

SB 2304

Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am Senator Joan Heckaman from D-23 and I represent Eddy, Nelson, Griggs, Steele, and the eastern half of Benson County including the Spirit Lake Nation.

I am asking Sen. Marcellais if he would read my testimony this morning.

SB 2304 requires schools to include curriculum on Native American history integrated into the social studies curriculum. There are several options available to do this, including lessons already prepared for Grades 4 and 8. This would be a perfect fit for them. In high school, a US History course or even a government course could be a good fit for this instruction.

I received information from Lucy Fredricks from the Department of Public Instruction via my staff that there are already some prepared lessons developed with the input of tribal elders following essential understanding that the elders developed. This project continues to grow with new lessons and content and are available for download from the department's web site. Over 3000 teachers across the state have been trained with on-site training as well as training during conferences. So, this information is available, but not all students have access to it because their school does not participate in the North Dakota Native American Essential Understanding Project. Schools that have trained include Bismarck, Mandan, New Town, Sunny Side Elementary in Minot, Fargo, West Fargo, Dunseith, Belcourt, Warwick, Central Middle School, Circle of Nations, Mandaree, Four Winds, and Cannonball Elementary.

As you can see, many of these schools are schools with a rich presence of Native American Heritage that we should not lose. But a greater richness can develop as all schools across North Dakota understand and appreciate Native American history.

Please give SB 2304 a Do Pass recommendation.