SETTING THE BAR HIGH:
AMERICAN INDIAN
STUDENT SUCCESS
THROUGH EFFECTIVE
LEADERSHIP

Bureau of Indian Education
2012 Summer Institute
Denver, CO – June 2012
Montana: The Big Sky State

- Montana is the 4th largest state, with 145,500 square miles
- It's population is ranked 44th in the nation with just under 1 million people
- American Indians students comprise our state’s largest minority at 11%
- We are more than rural – we are frontier
- You can find pockets of poverty that are generational, isolated, deep and concentrated
Montana Indian Reservations
Education in Montana

• Oversee 821 public schools who work hard to educate 141,600 students
• There are two BIE schools – Two Eagle River & Busby and Blackfeet Boarding Dormitory
• Montana has great public schools – our students regularly score in the top 10 in math & reading, and tied for first place last year in science
• Yet 2,000 Montana students drop out each year: that’s too many
• American Indian students drop out of school at 3 times the rate of white students
Helping American Indian students succeed
Section 1. Educational goals and duties.

(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 American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity.
Legislative Intent of IEFA

Every Montanan, whether Indian or non-Indian, be encouraged to learn about the distinct and unique heritage of American Indians in a culturally responsive manner...

Every educational agency and all educational personnel will work cooperatively with Montana tribes ... when providing instruction and implementing an educational goal. ...

...all school personnel should have an understanding and awareness of Indian tribes to help them relate effectively with Indian students and parents...

Montana Code Annotated 20-1-501 (1), 1999
“Quality Education” includes IEFA

Mont. Code Ann. sec. 20-9-309

A "basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools" means:

(c) educational programs to implement the provisions of Article X, section 1(2), of the Montana constitution and Title 20, chapter 1, part 5, through development of curricula designed to integrate the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians into the curricula, with particular emphasis on Montana Indians
Montana’s Common Core

Montana is implementing Common Core standards

Mathematics and English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, and Science: raising the standards of a quality education in Montana

Montana Indian Education for All

Unique to the nation, Montana’s Constitution recognizes the distinct cultural heritage of American Indians and commits to provide every Montanan, whether Indian or non-Indian, educational opportunities to learn about the distinct and unique heritage of American Indians in a culturally responsive manner.

Indian Education for All & Common Core

IEFA Companion Guide
IEFA curriculum units examples
Use data, including Montana American Indian demographics data, from a random sample to draw inferences about a population with an unknown characteristic of interest. Generate multiple samples (or simulated samples) of the same size to gauge the variation in estimates or predictions. Gauge how far off the estimate or prediction might be.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts, including those by and about American Indians, to support analysis, reflection, and research.

b. Apply grades 11–12 Reading standards to literary nonfiction (e.g., “Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning [e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court Case majority opinions and dissents] and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy [e.g., The Federalist Papers, presidential addresses, American Indian Policies]”).
Indian Education For All: More than a mandate

“The way I see it, Indian Education For All is about breaking down barriers. It’s important for students to see that there are many more similarities than differences between Indian and non-Indian people ... If this lesson is learned, it will help our students – all of them – engage with the world, and be compassionate and respectful, and become better citizens, and better human beings.”

Hans Bodenhammer, Chemistry Teacher, Bigfork High School
IEFA: More than a mandate

“When I was in grade school, we had “Native American Week,” when we read a few stories, and that was about it. Now everything is so much more in depth. Now we have a context for learning about Indian culture and history. In my school there are many more Natives than non-Natives. But what I’ve found is that learning about these things brings us closer together ...”

Jake Rider, Junior, Harlem High School
Indian Education for ALL
Reducing drop out in Montana
GMM Objectives

1: Increase the rate of Montana students graduating from high school ready for college and the 21st century workforce

2: Establish a support network between schools, businesses, and community organizations for student success

3: Create school-based and community-based opportunities to inspire students to stay in school and graduate
Our state’s seven largest communities have half the population of students who drop out.

