

INTERIM EDUCATION COMMITTEE

INDIAN EDUCATION REPORT on Dropout Prevention

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Conference Planning:

Discussion started about the idea of hosting an Indian Drop-out Prevention Summit soon after the state Drop-out Prevention Summit ended last June, when it was noted that there were only a few tribal schools in attendance at this conference. It should also be noted that this state conference was an invitation only conference, so this was the reason not many tribal schools were in attendance. But, with a majority of our tribal schools cultivating some of the highest dropout rates, we decided that we needed to start planning for a culturally relevant dropout summit for the tribal schools.

Partners:

After some discussions and meetings with a large network of agencies we were able to collaborate with a number of organizations including:

- The BUENO Equity Center for Multicultural Education. Boulder, CO.
- North Dakota Education Association
- North Dakota Department of Public Instruction
- North Central Comprehensive Center. Minneapolis, MN
- U.S. Department of Education
- McRel-Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning. Denver, CO
- U.S. Department of Interior-Bureau of Indian Education
- North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission
- Richard and Barbara Payne, Bay City, Michigan

Participation:

There were a total of 65 participants that attended the conference with staff from every tribal school on the four Indian reservations. Of the 65:

- 9 were school Superintendents
- 8 were school Principals or Assistant Principals
- 2 Policy Makers
- 3 state Agency staff
- Remaining were school Support Team Staff

Presenters:

The collaborating committee thought it was very important that we kept the information and discussion totally culturally relevant in order to maintain focus and connection, some of the topics presented were:

- Attendance Support and Strategies for Indian Students
- BIE Perspective on Dropout Prevention
- Research Findings Relative to Indian Dropout Prevention
- Management Information Systems Research on Dropouts
- State of the State Dropout Prevention and Strategies
- Emerging funding Opportunities for Indian Country
- Research on Family Engagement and Indian Students
- National Indian Dropout Prevention Strategies
- Team Planning Sessions

Trend Analysis/Indicators:

Many of the topics and presentations incorporated many of the more traditional trends or indicators like:

- Low SES
- Poor Grades
- Low Test Scores
- Held back a grade
- Discipline & Truancy
- High Absenteeism

Presentations were also given on more defined indicators like; Push and Pull Factors, Middle School Distress Signals, Mobility and Resilience.

Minnesota Initiative:

One of the more powerful and interesting presentations was given by Dr. Brent Gish, Superintendent of the Red Lake School district.

After the Tragedy of Red Lake in 2005 where a student killed 9 people and then took his own life, the school system struggled to get back on track and keep kids in school. School Suspensions and Dropouts were running rampant. In 2006-07 school year dropouts and suspensions was at 550 but by building a positive school climate this number decreased to 153 in 2008-09 school year.

Dr. Gish attributes this turnaround to the Comprehensive Model of Dropout Prevention which is linked with student needs. The Red Lake District Initiative encompassed:

- The Tribal/School Collaborative (System Renewal)
- Building Positive School Climate (Safe Learning Environments)
- Re-Thinking Discipline (safe Learning/Systemic Renewal)
- Teen Parenting and Child Literacy (Systemic Renewal/Early Childhood Program)

Dr. Gish expressed that probably the most important component of this initiative was the 1st bullet point of Tribal/School Collaborative. The collaboration between:

- Minnesota Department of Education,
- Minnesota Department of Human Services,
- Tribal Courts,
- Tribal Council,
- Tribal Family and Children Services
- Tribal Public Safety
- Tribal Health Services and HIS

By bringing all stakeholders into the strategy and having each of these entities work toward common goals helped save their schools. It should also be noted that the 4th bullet point is concerning an issue that is essentially a problem at their particular school district.

Tribal/School Plans:

As the presentations came to a close, each reservation was grouped with schools within their reservation so that community plans could be discussed and developed as well as each individual school plans. The groups had the opportunity to get together and work on their plans a few different sessions and presentations were given from each reservation toward the end of the conference.

Goals/Outcomes:

One of the main Goals that the committee discussed and decided on was to make sure that we were attempting to replicate some of the same plans that the state summit was attempting and to eventually meet with them as a whole and see how the two groups share commonalities and differences. This meeting just occurred on Monday, June 7, 2010

Comments:

The Dropout Prevention Summit totaled at \$3600.00 with the Department of Public Instruction assisting with a large part of that with \$2500.00, the BUENO Equity Center Contributed \$750.00 and the Indian Affairs Commission contributing \$350.00.

- 97% said the purpose was clear to them in advance.
- 43.18% said the meeting materials were excellent.
- 56.82% said the meeting materials were good.
- 52.27% said the presentations were excellent.
- 47.73% said the presentations were good.
- 56.82% said the overall meeting was excellent.
- 40.91% said the overall meeting was good.