

REL Midwest Reference Desk

American Indian Academic Performance in Minnesota

November 2013

Questions

1. Does research exist on the differences in academic performance between American Indian students and their peers in Minnesota?
 2. What does research tell us about the achievement gap between American Indian students and their peers across the United States?
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Background

A request for information was received from Minnesota Department of Education for research on the differences in academic performance between American Indian students and their peers in Minnesota.

Following an established research protocol, Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest conducted a search for research reports as well as descriptive and policy-oriented briefs and articles on the differences in academic achievement between American Indian students and their peers in Minnesota. This search yielded limited results. As a result, the search was expanded to focus on the academic achievement gap between American Indian students and their peers across the United States. Sources included federally funded organizations, research institutions, educational research databases, and a general Internet search using Google and other search engines.

We also searched for appropriate organizations that may act as resources on this issue. We have not done an evaluation of these organizations or the resources themselves but offer this list for the requester's information only.

1. Does research exist on the differences in academic performance between American Indian students and their peers in Minnesota?

Bowman, N. (2013). *American Indian education in Minnesota: Analytic review of key state and national documents*. Chicago, IL: Midwest Comprehensive Center at American Institutes for Research. Retrieved from <http://www.mn-indianed.org/docs/AmericanIndianEducationInMinnesota.pdf>

From the Executive Summary: “The purpose of this report is to examine and describe major concepts and assumptions underlying the foundation of American Indian education in Minnesota. The Midwest Comprehensive Center (MWCC), at the request of the

Minnesota Department of Education Office of Indian Education, conducted an in-depth review of key state and national documents pertaining to the current condition of American Indian education in Minnesota. The review encompassed publications from Minnesota’s Tribal Nations Education Committee, the state of Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Education, and an executive order from the White House. These selected documents contain information focused on academic achievement, educational barriers, or educational policy for American Indian K–12 students at the state and national levels.”

Minnesota Department of Education. (2009). *Legislative report of the advisory task force on Minnesota American Indian tribes and communities and K–12 standards-based reform*. Roseville: Author. Retrieved from <https://www.minnesotahumanities.org/uploads/stuff/outreach/American%20Indian%20Task%20Force%20Report%202009%20Short.pdf>

From the Introduction: “The Advisory Task Force on Minnesota American Indian Tribes and Communities and K–12 Standards-Based Reform met regularly in 2007–08, beginning with its establishment in September, 2007. During the course of our meetings, we have become increasingly committed to presenting a report to the Legislature that addresses both the charge established in law and our vision for significantly improving education for Minnesota’s American Indian children. It is our intent to present a report that captures our analysis of the current situation and our commitment to the possibilities of the future.”

Minnesota Minority Education Partnership. (2012). *State of students of color and American Indian students report*. St. Paul: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.mmep.org/images/PDFs/Research/SOSOAI/sosoc2012sm.pdf>

From the report: “Education is both the most important commodity and personal goal for individual and communal advancement in the 21st century. It is the key underpinning to Minnesota’s long-term economic competitive advantage and to its ability as a community to help shape the quality of life on our planet. Countless variables, needs, and interests impact educational opportunities and progress for Minnesota’s students. This element of our report gives an overview of key data in Minnesota’s educational system, highlighting issues of educational equity and excellence.”

2. What does research tell us about the achievement gap between American Indian students and their peers?

Alliance for Excellent Education. (2008). *Fact sheet: American Indian and Alaska Native students and U.S. high schools*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/AmerIndianAKNative_FactSheet.pdf

From the report: “There are an estimated 4.4 million American Indian and Alaska Native people living in the continental United States (the forty-eight contiguous states and Alaska), representing 1.5 percent of the total population.... Unfortunately, many American Indian and Alaska Native students do not receive the support they deserve from their respective learning communities. The nation must commit to ensuring the

well-being of these students and the quality of the education they receive, particularly given the clear evidence of striking disparities in their educational achievement and attainment levels.”

