



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

NATIONAL INDIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

REAUTHORIZATION OF THE ESEA INDIAN COUNTRY KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Indian nations have the largest stake in improving the education of their citizens. We must prepare them for active and equal participation in the global market. We must prepare them to be citizens in the 21st century. We must prepare them to be positive, involved members of our communities. And, most importantly, we must prepare them to be the future leaders of our governments. There is no more vital resource to the continued existence and integrity of Indian tribes than their children.

Education policies over the last few decades have supported tribes exercising sovereignty over education programs serving American Indian and Alaska Native children. We are looking forward to this trend continuing during this reauthorization and strongly support the current efforts of Congress and the Administration in ensuring that the needs of Indian students are considered from the beginning of the drafting process. To that end, we offer the following key recommendations.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen Tribal Control of Education

- Require States to enter into collaborative agreements with tribes.
In order for tribes and their tribal education agencies (TEA) to build capacity and better serve their citizens, States must recognize tribal authority over the education of their students. Upon request, States should negotiate with tribal governments to transfer education programs, funding, services, and administrative responsibilities to the tribes. The Department of Education would both facilitate and foster the cooperation of the State and the tribes in these agreements through financial penalties of Title 1 funding. For example, TEAs should be empowered to implement their own school improvement plan via the accreditation process. Additionally, tribes should be given funds to build capacity for their education departments in the same ways as States and districts.
- Statutory collaboration between local education agencies and tribes.
92% of Indian students attend public schools, making collaboration between the local education agency (LEAs) and the tribe essential in developing a comprehensive plan for Indian student achievement. LEAs should develop, in consultation with the local tribe, a plan to improve the coordination of activities, specifically relating to Title I.
- Improve data collection and sharing of data with tribes.
Data for Indian students is often incomplete. There are a number of reasons for this – including our incredible diversity which necessitates oversampling to achieve generalizability, our remote locations, and language barriers. A first step should be to build upon the already existing Migrant Student Information Exchange (MSIX) system.

NCAI

PHONE: (202) 466-7767

FAX: (202) 466-7797

WWW.NCAI.ORG

NIEA

PHONE: (202) 544-7290

FAX: (202) 544-7293

WWW.NIEA.ORG

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This system will allow for proper enrollment and placement of Indian students, while providing an opportunity for the development of a complete data collection system to track complete Indian student records.

- Restore Director of Indian Education to Assistant Secretary for Indian Education.
The current position for the Director is underutilized and functions almost exclusively as a grant manager. This position and office must be elevated so that there is authority to engage in all titles of the ESEA that impact Indian student education. The Assistant Secretary of Indian Education should also be authorized to facilitate interagency collaboration and to implement the role of the TEAs in various titles.

2. Invest in Cultural and Language Revitalization

- Use of culturally-based education as a promising practice in public schools.
Culturally-Based Education (CBE) is a teaching model that encourages quality instructional practices rooted in cultural and linguistically relevant context. We recognize, however, that there is little quantitative data to point to, so tribes are calling for CBE to be identified as a promising practice in Indian education and for programs to be funded longitudinally so we can effectively build an evidence base that conclusively distinguishes what works for which populations and under what circumstances.
- Formula grant program for immersion schools, culturally based charter schools, and early childhood centers. It is largely recognized that the best way to learn a language is to fully immerse oneself. While we have limited statistical data showing that Native language instruction directly improves academic success, there is a large body of qualitative data that shows correlation of Native language instruction to factors that do improve academic success. Therefore it is critically important to have sustainable funding for research that will demonstrate this statistical correlation.

3. Focus on Native Teachers, Administrators, and Leaders

- Pay programs for teachers in Indian Country.
Indian Country faces some of the highest teacher turnover rates in the Nation –tough working conditions, few amenities, and a lack of job opportunities for spouses are but some of the challenges our teachers face. A pay program for teachers is needed to provide higher salaries for those that work in Indian Country. This should include a scaled program to incentivize long term employment in Indian schools.
- Strengthen and Expand Native Teachers and Administrators Preparation Program.
Reauthorize and increase annual funding for the Department of Education’s *Professional Development for Teachers and Administrators* program [20 U.S.C. 7442] and the *In-service Training for Teachers of Indian Children* program [20 U.S.C. 7452], which provide vitally needed support for programs that prepare, train, and provide ongoing professional training for teachers and administrators currently working in or planning to working at tribal schools or schools with a high concentration of Indian students. Tribal colleges and universities, which are chartered by sovereign Indian nations, and consortia led by or including tribal colleges, should be recognized as the primary awardees. Specific

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authority and funding should be provided for special education teacher preparation and training; and the existing authorities should be amended to include specific credentialing program for classroom aids and a requirement for fieldwork in Indian schools.

4. Promote Intra-Agency Coordination and Collaboration

- Statutory collaboration between the Department of the Interior and the Department of Education.

Increased collaboration should include training and technical assistance for Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) staff, use of alternative assessments for tribal schools, assistance in curriculum selection, and instructional practices.

- Include express statutory language to make funding available for the BIE schools (either overarching the Act or within each ESEA program).

Without express statutory language, our BIE school system will be unable to participate or receive much-needed funding. The most recent example of this lies in the ineligibility of BIE for "Race to the Top" grants.

5. Consultation

- Establish a tribal advisory committee to advise the Secretary of the Interior on policy issues and budget development for the BIE school system.

There has never been a formal, established mechanism for tribally-operated schools to raise issues and provide substantive advice to the Secretary on an on-going basis – especially on development of the budget request for programs serving BIE schools. Since the schools in the BIE system are the sole responsibility of the Federal Government, the Secretary of the Interior should be consulting closely and regularly with representatives selected by the tribes and the tribal school boards who operate those schools to learn directly from them about their needs and hear ideas about how to fill those needs.

- Increase on-the-ground resources and provisions from the BIE for the schools.

Schools in the BIE system struggle on a daily basis to provide a quality education to Indian students with insufficient funding to accomplish their mission. Specific direction should be given to the Secretary of the Interior to fund BIE schools on the amount of need, as regulated at 25 CFR Part 39, Subpart H.

For additional information, please contact: Ahniwake Rose, Policy Analyst, NCAI at 202.466.7767 or Gerald Gipp, Acting Executive Director, NIEA at 202.544.7290.