American Indian Student Success Across Minnesota

A 2013 report by MinnCAN, the Minnesota Campaign for Achievement Now, recognized the success of American Indian students in 3 Minnesota schools.¹ What do these schools have in common? They use culturally-competent educational practices to help each American Indian student make progress.

1. High-Five language immersion classrooms at Anishinabe Academy in Minneapolis, MN. By blending Dakota and Ojibwe language immersion with a culturally-based curriculum, students are more prepared for kindergarten—both academically and socially.¹ Additionally, scientific evidence shows that learning a second language can improve life-long thinking skills, memory, and attention.²

2. Churchill Elementary School in Cloquet, MN. By refocusing on making data-based decisions, building positive relationships, and using feedback from parents and community members, American Indian students are achieving at high levels.¹ Schedule changes for the whole school allow all students to get the help they need. These changes are supported by an established partnership between the Cloquet School District and the Fond du Lac Band, both of whom share common goals on student success.¹

3. Detroit Lakes Middle School in Detroit Lakes, MN. Using data to determine student needs is just one part of why Detroit Lakes middle school students had the highest rate of Native achievement in the state in 2013. Collaboration and teamwork among teachers and parents makes high expectations the norm at this school. The importance of identity is also prioritized through parent mentor groups and culture-based programming, such as the gifting of an eagle feather upon graduation.¹
For American Indian people, culturally-competent education means incorporating Native history, languages, and culture so that our students can learn and take pride in who they are. It does not mean re-teaching history that glorifies or glosses over the injustices of colonization. Instead, it involves sharing the truth and building from the strengths of each student and his or her culture.

**References**