The Clearinghouse on Native American Teaching and Learning at Washington State University. (2008). *From where the sun rises: Addressing the educational achievement of Native Americans in Washington state*. Pullman, WA: Author. Retrieved from [http://education.wsu.edu/nativeclearinghouse/achievementgap/Native%20American%20Achievement%20Gap%20Report%20\(Hyperlink\).pdf](http://education.wsu.edu/nativeclearinghouse/achievementgap/Native%20American%20Achievement%20Gap%20Report%20(Hyperlink).pdf)

From the Summary: “The purpose of this study was to conduct a detailed analysis of factors contributing to an educational “achievement gap” for Native American students. One of the primary foci was to analyze the progress in developing effective government-to-government relations between tribes and school districts and identification and adoption of curriculum regarding tribal history, culture, and government as provided under RCW 28A.345.070. Throughout were efforts to: (a) identify performance measures of achievement and success that are culturally and community appropriate to monitor adequate yearly progress, (b) determine what constitutes achievement and success for Native American students from the perspectives of Native stakeholders, and (c) conduct a detailed analysis of factors contributing to educational achievement and success of Native American students.”

George, B. (2011). *Native American academic performance: Does school type matter?* Washington, DC: Academy for Public Policy Analysis and Research at the Urban Institute. Retrieved from http://www.dartmouth.edu/~socy/pdfs/blythe_george_paper_urban_institute_2011.pdf

From the Abstract: “Native American youth have persistently been one of the lowest performing minority groups with regards to academic achievement. Reasons for such performance have been attributed to the economic and social disparities endured by many Native¹ communities, both on and off reservations. These disparities serve as obstacles to Native student success. Substantial research now points to the lack of culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy for Native students within the larger education system as a possible obstacle to academic success. To test this hypothesis, this study uses alternative school self-identification in California between 2002–2007 to serve as a flag for the possible use of culturally relevant course material and teaching methods. This study conducts spatial, longitudinal, and regression analyses to identify trends in Native student proficiency rates by school type attended. These analyses used proficiency rates included in the state’s Adequate Yearly Progress reports and a variety of school characteristics based on the National Institute for Education Statistics’ Common Core of Data and Decennial Census information. The findings highlight the important opportunities afforded by alternative schools, as well as underscoring the importance of using and testing such schools effectively.”

The Education Trust. (2013). *The state of education for Native students*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.edtrust.org/sites/edtrust.org/files/NativeStudentBrief_0.pdf

From the report: “In this fact sheet, we have collected the best available national data on the schools Native students attend, their achievement, and their educational attainment. We hope that these data will help spark much needed conversation and action to ensure that we, as a nation, reverse these trends.”

Montana Office of Public Instruction. (2012). *Montana American Indian student achievement data report*. Helena, MT: Author. Retrieved from http://www.mmep.org/media/k2/attachments/SOSOCAIS_2012_Executive_Summary_120312.pdf

From the report: “Schools and communities across Montana are working hard to ensure that students receive the Best education and graduate ready for college and careers. One of the most important components in this effort involves understanding where students are and how we can best help them achieve at the highest levels. Data is an invaluable tool and its use is necessary in ensuring student success. This report is intended to support that effort and to ensure that the work of closing the achievement gap for American Indian students in Montana continues. Understanding this information can assist us all as we strive to engage students in learning environments that are both rigorous and meaningful to their lives and their futures. Our collaborative efforts will make a difference and only continue the work of quality education in Montana.”

National Assessment of Educational Progress. (2006a). *National Indian education study part I: The performance of American Indian and Alaska Native fourth- and eighth-grade students on NAEP 2005 reading and mathematics assessments*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED491693.pdf>

From the Executive Summary: “The National Indian Education Study is a two-part study designed to describe the condition of education for American Indian/Alaska Native students in the United States. The study was conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics for the U.S. Department of Education, with the support of the Office of Indian Education. This report, Part I of the study, presents the performance of American Indian/Alaska Native students at grades 4 and 8 on the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress in reading and mathematics. Part II, a separate report, will present the results of a special survey of American Indian/Alaska Native students and schools, focusing on demographic and cultural factors. A primary objective of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is to provide educators and policymakers reliable data on academic performance of students at the national, state, and local levels. NAEP serves as an integral part of our nation’s evaluation of the condition and progress of education. The National Indian Education Study was conducted for the first time in 2005 as a part of NAEP, and in accordance with Title VII Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 2001. This report is a summary of a compilation of comprehensive data on the academic achievement and progress of American Indian/Alaska Native students.”

