North East	Reading	54.2%	davidkloker@r	(406)789-2211	(406)789-2213	David	Kloker	Superintendent	kloke@metnet.state.mt.us
Hays-Lodge Pole K-12 Schls	235	246	99.6%	92.7%	Hi Line	Reading	4.5%	snowzone01@hckimhiwalker@iamedeer.k12.mt.us	(406)673-3120	(406)673-3415	James	Anderson	Superintendent	jima_59527hays@yahoo.com
Lame Deer H S Butte Elem	867	192	99.5%	92.2%	South East	Reading	12.5%	us	(406)477-6305	(406)477-6535	Gary	Scott	Superintendent	gscott@lamedeer.k12.mt.us