The Dropout Crisis in Montana

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The Dropout Crisis in the Northwest Conference
Response to the Report by Faircloth & Tippeconnic

- Need for new research (mobility), but validity of many points brought up in the research review
- “Recognizing our role”
- Montana’s Indian Education for All and Indian Student Achievement efforts
- The power and necessity of accurate & usable data
- The need for strong, sustained leadership and teaching forces who have an understanding of American Indian communities
- Success stories and best practices – focus on strengths
- The role of poverty – examples in Montana & Oklahoma
US Census Legend - Poverty
Montana
Adequate Yearly Progress Status in Montana

Flags indicate districts that are in 'Restructuring'
Adequate Yearly Progress Status in Montana

Flathead Reservation – no schools in ‘Restructuring’ & a community with a higher economic profile than all other six reservations.
2007 Criterion Referenced Test (CRT)  
By reservation and urban districts  
Average proficiency rates of American Indian student scores  
Grades 3-8 & 10 combined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reservation/District</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Math</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northern Cheyenne</strong> (Lame Deer)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crow</strong> (Pryor/Plenty Coups, Lodge Grass, Wyola, Hardin)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fort Peck</strong> (Poplar, Brockton, Wolf Point, Frazer, Frontier)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blackfeet</strong> (Browning, Heart Butte)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fort Belknap</strong> (Harlem, Hays-Lodge Pole)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rocky Boy</strong> (Box Elder, Rocky Boy)</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flathead</strong> (Arlee, Ronan, St. Ignatius, Polson, Dixon, Hot Springs, Charlo)</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Havre</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missoula</td>
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<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Great Falls</td>
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<td>53</td>
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<tr>
<td>Billings</td>
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<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helena</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butte</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>American Indian student state average</strong></td>
<td>58</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>White student state average</strong></td>
<td>84</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Oklahoma Average Scale Score Grade 4
Mathematics, NAEP

Year

Average Scale Score

1992*
2000
2003
2005

Average White Scale Score
Average Black Scale Score
Average Hispanic Scale Score
Average American Indian Scale Score
Oklahoma
More about Montana & dropouts ...
1) It is the goal of the people to establish a system of education which will develop the full educational potential of each person. Equality of educational opportunity is guaranteed to each person of the state.

2) The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity.
The Dropout Reality

- On average, American Indian students dropout of grades 7/8 at a rate more than 9 times that of white students and out of high school at a rate of 2.5 times that of white students.

- In the past five years, American Indians represented only 11.5% of the total school enrollment for grades 7/8, but accounted for 70% of the dropouts. For high school, American Indians represented 10% of the total school enrollment and 23% of the dropouts.
2006-07 Montana Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity Categories

Total Dropout % Grades 7-12

- American Indian: 404
- Asian: 71
- Hispanic: 17
- Black: 1395
- Pacific Islander: 0
- White: 0
- Overall: 0

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Five Year Montana High School Dropout Rate Trends by Race/Ethnicity Categories

American Indian
White
Statewide
Five Year Dropout Rates (2001-2006) for Race/Ethnicity Categories and by Grade Level
Dropout Rates for Race/Ethnicity Categories by Gender for Grades 9-12

American Indian Male
American Indian Female
White Male
White Female

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Where American Indians Are Enrolled

Urban districts in MT are defined as belonging to one of the state’s largest school systems: Billings, Bozeman, Butte, Great Falls, Helena, Kalispell & Missoula.

- **Urban**
- **50-100% American Indian**
- **Non-urban < 50% American Indian**
Five Year Dropout Rates (2001-2006)
by Race/Ethnicity Categories & by School Location for Grades 9-12

American Indian
- Urban: 12%
- 50-100% American Indian: 8%
- Non Urban < 50% American Indian: 4%

White
- Urban: 2%
- 50-100% American Indian: 6%
- Non Urban < 50% American Indian: 2%
2005-06 MT Dropout Rates
1H Districts and Race/Ethnicity

- American Indian
  - Up 5% from 2004-05
- White
  - Up 3.4%
  - Nearly doubled – Up 7.4%
  - Up 4.5%
Why are American Indian Students Dropping out in Montana?
Issues & Factors to Consider

- Complex Historic & Cultural Issues and a General Lack of Awareness & Understanding
  - Generational, Concentrated, Isolated and Deep Poverty
  - Lack of Mental & Emotional Health Supports
  - Need for greater Parent/Family/Community Outreach & Involvement
  - Urban vs. Rural Schools Issues
  - High Student Mobility Rates & Retention Issues
  - Lack of Academic Challenge, Rigor & High Expectations
  - A Need to Focus Efforts on Key Transition Points

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Focusing our Efforts & Providing Support — Montana’s Dropout Prevention Grant Program
In 2002-03 six districts with high American Indian populations & high dropout rates were awarded Dropout Prevention Grants through the OPI. Over four years $433,000 in funds were distributed to these schools.
American Indian Dropout Prevention Grant 2001-02 & 2004-05 Comparison Data

Grant Schools included Heart Butte, Browning, Rocky Boy, Lame Deer, Poplar & Box Elder

The average total school dropout rate change from 2001-2004 for schools participating in the grant was a decrease of 4%
A Promising Program –
The Blackfeet Learning Academy
“A Culture of Respect”

- The Blackfeet Learning Academy is an alternative high school for Browning Public Schools with a 69% retention/success rate in its fourth year of operation.
- Six dedicated staff members served 52 students in the 2007-08 school year.
- Teaching methods meet students’ individual learning styles: independent study, project-based learning, small group instruction, work study and experiential learning.
- Students are eligible for dual enrollment at Blackfeet Community College.
- Blackfeet culture is emphasized and integrated into every curricular area and into expectations for personal growth.
How the Academy supports more than just academic growth ...

- On-site student support services ranging from transportation and childcare to mental health and drug & alcohol concerns
- Students serve as mentors for middle school students under the summer “Blackfeet Academy Wilderness Adventure Program” – lead 14 summer expeditions which teach survival skills, which develops stewardship, self-sufficiency and self-confidence
- Attribute success to committed staff members, networking for services/resources, and high expectation held for each student to grow personally and academically.
Other Promising Practices & Prevention Strategies
Dropout Prevention Strategies

SCHOOL & ACADEMIC SUPPORTS –

- Extend learning time, especially in Language Arts, Math and Writing
- Have high expectations - provide academic challenge for all
- Focus on transition into 7/8 & high school
- Support students to stay on track & graduate on time
- Increase after school, summer school & mentoring opportunities (also monitor equity in participation)
- Support early childhood services
- Support differentiated & culturally relevant instruction (Indian Education For All)
More Dropout Prevention Strategies

**STUDENT & COMMUNITY SUPPORTS** –

- Increase awareness of and support for social & mental/emotional health issues in American Indian communities
- Include ALL community stakeholders (Health care providers, law enforcement and judicial entities, business community, etc.) in dropout prevention discussions and strategies
- Understand the school climate – survey students
- Increase parent and community outreach efforts
- Establish advocate systems that serve as conduits from school to community and who support families
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Visit our website at:
http://www.opi.mt.gov/IndianEd/Index.html

Chris Lohse’s preliminary report on “American Indian Student Achievement in Western States ...”