National Assessment of Educational Progress. (2006b). *National Indian education study part II: The educational experiences of fourth- and eighth-grade American Indian and Alaska Native students*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED493678.pdf>

From the Executive Summary: “This report describes important aspects of the educational experiences of [American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN)] students in grades 4 and 8. Although the central focus of the report is AI/AN students, information is also provided about non-AI/AN students, where available, so that the reader can compare the characteristics of AI/AN students with their peers from different backgrounds. The source of the information on non-AI/AN students is NAEP, which included a survey component to collect limited demographic information about all students who participated in 2005. The NAEP survey, however, did not collect information on the role of AI/AN culture or language in education—topics which are the central focus of NIES. The NIES Part II report also provides comparisons between AI/AN students at high density and low density schools. High density schools are defined by the OIE as schools in which at least 25 percent of the students are American Indian or Alaska Native. All other schools are classified as low density.”

National Center for Education Statistics. (2008). *Status and trends in the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives: 2008*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008084.pdf>

From the NCES website: “This report examines both the educational progress of American Indian/Alaska Native children and adults and challenges in their education. It shows that over time more American Indian/Alaska Native students have gone on to college and that their attainment expectations have increased. Despite these gains, progress has been uneven and differences persist between American Indian/Alaska Native students and students of other racial/ethnic groups on key indicators of educational performance.”

U.S. Department of Education. (2011). *Tribal leaders speak: The state of Indian education, 2010*. Washington, DC: Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Indian Education, White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/indianed/consultations-report.pdf>

From the report: “In accordance with President Obama's Nov. 5, 2009, memorandum requiring federal agencies to develop plans of action for consultation and coordination with American Indians/Alaska Natives, the U.S. Department of Education conducted six official consultations with tribal leaders and American Indian educators across the country in 2010. These were the first such sessions that the U.S. Department of Education sponsored in its history. During the Department of Education's tribal consultations in Indian communities, tribal leaders and educators or American Indian children testified that American Indian students face a number of significant challenges, including lack of access to culturally appropriate curricula, educators without sufficient cultural training, and poor learning conditions. They spoke of organizational challenges, insufficient resources, and limited opportunities for members of tribal communities to meaningfully participate in the education of their own children. These challenges identified by tribal

leaders and educators of American Indian children may act as barriers to a quality education and contribute to poor outcomes for American Indian students. As data from the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show, unfortunately, American Indian students face significant achievement gaps as compared to their non-native peers. Tribal leaders testified that these outcomes perpetuate cycles of limited economic opportunity, resulting in significant health, welfare, and justice inequities in Indian country.”

Additional Resources

- *Journal of American Indian Education*
<http://jaie.asu.edu/>

From the website: “The *Journal of American Indian Education (JAIE)* is a professional journal that publishes papers directly related to the education of American Indian/Alaska Natives. The *Journal* also invites scholarship on educational issues pertaining to Native Peoples of the world, including First Nations (Aboriginal People of Canada), Native Hawaiian, Maori, Indigenous Peoples of Latin American and others. The goal of the *Journal of American Indian Education* is to improve Native Education through knowledge generation and transmission to classrooms and other educational settings. It encourages dialogue between researchers and teachers through research-based scholar and practitioner articles elucidating current innovations in the classroom. Essays that advance a point of view about an educational question or issue, if supported by cited research literature, are acceptable for consideration as well as manuscripts that present views of literature in areas that are relatively unexplored. Studies grounded in Native Research methodologies are especially encouraged. The JAIE also seeks expository manuscripts that present an explicative or interpretive perspective to an existing theory or issue.”

Additional Organizations to Consult

- Association of Community Tribal Schools
<http://www.acts-tribal.org/ACTS/Welcome.html>

From the website: “Mission: To assist Community Tribal Schools towards their mission of ensuring that when students complete their schools they are prepared for lifelong learning and that these students will strengthen and perpetuate traditional tribal societies.”