Montana’s American Indian students disproportionately drop out of school: 10.6% compared to 3.5% of white students.

Urban Indians drop out in higher numbers than do students attending school on a Reservation (2006).

In Montana, almost all schools on Reservations are public schools: there are two BIE schools in the state.
2011 Legislative Priorities

Raise the legal drop out age from 16 to 18

Establish minimal anti-bullying policies

Budget Request: Funds for every Montana high school junior to take the ACT, to ensure all students have the opportunity to attend college, and to assess Montana students’ college readiness – GEAR UP
Inviting local community participation
Locally-designed & implemented GMM initiatives

To date, 65% of all Montana high school students attend school in a district that is launching a Graduation Matters Montana initiative

Building public-private partnerships

United Way, State Farm Insurance, Optimum Cable, First Interstate Bank, Northwestern Energy & the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation have all endorsed the initiative and are participating in local GMM initiatives

Celebrating & sharing what works

Creating & fostering a statewide learning community of successful practices that work in a rural, frontier state like Montana
Communities, businesses & schools planning their GMM
Welcome

In order to ensure that Montana's public schools are meeting the goal of graduating more students ready for college and careers, Superintendent Juneau has launched Graduation Matters Montana. Whether you are a community leader, business owner, educator, student or family member, your help is needed in ensuring students in our state graduate ready for college and careers.

Students Speak
Take the Pledge
What You Can Do
Graduation Matters Across Montana
Student Advisory Board

are 7 times more likely to own their own home. Graduates are less likely to live in poverty or to be on
What students need to stay in school

• Structure
• Relevance
• Support
Since Fall 2011, over 3,000 Montana students have signed the pledge in events organized for students, by students.
A Unique Opportunity

• 2009: Directed OPI staff to identify state’s most struggling schools and strategies to dramatically improve them: they looked at achievement gaps, educational disparities and how to create sense of urgency for our American Indian youth

• 2010: USED School Improvement Grant

• Designed a unique model that forges unprecedented collaborations with:
  – Tribal Government
  – Local Schools & Local Families
  – State Agencies (Sept. of Health & Human Services, Dept. of Labor)

• The model provides agency staff leadership to school administration, teachers, students, families & school boards

• The model builds supports for mental health & wellness
2009-10 Proficiency Rates in Reading & Math

Hays Lodge Pole HS
Lodge Grass HS
Frazer HS
Plenty Coups HS
Lame Deer HS
Pryor MS
Pryor Elem

% At or Above Proficient

13.18% 14.39% 15% 15.48% 17.82% 20.24% 20.51%
Tier I Schools 2009 Graduation Rates

Graduation Rate, in Percent

- Statewide All: 81%
- Statewide AI/AN: 61%
- Lodge Grass AI/AN: 52%
- Frazer AI/AN: 62%
- Plenty Coups AI/AN: 74%
- Lame Deer AI/AN: 39%
Students: more than data points
Students: more than data points
Issues & Factors to Consider

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

1. Safety, Discipline & Engagement
   Students feel secure and inspired to learn

2. Action against Adversity
   Schools directly address their students' poverty-driven deficits

3. Close Student-Adult Relationships
   Students have positive and enduring mentor/teacher relationships

4. Shared Responsibility for Achievement
   Staff feel deep accountability and a missionary zeal for student achievement

5. Personalization of Instruction
   Individualized teaching based on diagnostic assessment and adjustable time on task

6. Professional Teaching Culture
   Continuous improvement through collaboration and job-embedded learning

7. Resource Authority
   School leaders can make mission-driven decisions regarding people, time, money & program

8. Resource Ingenuity
   Leaders are adept at securing additional resources and leveraging partner relationships

9. Agility in the Face of Turbulence
   Leaders, teachers, and systems are flexible and inventive in responding to constant unrest
The Montana Model
A Unique Approach to SIG

- State-level coordination of grant activities and funds
- Collaborative process with schools and staff to bring in state-of-the-art, research based practices & programs, resources, and expertise.
- Take in to consideration our unique population and their specific needs
Elements of Montana’s work & model

