



# NEWSLETTER

## A Quiet Crisis Indeed

IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT THE DROPOUT RATE FOR THE NATIVE AMERICAN/ALASKAN POPULATION IS MUCH HIGHER THAN THAT OF NON-NATIVE STUDENTS. ACCORDING TO *A QUIET CRISIS*, A 2003 REPORT BY THE COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS, NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS COMPRISE ONLY 1% OF THE TOTAL STUDENT POPULATION, YET THEY ACCOUNT FOR 3% OF ALL PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DROPOUTS IN THE UNITED STATES. IN THE LAST DECADE, ONLY 66% OF NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL, COMPARED WITH 75% OF THE GENERAL POPULATION.



Native Education

In the state of Alaska, the Department of Education has been compiling dropout statistics for six years. Overall, the dropout rate in Alaska in grades 7 through 12 was 5.8%—a number that seems relatively low. However, the magnitude of the problem for Native Alaskans is hidden in that number. For example, although Native Alaskans make up only 24% of the school population in Alaska, 36.6% of the dropouts come from this ethnic group. To put this number more keenly into perspective, there were 7,812 Native students in grades 7-12 who dropped out of Alaska schools during the last six years. That means if you put these students into two large high schools of 2,000 students each and four large middle schools of 953 students each, none of them would graduate—they drop out without the skills, education, and a diploma which are very often necessary to function as a contributing self-sustaining member of society.

It is precisely data such as this that has brought Alaska to the forefront in dropout prevention efforts. They are determined to make a difference in the education of the Native Alaskan youth. Educators in Alaska have developed programs that bring culture into the classroom, teach native languages, provide alternative instruction and much more. But Alaskans are looking to forge further ahead.

Presently, the Central Council of Tlingit Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska received a grant and partnered with the National Dropout Prevention Center and the Alaska Staff Development Network to assist in developing a model program for the Juneau, Sitka, and Ketchikan school districts. According to the proposal, the objectives are to develop a scientifically-based, computer-assisted “Dropout Early Warning System” that identifies which Native students are most likely to drop out and when; to facilitate use of research-based best practices infused with cultural knowledge and perspective to revise/create and implement effective dropout prevention programs for Native youth; and to increase the number of Native students who stay in school.

This newsletter makes a first attempt to grapple with the myriad issues related to providing a more successful educational experience for Native children. Articles from New Mexico to Idaho as well as Alaska stress the importance of strong relationships with these students.

For example, Marilyn Iverson describes a scenario in Idaho where a young Native American student feels isolated from his school. The efforts of an adult mentor make all the difference.

Laury Scandling describes the lessons she has learned from over 15 years of working with Alaskan Native children. The strong Native cultural values of “family” and “respect” are integrated into an alternative school, with positive results.

McClellan Hall shares with us his dialogues with Native students in an AmeriCorps program in New Mexico. Their experiences as well as their youthful perspectives on the issues related to Native education, have much to offer us.

Jerri Shepard shares a favorite resource, Native American based, that is valuable for all students, but particularly for Native students, with its respect for the cultural aspects of their lives.

Alaskan educator, Rhonda Hickok turns the issue around by the use of terminology. Is it dropout—or pushout—and why does it matter what words we use?

All in all, a good start at looking at this very important issue. We appreciate all our contributors for what they have taught us.

—Contributing to this article was  
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# 2007 NDPN Crystal Star Winners

*AdvancePath Academics, Inc. provided generous support for the 2007 NDPN Crystal Star Awards program.*

## Program Winners

**The Latin American Community Center's High School Credit Recovery Program** in Wilmington, Delaware, was established in 2004 to provide opportunities for students to receive the support they need to recover credits and master prerequisite skills to advance in



Mr. Javier Sanchez representing the Latin American Community Center's High School Credit Recovery Program

their educational careers. The goal of this program is to provide an educational setting where students served by the Latin American Community Center and attend one of the contracted schools can earn academic credits towards graduation in an environment that is sensitive to their academic and life circumstances. The program allows students in grades 9-11 who have fallen behind in one or two high school credits a chance to make up the credits.

**Communities In Schools (CIS) of Atlanta (Georgia)** began helping young people stay in school and earn their high school diplomas in 1972. Its mission is to connect community resources with schools to help young people successfully learn, stay in school, and prepare for life. During the 2006-07 school year, CIS of Atlanta provided direct support to 48 schools in the City of Atlanta and DeKalb County. Schools were selected based on criteria including poor attendance, low test scores, low graduation rates, lack of parent involvement, and/or high rates of poverty. The accomplishments of CIS over the last seven years have resulted in systemic changes, particularly in Atlanta Public Schools, that have resulted in CIS staff being placed in every high school and middle school, and 25% of all elementary schools in the system.