- Bureau of Indian Education
<http://www.bie.edu/index.htm>

From the website: “The Bureau of Indian Education’s (BIE) mission is to provide quality education opportunities from early childhood through life in accordance with a tribe’s needs for cultural and economic well-being, in keeping with the wide diversity of Indian tribes and Alaska Native villages as distinct cultural and governmental entities. Further, the BIE is to manifest consideration of the whole person by taking into account the spiritual, mental, physical, and cultural aspects of the individual within his or her family and tribal or village context.”

- Indian-Ed.org: Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State
<http://www.indian-ed.org/>

From the website: “This site houses resources, materials, lessons, and entire units to support the teaching of tribal sovereignty, tribal history, and current tribal issues within the context of OSPI [Office of Superintendent of Publish Instruction] recommended units for Washington and U.S. history in the elementary and middle school levels and U.S. history and Contemporary World Issues in the high school level. Each unit is aligned with National Common Core State Standards, state standards and builds toward the successful completion of a Content-Based Assessment, or CBA.”

- Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center—The American Indian Education Knowledge Base
<http://www.mc3edsupport.org/community/knowledgebases/Project-7.html>

From the website: “The American Indian Education KnowledgeBase is an online resource to aid education professionals in their efforts to serve American Indian students and close the achievement gap American Indian students have faced in public, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and other schools.”

- National Caucus of Native American State Legislators
<http://www.ncsl.org/issues-research.aspx?tabs=951,70,389#389>

From the website: “The Caucus promotes a better understanding of state-tribal issues among policymakers and the public at large. In addition, members hope to encourage a broad understanding of state-tribal issues across the country and raise the profile and awareness of tribal issues throughout the state legislative arena. The effectiveness of the Caucus, and of individual Native American state legislators, can increase the ability of the state legislatures to appropriately address tribal issues and develop public policy in cooperation with tribal governments.”

- National Indian Education Association
<http://www.niea.org/About.aspx>

From the website: “The National Indian Education Association [NIEA] advances comprehensive educational opportunities for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians throughout the United States. The premiere organization advocating for educational excellence, opportunity, and equity for Native students, NIEA focuses on helping tribes and communities control and choose excellent education for our Native students, promoting culturally based education that allows Native students to preserve languages and traditions of their tribes and nations, and expanding equal educational opportunity for every Native student regardless of where they live.”

- Office of Indian Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at U.S. Department of Education
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/oie/index.html>

From the website: “The mission of the Office of Indian Education is to support the efforts of local educational agencies, Indian tribes and organizations, postsecondary institutions,

and other entities to meet the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives so that these students can achieve to the same challenging state standards as all students.

The No Child Left Behind Act amends the Indian education programs as Title VII, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This landmark in education reform embodies four key principles: stronger accountability for results; greater flexibility in the use of federal funds; more choices for parents of children from disadvantaged backgrounds; and an emphasis on research-based instruction that works.”

Keywords and Search Strings Used in the Search

Native American OR American Indian AND achievement gap OR education* achievement

Search of Databases and Websites

Institute of Education Sciences Sources: REL Program, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Institute of Education Sciences (IES), IES Practice Guides

Other Federally Funded Sites: Center on Innovation and Improvement, Center on Instruction, National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, Common Core of Data, National Center for Research on Early Childhood Education

Additional Data Resources: Education Development Center, ERIC, EBSCO databases, JSTOR database, FirstSearch (OCLC), ProQuest, Educator’s Reference Complete, Google Scholar, Google, general Internet search

Criteria for Inclusion

When Reference Desk researchers review resources, they consider—among other things—four factors:

- **Date of the Publication:** The most current information is included, except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.
- **Source and Funder of the Report/Study/Brief/Article:** Priority is given to IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols.
- **Methodology:** Randomized controlled trial (RCT) studies, surveys, self-assessments, literature reviews, and policy briefs are reviewed. Priority for inclusion generally is given to RCT study findings, but the reader should note at least the following factors when basing decisions on these resources: numbers of participants (Just a few? Thousands?); selection (Did the participants volunteer for the study, or were they chosen?); representation (Were findings generalized from a homogeneous or a diverse pool of participants? Was the study sample representative of the population as a whole?).

- **Existing Knowledge Base:** Although we strive to include vetted resources, there are times when the research base is slim or nonexistent. In these cases, we have included the best resources we could find, which may include newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, organization websites, and so on.
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