• Early & regular Community Meetings to build understanding & support

• MOUs/Implementation Agreements
  – Independent Evaluators for certified staff

• Changes at OPI to Support SIG

• Job Embedded Professional Development:
  - OPI Onsite staff - Transformational Leader, Instructional Coach, Community Liaison and School Board Coach
When schools, families and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer and like school more.
Community Meetings
Community Meetings
Year 1 Successes & Lessons Learned

• **On-site state staff**, living in or near each community, ensures persistent, rigorous implementation school improvement

• **Community Liaisons** are critical. They work with families, students, and local organizations, and are helping to break down mistrust between schools and the community

• **Home visits** have built new trust & relationships

• **Addressing health & mental health** needs is key, and when paired with school improvement, students can really thrive
Year 1 Successes & Lessons Learned

- **School Board Coaches** have been welcomed by local trustees. They are helping to revise school policies, encourage adherence to policy, and focus on school improvement.

- **Coordination and management at the SEA level** allows, surprisingly, for flexibility and adaptability to adjust strategies.

- **Key community stakeholders** are championing the work.
Year 1 Successes & Lessons Learned

- **Change is very hard** and will take more than three years
- **Engaging in a truly collaborative** process while being the ultimate “enforcer” is a difficult path
- **Communicate, communicate, communicate**: easier said than done
- **We are already planning** for sustainability

The GOOD news:

Every SIG high school saw increases in their math, reading and science scores in the 1st year
School Leadership & SIG

- OPI staff supports include: transformation leader, school board coach and teacher evaluation specialist
- OPI contracts with a Montana college to provide year-round leadership development for SIG school administration
- School administration attend a summer leadership academy and participates in monthly ITV meetings to discuss topics that are chosen either by OPI or by the leaders
School Leadership & SIG: 
*Lessons Learned*

- It took time to gain support for ongoing professional development, but it’s caught on: schools now contact one another for support.
- Topic areas must be relevant and immediately practical in their application to be valued by leadership.
- Frequent school leadership change over means that school-based teams must truly believe in the work to carry it forward when change in leadership happens.
Rising Graduation Rates

MT Graduation Rates, 2009 & 2011

- Statewide All: 81% (2009), 82% (2011)
- Statewide AI: 61% (2009), 63% (2011)
- Lodge Grass: 52% (2009), 51% (2011)
- Frazer: 62% (2009), 83% (2011)
- Plenty Coups: 74% (2009), 63% (2011)
- Lame Deer: 39% (2009), 53% (2011)
Making New Promises in Indian Country

By Sarah Yager

A Montana reservation has a higher homicide rate than some of the country’s most murderous cities. Here’s what Obama, and the state’s school superintendent, are doing to help.

State officials: Education initiative expanding to include health services

DECEMBER 07, 2011 12:15 AM - BY SUSAN OLK OF THE GAZETTE STAFF

LAME DEER — Helping students access the services they need for success takes a partnership that goes beyond school boundaries.

That’s the message two state officials are bringing to communities with the state’s lowest-performing high schools. Tuesday, the pair took their Schools of Promise and Communities of Promise tour to Lame Deer.

SCHOOLS OF PROMISE

Promising start: Lame Deer school sees progress from grant program

OCTOBER 02, 2011 12:15 AM - STORY BY SUSAN OLK PHOTOS BY JAMES WOODCOCK OF THE GAZETTE STAFF

LAME DEER — After a year of attacking the problem from all sides, administrators, teachers and state specialists are cautiously optimistic that efforts are working.

But the changes at Lame Deer High, an isolated reservation that has taken time to overcome.

Lame Deer is one of five high schools in the low proficiency. All five are on Indian reservations. In Title I schools, 40 percent or more of the student definition of low income.

Working together to help American Indian youth succeed

Big Sky Hope

The lessons to be learned from Frazer's schools
Secretary Arne Duncan on MT SIG School – Lame Deer
The future of our tribes is in the hearts and minds of our children.