California Department of Education  
May 2022

# Recommendation 2

The American Indian Education Oversight Committee (AIEOC) recommends that the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SSPI) appoint three Native American taskforces: the Tribal Consultation Policy Taskforce, the Native American Chronic Absenteeism Taskforce, and the Native American Data Collection Taskforce.

Each Native American taskforce should consist of up to 10 members appointed by the SSPI and/or AIEOC. These taskforces should be made up of no more than 10 participants and include:

* three Native American Advisors
* one California Department of Education (CDE) staff to serve on each task force
* three local educational agencies (LEAs) to reflect the geographic diversity across the state (each task force)
* AIEOC members may serve on the task forces

Each taskforce will provide a report to the AIEOC for approval. After approval, the AIEOC will send to the SSPI.

## Tribal Consultation Policy Taskforce

The belief of the CDE is that all students should receive a world-class education from early childhood to adulthood, and its purpose is to provide it. The CDE serves our state by innovating and collaborating with educators, schools, parents, and community partners. Together, as a team, we prepare students to live, work, and thrive in a multicultural, multilingual, and highly connected world. As part of its mission, CDE is committed to helping to improve the educational outcomes of all American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students. The CDE administers programs that are directed toward, or have specific impacts on, AI/AN students and other tribal members. The CDE should further strengthen its relationship with Indian tribes by implementing a process that ensures meaningful consultation and collaboration with them when developing policies and taking actions that have tribal implications.

To further this the CDE should:

* Establish and develop a department-wide Tribal Consultation Policy and amend the existing Consultation Policy to increase inclusion of LEAs
  1. Consult California Tribes in development of consultation policy
* Create a CDE Office of Tribal Relations (CDEOTR)
  1. Include California Tribes in development of a CDEOTR
     1. The CDEOTR should report directly to the Superintendent and AIEOC
     2. Appropriately staff and fund a CDEOTR to reflect the tribal diversity and density of California

## Native American Chronic Absenteeism, Educational Outcomes, and Graduation Rate Taskforce

According to 2020–21 data from CDE’s DataQuest program, Native American students had the highest rate of chronic absenteeism with 26.9 percent.[[1]](#footnote-1) Recent research indicates that chronic absenteeism is a better predictor of drop-outs than low grades or test scores. Lower rates of attendance are also associated with higher rates of grade retention, disengagement, and alienation in school.[[2]](#footnote-2) Native American children have the highest dropout rates of any ethnic group in the United States. DataQuest data from 2016–17, which is the most recent data available, shows the a five percent annual adjusted dropout rate for Native American students grades nine through twelve.[[3]](#footnote-3) This is the highest rate for any ethnicity. These numbers are even higher in areas where the parents complain of a major lack of understanding of Native culture within the school or community. In California, the 2019–20 Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate for American Indian students in California was 75.8 percent as compared to their White counterparts who were at 87.9 percent.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Native American students have unique educational needs and continue to face a number of overwhelming barriers that can lead to student alienation and disengagement from school, including:

* Lack of culturally relevant and responsive curriculum that includes Indigenous history, language, governance, culture, and worldviews
* Invisibility of Native American contributions to society and inaccurate depictions of California and United States history
* Overuse of disciplinary practices such as suspension, expulsion, referrals to law enforcement, and involuntary transfers to alternative schools that provide an inferior education
* Failure to provide school-based student supports, including culturally relevant school-based mental health professionals and programs designed to promote student well-being that keep students in school, such as culturally relevant trauma-informed practices
* Bullying and racially hostile school environments
* Poor transportation and lack of access to health care

Truancy and school discipline are associated with a host of negative consequences, including a decline in academic achievement, a greater likelihood of dropping out of school, poor health and well-being outcomes, and an increased risk of involvement in the juvenile justice system.

To address these issues, the CDE should appoint a Native American Chronic Absenteeism, Educational Outcomes, and Graduation Rate Task Force that will:

* Identify and recommend strategies to reduce Native American achievement gaps, dropout rates, and absenteeism
  1. Work with State School Attendance Review Board in designing culturally responsive practices and implementing intervention strategies
  2. Research and recommend strategies related to Special Education and Individualized Education Plans/504 to increase attendance and close achievement gaps
  3. Increase Tribal specific approaches for mental health and counseling to improve attendance rates of Native American students
  4. Convene an annual summit for data review, review promising practices, and create new and revised recommendations

## Native American Data Collection Taskforce

Data on AI/AN are often subject to inaccuracies that can result when respondents self-identify their race/ethnicity. The racial/ethnic categories presented to a respondent, and the way in which the question is asked, can influence the response, especially for individuals who consider themselves of mixed race or ethnicity.

To address these issues, the CDE should appoint a Native American Data Collection taskforce that will:

* Develop and adopt an improved data collection system regarding Native American students, and make it available on DataQuest or the CDE website
  1. Request Annual Allocations Amounts (Disaggregated) on Native American Education Spending
  2. Improve data related to Native American Students in Special Education and/or Accommodations to support their success

1. <https://bit.ly/3NRTnfP> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Gottfried, M. A. (2014). Chronic absenteeism and its effects on students’ academic and socioemotional outcomes. Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR), 19, 53-75. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://bit.ly/3xr07uc> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://bit.ly/3zElGdE> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)