

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**Title:** Annual Report: State Advisory Council on Indian Education**Type of Executive Summary:**
 Action
 Action on First Reading
 Discussion
 Information
Policy Implications:

-
- Constitution _____
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- General Statute #115C-210
-
-
- SBE Policy #EEO-B-001
-
-
- SBE Policy Amendment
-
-
- SBE Policy (New)
-
-
- APA # _____
-
-
- APA Amendment
-
-
- APA (New)
-
-
- Other _____

Presenter(s): Dr. Bill Harrison (CEO/State Board Chairman), Dr. Rebecca Garland (Chief Academic Officer, Academic Services and Instructional Support), Ms. Priscilla J. Maynor (State Indian Education Liasion), and Dr. Zoe Locklear (Chair, State Advisory Council on Indian Education)

Description:

In 1988, the N.C. General Assembly enacted Article 13A (NCGS § 115C-210 et seq) to establish a fifteen-member State Advisory Council on Indian Education to serve as the mechanism for advocating on the behalf of American Indian students. The Council serves a vital role in advising the State Board of Education (SBE) on issues pertaining to the education of American Indian students. More specifically, the Council is charged with the following duties:

- to advise the SBE on effective educational practices for American Indian students;
- to explore programs that raise academic achievement and reduce the dropout rate among American Indian students;
- to advise the SBE and the Department of Public Instruction on ways to improve coordination and communication for the benefit of American Indian students affected by state and federal programs administered at the state level;
- to prepare and present an annual report to the SBE, tribal organizations, and to conferees at the annual North Carolina Indian Unity Conference; and
- to advise the SBE on any other aspect of American Indian education when requested.

The Council's 2009 Annual Report seeks to gain a better understanding of how innovative educational initiatives targeting high school students could serve American Indian students more effectively. In doing this, the Council partnered with the SERVE Center at UNC-Greensboro to examine:

1. The nature of innovative opportunities available to students;
2. The needs of American Indian students and how the schools address those needs;
3. The integration of American Indian culture into the school experience; and
4. The participation of Native students in online courses.

In addition, barriers that prevent students from taking advantage of these opportunities were explored.

Resources:

State Appropriations

Input Process:

American Indian students, superintendents, principals, coordinators for Title VII Indian Education Programs, and staff with the Center for Native Education

Stakeholders:

American Indian students and parents, local education agencies and schools, and tribal communities and organizations

Timeline For Action:

This item is presented for Information at the June State Board meeting.

Recommendations:

The State Board of Education is asked to accept information presented by State Advisory Council on Indian Education in its annual report.

Audiovisual equipment requested for the presentation:

Data Projector/Video (Videotape/DVD and/or Computer Data, Internet, Presentations-PowerPoint preferred)
Specify: _____

Audio Requirements (computer or other, except for PA system which is provided)
Specify: _____

Document Camera (for transparencies or paper documents – white paper preferred)

Motion By: _____

Seconded By: _____

Vote: Yes _____ No _____

Abstain _____

Approved _____ Disapproved _____

Postponed _____ Revised _____

*Person responsible for SBE agenda materials and SBE policy updates: Priscilla J. Maynor, 919-835-6118

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Background

In 1988, the N.C. General Assembly enacted Article 13A (NCGS § 115C-210) to establish a fifteen-member State Advisory Council on Indian Education to serve as the mechanism for advocating on behalf of American Indian students. Membership consists of American Indian parents and educators, legislative members, representatives from the UNC Board of Governors, and a member of the North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs.

The Council serves a crucial role in advising the State Board of Education (SBE) on issues pertaining to the education of American Indian students. More specifically, the Council is charged with the following duties:

- to advise the SBE on effective educational practices for American Indian students;
 - to explore programs that raise academic achievement and reduce the dropout rate among American Indian students;
 - to advise the SBE and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) on ways to improve coordination and communication for the benefit of American Indian students affected by state and federal programs administered at the state level;
 - to prepare and present an annual report to the SBE, tribal organizations, and to conferees at the annual North Carolina Indian Unity Conference; and
 - to advise the SBE on any other aspect of American Indian education, when requested.

During the past year, the Council focused attention on advancing its plan, the *Strategic Pathways for Strengthening American Indian Education*. Public school administrators and staff, parents, tribal leaders, and community participants were engaged in creating educational experiences and cultural opportunities that promote high expectations and accountability for the academic success of American Indian students. The Council, in addition to others across the state, has identified multiple areas of concern that negatively impact the lives of American Indian youth. However, the Council has placed priority on two specific concerns: (1) improving the graduation rates for Native students, and (2) addressing the dropout crisis.

While the number of American Indian students leaving school without graduating has recently declined, this population of students continues to drop out in disproportionate numbers. The high school drop-out rate for American Indian students has decreased 1.88 percentage points over the last four years; however, statewide, these students are leaving school 1.4 times as often as other students. American Indian males, with a rate of 7.89 percent, have the highest dropout rate of any ethnic group. During the 2007-08 academic year, the 4-year cohort graduation rate for American Indian students was 55.7 percent.

