

**Comprehensive Federal Indian Education Policy Statement**

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**US Department of Education  
Office of Indian Education**

## COMPREHENSIVE FEDERAL INDIAN EDUCATION POLICY STATEMENT

### INTRODUCTION

Improving the educational achievement and academic progress of American Indians and Alaska Natives is vital to the national goal of preparing every student for responsible citizenship, continued learning, and productive employment. The Federal Government is committed to improving the academic performance, reducing the dropout rate, and meeting the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students. The United States has a unique political and legal relationship with American Indian tribal governments, and a special historic responsibility for the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives. The Federal government in accordance with the Constitution and treaties with individual tribes, generally recognizes that Indian Tribes as "dependent domestic nations" retain certain sovereign powers except as divested by Congress.

In order to further the Federal Government's commitment to improving the educational outcomes of American Indian and Alaska Native students and improving the quality and performance of schools and education programs for American Indians and Alaska Natives, a comprehensive Indian education policy is needed to: (1) improve Federal interagency cooperation, (2) promote intergovernmental collaboration and (3) help tribal governments to meet the unique educational needs of their children, including the need to preserve, revitalize, and use native languages and cultural traditions.

### AUTHORITY

Section 2(g) of Executive Order No. 13096, signed by President Clinton on August 6, 1998, directed the Interagency Task Force established by the order and charged with overseeing its implementation to, among other things, "develop a comprehensive Federal Indian education policy to support the accomplishment of the goals" of the order."

### BACKGROUND

In March, 1997, a coalition of American Indian organizations, including the National Indian Education Association (NIEA), the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the Native American Rights Fund (NARF), and the National Advisory Council on Indian Education (NACIE), presented the President with a "Proposed Comprehensive Federal Indian Education Policy Statement". The proposed policy statement was endorsed by numerous American Indian tribal governments and represented a position of Indian Country regarding the Federal Government's role in the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

On August 6, 1998, President Clinton signed Executive Order 13096, "American Indian and Alaska Native Education." One of the activities called for in the executive order was the development of a long-term Comprehensive Federal Indian Education Policy. Accordingly, the order directed the Interagency Task Force established by the order to develop a comprehensive Federal Indian education policy to support the accomplishment of the goals of the order.

The goals of the Executive Order are: (1) Improving reading and mathematics; (2) increasing high school completion and post-secondary attendance rates, (3) reducing the influence of long-standing factors that impede educational performance, such as poverty and substance abuse, (4) create strong, safe, and drug-free school environments, (5) improving science education, and (6) expanding the use of educational technology. These six goals, which when addressed comprehensively will improve both the quality of student learning as well as the quantity of Indian students completing their secondary education, are embodied within the broader framework of the following policy principles.

### **POLICY PRINCIPLES**

To the extent practicable and permitted by law, all departments, agencies, and offices of the Federal agencies will implement the following policies and adhere to the following principles regarding the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives:

#### **I. Language and culture**

The Federal agencies have a significant interest in aiding American Indian and Alaska Native tribes in the preservation of their tribal cultures. The Federal Government recognizes that the education of American Indian and Alaska Natives, both within schools and in family and community social and educational settings, is central to the development of a child's language and culture. The Federal agencies shall protect and preserve for American Indians and Alaska Natives their inherent right and freedom to believe, express, and exercise their traditional religions.

The Federal agencies shall also preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of American Indians and Alaska Natives to use, practice, and develop Native languages and shall assist American Indian and Alaska Native tribes with efforts to maintain and revitalize their Native languages. Schools educating American Indians and Alaska Natives will be assisted by the Federal agencies to meet the special educational and culturally related educational needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students. While gaining fluency in a native language is an essential objective, the Federal agencies shall also ensure that schools are held accountable for providing the opportunity for American Indian and Alaska Native students to be competent in English as well as their native language.

## **II. Funding and resources**

The Federal Government has a special historic responsibility for the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives. As an aspect of this responsibility the Federal agencies provide operational and programmatic resources for Federal and tribally operated schools and colleges, and public school districts located on or near Indian trust status lands.

American Indian and Alaska Native students should not be deprived of the equitable provision of resources to meet their educational needs. In fulfilling its special responsibility, the Federal agencies are committed to ensuring equality of educational opportunity for American Indians and Alaska Natives attending Federal, Tribal, or public schools.

