



KEY POINTS ON NATIVE EDUCATION

Despite some successes, Native educational statistics remain dreadful, reflecting not just dire economic circumstances, but also the ongoing harmful effects of past Federal Indian policies. For millennia, Native American cultures and communities flourished in what is now known as the United States. However, the Federal government’s long time education policy, embodied in the evil principal “Kill the Indian to Save the Man,” did great damage to American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian education systems. As a result, Native students perform far below their potential.

Much of the harm inflicted upon Native peoples is being undone by Natives themselves - and yet the legal and financial resources needed to complete this task can only be found with the originator of the harm – the Federal government, which has a trust responsibility to Native peoples rooted in the Constitution, treaties, statutes, case law and other commitments.

The Native Culture, Language and Access for Success in Schools Act (Native CLASS Act; S. 1262; H.R. 3568 and H.R. 3569) - Moving towards a Federal education policy that fulfills the Trust responsibility and supports Native self-sufficiency and self-determination through education. The Native CLASS Act would comprehensively restructure the Federal government’s role in Indian education, while empowering Tribes to assume a greater role and responsibility in the education of Native children. NIEA supports several initiatives, which are woven into the Native CLASS Act as part of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. These initiatives address the following priorities:

- **Strengthen Tribal Control of Education.** As a matter of right, why would Native peoples want their children’s education controlled by non-Natives? As a practical matter, Native and local control will yield better results, both in terms of cultural vitality and in terms of student success. NIEA seeks:
 - Funding for the establishment of Tribal education departments and agencies, including establishing a pilot project authorize a pilot project allowing up to five Indian tribes to operate a few select ESEA title programs in schools located on Indian reservations serving Indian students.
 - A mandate for more collaboration and sharing of data from the States and local education agencies (FERPA).
 - Encouragement of Tribal and State Partnerships
- **Invest in Cultural and Language Revitalization.** Native students who have a strong foundation in their language and culture perform better academically, at the same time Native culture is preserved not in books, but in the minds of our children. NIEA supports:

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- Culturally based education and Native language instruction.
 - Reauthorization of the *Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act*, which expires in FY 2012. This act should be fully funded, including an expanded commitment to immersion schools.
 - Continued authorization of the Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian programs.
 - Encourage public schools to teach Native languages.
 - Teacher induction programs should incorporate Native languages, culture and history.
- **Focus on the Development and Retention of Native Teachers, Administrators and Education Leaders.** A strong corps of Native education professionals is an essential element of building up Native education. A Native student who has a Native teacher not only receives instruction in the subject matter, but also has someone who intimately understands the student's culture and who is a role model for what that student can achieve. Studies have shown that having such a role model can be the single most important factor in a student's motivation and success. NIEA supports:
 - More resources for professional development, salary increases and other long-term employment incentives for Native education professionals.
 - Expand training and technical assistance programs.
- **Address the Needs of All Native students.** Federal policy should address the needs of Native students in BIE, Tribal, public and private schools, as well as in both reservation and urban settings.
 - All Federal programs should have a mandate to target services to Native students (including set asides).
- **The Federal Government Must Continue to Fulfill its Trust Obligation and Make Strong Investments in Indian Education Programs in the FY 2013 Budget.**
 - **The trust obligation of the Federal government to Native education is fundamentally different from ordinary discretionary spending.** Unlike other areas, this legal obligation is deeply rooted in the U.S. Constitution, treaties, statutes, case law and other commitments made to Native peoples, largely in return for huge land cessions.
 - **Not only is Federal support for Native education a fulfillment of the trust responsibility, it is also smart policy because it strengthens Native communities, languages and cultures; empowers Native peoples to be self-sufficient; and yields a multi-fold economic return in the long run.** For example, studies have shown that a \$1 investment in Head Start yields a return on investment of \$7 to \$9. Similar multiple returns are found in other Native educational programs.

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