Mrs. Patricia Pflum representing Communities In Schools of Atlanta, Georgia

## Students With Disabilities Individual Winner

**Ms. Laura Brown** serves as the Director of North Georgia Learning Resources System (GLRS), an extension of the Georgia Department of Education, coordinating special education services and professional development for

local schools in the northeast corner of Georgia. She is a 28-year veteran educator and is currently the Project Coordinator for Georgia's graduation project designed to address the dropout issues related to students with disabilities. During her tenure at North GLRS, she has led school improvement initiatives in the areas of inclusive practices, support for students with autism, adolescent reading, and middle school mathematics.



Ms. Laura Brown

## Individual Winner

**Ms. Beverly Herrlinger** has been involved with public education in many capacities for over 30 years, most of those years dealing with at-risk students. When she moved to Kentucky, it was a very easy decision to make when she was offered an opportunity to work to help establish Jefferson County High School, the largest alternative high school in Kentucky and a former Crystal Star Award Program winner. Ms. Herrlinger has dedicated her educational career to working with at-risk students both as a classroom teacher and school administrator. Beverly has served as a consultant to numerous school districts in the areas of curriculum, professional staff development, and teacher training.



Ms. Beverly Herrlinger



National  
Dropout Prevention  
Center/Network

## NEWSLETTER

The *National Dropout Prevention Newsletter* is published quarterly by the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network. Your comments are always welcome. Please address mail to:

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# Network Notes

## 2007 NDPN Distinguished Leadership and Service Award

■ At the 19th Annual National Dropout Prevention Network Conference in Louisville, KY, the Network honored Dr. Arthur Stellar with its



highest award, the NDPN Award for Distinguished Leadership and Service Award. This award is given annually to a Network member who has provided exemplary service to the Network.

Dr. Stellar is superintendent of the Taunton Public Schools in Massachusetts where the dropout rate was 7.8% before he arrived and 4.2% after two years of his leadership. Dr. Stellar has served the Network well, having been chairman of the Board for the National Dropout Prevention Network. During his tenure on the Board, Dr. Stellar fostered the strong connection between the NDPN and the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University; he worked tirelessly to develop a more effective Board of Directors; and he has also been a significant contributor to such NDPC/N publications as this newsletter and *The Journal of At-Risk Issues*.

## An Exciting New Outreach Initiative

■ Beginning in February, the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network will commence a series of monthly one-hour webcasts—radio broadcasts on the Web—based on the 15 Effective Strategies. These professional development opportunities are scheduled for the fourth Tuesday of each month, at 3:30 p.m. Eastern Time. Schools and community partners are encouraged to tune in to these live broadcasts, which will bring to the microphone national experts in dropout prevention strategies that work!

Our first radio webcast will be Tuesday, February 26, 2008, at 3:30

p.m. Eastern time. Our guest expert will be Dr. Steve Edwards, co-author of *The Principal's Role in Dropout Prevention: Seven Key Principles*. Dr. Edwards will present the Seven Principles and will be available to answer questions that are called in on a toll-free line.

Plan to participate in this regularly scheduled opportunity for professional development for yourself and your colleagues! And if you are unable to hear all of the broadcast or have to miss it, each recording session will be archived on our Web site.

To get preliminary information about the webcasts, stay tuned to our Web site, [www.dropoutprevention.org](http://www.dropoutprevention.org), and if you are a *Dropout Prevention Update* e-newsletter subscriber, you will be notified through email.

Generous support for the webcasts has been provided by Penn Foster.

If you have suggestions for a program topic, please write us at [ndpc@clemson.edu](mailto:ndpc@clemson.edu).

## About the Authors

■ Steve Edwards has successfully implemented numerous programs to improve student performance during his 16-year tenure as a school administrator and now shares



his experience with our Network in this latest publication, *The Principal's Role in Dropout Prevention: Seven Key Principles*. Throughout his 31-year professional career, Dr. Edwards has published numerous articles on school reform, and has authored a book that outlines the implementation of the Student Assistance Center. Dr. Edwards was also an adjunct professor at the University of Connecticut's Graduate School of Education, as well as professor at the Graduate School of Educational Leadership at the George Washington University. Steve is a member of the Network Board of Directors.