The Federal agencies recognize that American Indians and Alaska Natives have special educational and culturally related academic needs that must be met so that American Indian and Alaska Native students can achieve to the same high standards as all other students. The Federal agencies shall provide resources to comprehensively meet the identified needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students.

## **III. Interagency Cooperation**

Federal agencies, departments and offices shall seek ways in which to work cooperatively together with specific tribal governments and Indian communities to enable the comprehensive identification and use of programs and resources to meet the needs of Indian families, children, and youth. The Federal agencies, in a comprehensive and coordinated interagency manner, will identify and cooperate to provide resources and programs that can respond in a comprehensive manner to the physical and mental health, social, recreational, and educational needs of American Indian and Alaska Native children and youth in local community settings.

The Federal agencies shall broadly assist American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments and American Indian and Alaska Native communities to incorporate the long-term educational development of tribal members as a fundamental component of local community social and economic development efforts. The Federal agencies shall work with tribal governments and Indian communities to develop community-based education strategies to meet long-term social and economic development goals and objectives.

## **IV. Intergovernmental Collaboration and Partnerships**

The Federal Government has a government-to-government relationship with federally-recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments. All departments, agencies, and offices shall include within their consultation policies with

tribal governments, topics that are consistent with this Comprehensive Federal Indian Education Policy.

In addition, the Federal agencies will, to the extent appropriate, foster and facilitate communications among state and tribal governments regarding the special educational and culturally related academic needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives attending state public schools. The Federal agencies will facilitate the development of regional intergovernmental collaborations and partnerships whereby State, Federal, and Tribal governments can determine how to mutually assist each other in comprehensively meeting the educational needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students in a particular region.

## **V. Research and Information**

The Federal agencies shall develop comprehensive baseline data concerning the effectiveness of Federal efforts to improve the educational achievement and progress of American Indians and Alaska Natives and encourage the creation of new knowledge regarding best practices and the impact of Native language and culture on the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

The Federal agencies shall consult with American Indian and Alaska Native tribes on the development of national research agendas and related activities affecting the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives and shall provide opportunities for American Indians and Alaska Natives to participate in the conduct of research efforts supported by the Federal Government.

The following implementation steps shall be completed in accordance with the six goals for improving educational outcomes for American Indian and Alaska Native students, outlined in Executive Order 13096.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

1. All Federal departments, agencies, and offices will consider, and, where appropriate, will incorporate this comprehensive policy on American Indian and Alaska Native education in the implementation of the Tribal Consultation Executive Order 13175.
2. The Federal Interagency Task Force shall coordinate the implementation of this comprehensive strategy. The Task Force shall consult with policy officials of the Executive Office of the President and the Office of Management and Budget as necessary, to provide suggestions to improve program implementation and provision of new and existing programs, services, and initiatives. These suggestions will be consistent with the goals of the Comprehensive Indian Education Policy, which are to: (1) Improve reading and mathematics, (2) Increase high school completion and post-secondary attendance rates, (3) Reduce the influence of long standing factors that impede educational performance, such as poverty and substance abuse, (4) Create strong, safe and drug free school environments, (5) Improve science education, and (6) Expand the use of educational technology

Federal Task Force Agencies shall also identify the resource and budgetary needs of new and existing Federal programs to better meet the comprehensive educational, health, social, and cultural needs of American Indian and Alaska Natives. The Task Force will report annually to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) each August, to outline Federal agency progress in implementing these policy principles and to propose a comprehensive interagency budget plan supportive of meeting the needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students.

3. The Department of Education, through its MOA with the Bureau of Indian Affairs affecting research and through implementing the department's data collection requirements affecting States, shall describe definitions and categories affecting the identification of American Indian and Alaska Native students that are consistent with Federal programs.
4. Federal agencies shall report data and conduct studies related to the education performance and progress of American Indian and Alaska Native students that are of high quality and provide appropriate benchmarks and measurable objectives for improving the six goals of the executive order. The Department of Education will work with other Federal agencies to determine and report data on American Indian and Alaska Natives Students.
5. The Secretary of Education shall, every two years, issue a report on "The State of American Indian and Alaska Native Education," comprehensively describing the educational status and progress of American Indians and Alaska Natives with respect to meeting the six goals outlined in Executive Order 13096, and any other student performance goals the Secretary may deem necessary.