Innovative Educational Opportunities

In North Carolina, a number of efforts are underway to improve graduation rates and strengthen the high school experience for all students. For example, Learn and Earn/Early College high school programs

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provide students an opportunity to simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an associate's degree or two years of college credit. Through the support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, North Carolina has created New Schools Project high schools that are more focused, rigorous, and delivered in smaller learning communities. In its 2009 Annual Report, the Council explores how the state's innovative reform programs can more effectively serve American Indian students. Through student focus groups and interviews with school administrators, the Council examined the nature of innovative high school opportunities, how schools are currently meeting the academic needs of American Indian students, ways in which Native culture is embedded in school experiences, and participation of Native students in online courses. Additionally, an attempt was made to identify barriers that prevent American Indian students from participating in any or all of these opportunities. The information was gathered in three school districts largely selected based on each district's relatively significant enrollment of American Indian students and recent establishment of innovative programs. Two of the districts, Cumberland and Robeson, are state-operated and the third district, Cherokee Central Schools, is tribally-operated.

The Council was gratified to learn that American Indian students are participating in some of these programs at close to the same rate or even at a higher rate than their proportion of the population. For example, 1.3% of the North Carolina public high school enrollment is American Indian, but American Indian students represent 3.3% of the students participating in Learn and Earn Early College High Schools and Redesigned High Schools (North Carolina New Schools Project, 2009) and 3.7% of the students enrolled in the North Carolina Virtual Public School, according to data from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Approximately 1.1% of participants in community college "transition" courses (including Huskins, Early College, and Special Credit programs) are American Indian (North Carolina Community College System, 2008).

Unfortunately, the Council was discouraged by the very low participation rates of American Indian students in Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. In 2008, only 376 or 0.4% of the more than 85,000 AP examinations administered in North Carolina were taken by American Indian students (College Board). Of the 1,406 students currently taking IB courses, only 7 or 0.5% are American Indian, according to data reported by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

Although evidence exists that documents the participation of American Indian students in innovative educational reform programs, evidence also indicates that a great deal of work remains to be done to ensure optimal engagement of students most at risk of dropping out of school. Educators and policy leaders must provide unwavering support for the establishment and expansion of educational programs that will engage students in positive academic experiences. Further, barriers which impede student participation must be identified and minimized or completely eliminated.

Therefore, the State Advisory Council on Indian Education advises the State Board of Education and local school districts to respond as follows:

- 1. Establish and implement a broad array of innovative high school reform programs to provide rigorous academic experiences for American Indian students and aggressively identify, enroll, and monitor all students who would benefit from participation in such programs.**

The state and local districts must strengthen and broaden identification and enrollment practices in order to effectively and efficiently meet the needs of American Indian students who would benefit from participation in innovative educational initiatives. Reliable and accurate data systems are critical in the

successful implementation of these practices and must be developed in a deliberate and purposeful manner. Also, careful consideration must be given to disaggregation of data to ensure equitable participation of all eligible students.

2. Develop and implement nontraditional outreach and communication strategies to effectively reach all American Indian families.

Although the state and local districts regularly disseminate education-related information, traditional communication strategies appear to be ineffective in reaching all American Indian students and parents. Consequently, parents are uninformed and are unable to support their child's participation in programs that would positively impact future success. Many Native parents regularly attend tribal-sponsored meetings but do not attend school meetings; therefore, it is imperative that districts develop alternative, nontraditional strategies to maximize communication. For example, to increase communication capacity, districts could partner with existing Indian education programs and tribal organizations that provide support services to American Indian families and children. Districts could include educational information in tribal newsletters, on tribal websites, and during community cultural events, such as powwows.

3. Integrate accurate information regarding Native culture in all aspects of the curriculum.

Research supports the assertion that American Indian students demonstrate higher levels of academic performance when their cultural identity and heritage are acknowledged and validated. As the driving force for instruction across all disciplines and grade levels, state curricula standards must be rigorous and culturally-based in order to meet the unique academic needs of Native students. Instructional materials, including textbooks, must accurately reflect the historical and contemporary presence of American Indians in North Carolina, with particular emphasis on topics such as tribal histories and languages. Through high quality professional development, educators must be provided information relative to best instructional practices for teaching American Indian students. For this to occur, the SBE should support and expand the existing resources previously developed in partnership with LEARN NC.

4. Establish supportive and caring school environments for all American Indian students.

It is reasonable to expect state and local districts to establish supportive and caring school environments for all students, including all American Indians. A prevalent theme emerged from the interviews regarding the importance of positive student-teacher relationships. Meaningful interactions between educators and students are essential for student success. During the site visits, positive relationships seemed to be at least partly enhanced by small school size given that students appeared to be more comfortable and empowered to approach teachers and administrators with questions and concerns. Students strongly emphasized the importance of having access to successful Native adult role models who could favorably impact their intrinsic motivation to establish high goals for their own success. The SBE and the Department of Public Instruction should partner with the state's tribal organizations to develop and disseminate an up-to-date database of Native individuals who could serve as guest presenters on a variety of topics.

5. Identify and eliminate barriers which inhibit the participation of American Indian students in innovative educational opportunities.

In order for American Indian students to successfully participate in innovative educational programs, barriers which impede their participation must be identified and minimized or completely eliminated. Limited or no access to computers and/or the Internet outside the school setting surfaced in the interviews as a key barrier for many students. To minimize or eliminate this barrier, districts must seek additional resources to provide students with access to technology. The interview responses also cited barriers created by inflexible transportation policies and inadequate funding to support student transportation. The SBE could review existing transportation policies and identify those which unintentionally serve as disincentives to school

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districts. For example, policies related to efficiency ratings could be reviewed and revised to allow greater flexibility as needed by districts in the provision of transportation.

The Council looks forward to the continued opportunity to partner with the State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction in the review and implementation of the findings and recommendations included in the 2009 Annual Report, *Weaving Innovative Educational Opportunities for American Indian Students*.