



**Department of Public Instruction**  
600 E Boulevard Ave., Dept. 201, Bismarck, ND 58505-0440  
(701) 328-2260 Fax - (701) 328-2461

**Kirsten Baesler**  
*State Superintendent*

**Robert J. Christman**  
*Deputy Superintendent*

[www.nd.gov/dpi](http://www.nd.gov/dpi)

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To: North Dakota Educators and School Administrators

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) is dedicated to building a system of innovation and support for schools to ensure academic success for all North Dakota students.

The NDDPI is also keenly aware there are specific sub-populations of students that have historically needed greater assistance and support. North Dakota has a significant population of Native American students; a sub-population identified in our federal accountability system. The purpose of this memorandum is to pledge to provide schools with a high population of Native American students the additional resources and support they need to better assist students in making academic gains.

To assist with this effort, the NDDPI has recently restructured in order to foster greater collaboration and support among the various programs within the department. A new Division of Student Support & Innovation was created, and the Office of Indian/Multicultural Education is within this division. We would like to take this opportunity to highlight a few initiatives being planned in order to better provide support to Native American students.

- **Indian Education Summit:** July 22, 2014 was a day that made history when North Dakota hosted its 1<sup>st</sup> Annual North Dakota Indian Education Summit at the North Dakota State Capitol. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual North Dakota Indian Education Summit was held July 7-8, 2015. The NDDPI Office of Indian/Multicultural Education has already begin planning for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual North Dakota Indian Education Summit.
- **School Improvement Coaching Project:** The NDDPI is working on a new project that will provide North Dakota schools with an opportunity to access the services of a school improvement expert to conduct school visitations and provide coaching comments. High poverty schools and schools whose populations consists of high percentages of Native American students will be given priority to participate in this project. Additional information regarding this initiative will be available in the near future.
- **State Equity Initiative:** All states were required to submit a State Equity Plan to the U.S. Department of Education on June 1, 2015, ensuring that poor and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers. The NDDPI will begin to implement the strategies outlined within the plan which are targeted to help high poverty schools.
- **Native American Needs Assessment:** In order to provide more support and resources to better assist schools with a high population of Native American students, the NDDPI will be conducting a needs assessment to help us determine the areas where we can best provide assistance. This assessment will help outline areas that may need to be addressed, identify statewide concerns, establish commonalities that may exist across schools and districts, and determine the priorities for this cohort of schools. We are in the process of creating a survey which will soon be disseminated. Your participation in the survey will help guide the NDDPI in determining future plans for providing support and assistance.

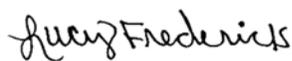
- ***North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings***: The NDDPI has contracted with Technology & Innovation in Education (TIE) out of Rapid City, South Dakota to plan, prepare, and develop the *North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings* to include Inter-Tribal essential understandings and potential stems for each of the five tribes in North Dakota (Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, Spirit Lake Tribe, Three Affiliated Tribes, and Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate). This resource document will outline the basic concepts every North Dakota educator should know about Native Americans in North Dakota including the culture and history of the tribes. The first Gathering of Elders meeting was held in April 2015 in Bismarck, as Elders from each reservation in North Dakota came together to share stories, wisdom, song, and information they felt it was important for all students to know about Native Americans in our state. A short 20 minute video of the Elders was developed from the first meeting which is also be available to view. This began the process of identifying key common themes and areas of focus that were discussed at the second meeting held in May 2015. This meeting was a work meeting with Elders to build basic framework to start the process of developing and writing the *North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings*. The teaching of our Elders and some themes that came out of the two meetings were: values (respect, generosity, bravery, and wisdom), identity, language, education, spirituality, kinship, humor, healing, land, importance of children, history, and storytelling. Other resources will also be used to assist in developing and write the *North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings*. The final resource document will be completed by November 2015 and will be available for all North Dakota schools.

In order to individualize technical assistance and support, the Division of Student Support & Innovation has created a district contact chart. The chart lists every district in the state, including North Dakota organizations operated by the BIE and/or tribe, and assigns each school a contact person from the Division of Student & Innovation. The chart can be accessed at [www.nd.gov/dpi/uploads/126/contacts.pdf](http://www.nd.gov/dpi/uploads/126/contacts.pdf) on the new NDDPI website. Districts and schools are encouraged to communicate with their contact person for any questions they may have.

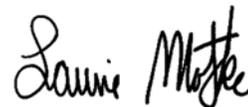
As we move forward, we are committed to continuously working to improve educational opportunities for Native American students and promise our ardent support to assist schools in aiming for academic excellence.



Kirsten Baesler  
State Superintendent



Lucy Fredericks, Director  
Office of Indian/Multicultural  
Education



Laurie Matzke, Division Manager  
Student Support & Innovation