Rebecca Edwards has taught at both the middle and high school levels. As an educator, she has been cited for her creative and nontraditional



approach to meeting the social, emotional, and academic needs of all children. Beyond her classroom experiences, Rebecca led an innovative alternative education program specifically designed to meet the needs of students who have met with repeated failure or incarceration.

## 20th Annual At-Risk Youth National FORUM

■ It will soon be time for the 20th Annual At-Risk Youth National FORUM, February 17-20, 2008, in Myrtle Beach, SC. This year's conference—*Bringing the Community Together: Helping All Students Become Graduates*—will be as powerful as ever!

Detailed information about the FORUM can be found on our Web site at [www.dropoutprevention.org](http://www.dropoutprevention.org).

## Director of CCSO Encourages Change

■ Gene Wilhoit, Director of the Council of Chief School Officers, gave the closing address at the 19th Annual National Dropout Prevention Network Conference in Louisville. In his remarks, he spoke of the need for major systems change at all levels of education if we are serious about addressing the dropout crisis.



Gene Wilhoit reconnected with NDPC Associate Director, Sam Drew; the two served together at the U.S. Department of Education in the early 1980s.



# Program Profile

## Making Connections: A Means to Native American School Success

by Marilyn Iverson

It is seventh hour in a high school commons area. Bright and sunny with surrounding windows, this area is abuzz with high school students. Many students, done with classes for the day, are waiting for extracurricular activities to begin and/or a ride home. Studying and relaxing appear to be the norm as students laugh and share a snack. The merriment expected of a high school setting is apparent.

Others, however, are not quite so content; Chris sits alone over to the side. A stocky Native American ninth grader, he looks downward and slumps in a chair to give the impression that he would rather be left alone; although a book is open, it appears as if little work is accomplished. An observant teacher notices Chris's occasional glance toward the student groups.

As one of the school's Native American students, Chris faces some unique challenges. High Native American dropout rates with up to 60% in some schools are well known. Disenfranchised, these students drop out of school and are ill-prepared for the job market resulting in a life of poverty.

Although they are complex, Native American issues must not be ignored. Whether the setting is assimilated or segregated, education is "leaving these students behind." Educators need to ask themselves serious questions about students such as Chris. What does education need to do to reach the Native American students? Why do many of our Native American children drop out of school? What factors tend to disenfranchise these students? What can school districts glean from Native American issues that incorporate traditional values while at the same time keep pace with accountability issues? Education systems need to delineate these

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*What can school districts glean from Native American issues that incorporate traditional values while at the same time keep pace with accountability issues?*

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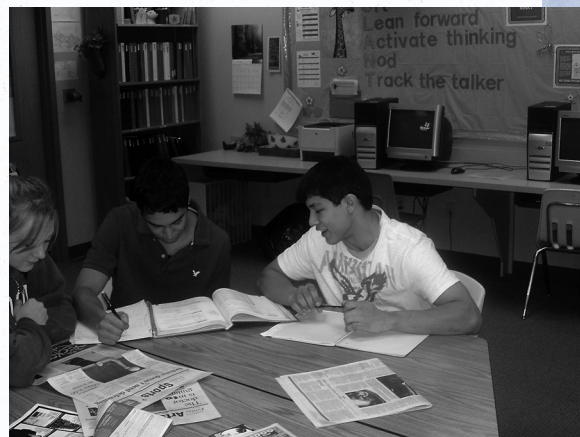
struggles so programs that address academic, social, and cultural needs can improve Native American school contentment. Making connections with adults and students is imperative to school success. Teaching skills in decision making, conflict resolution, and goal setting should supplement the content area classes. Providing opportunities to complete work at school can enhance a feeling of success. Native American students also need to participate in school activities. Extracurricular activities can offer a sense of belonging, a positive outlet for activity, and a constructive use of time. These factors can suffice to provide an important link in meeting the basic needs of connectedness necessary to care enough to succeed both academically and socially.

Meaningful adult relationships in the school can and do make a difference in Native American education. Programs such as the Partners for Academic and Social Success (PASS) at Red River High School, Grand Forks, North Dakota, match at-risk youth with an adult. Each at-risk student has weekly one-to-one contact with an adult mentor. Academic and social adult advisors provide guidance for students and help serve to circumvent problems by guiding the student toward better study skills, decision making,

and planning. These endeavors can bridge the gaps between levels of education and the new school and classroom activities; the student types of programs do positively effect change for the Native American student.

Back in the commons, the high school football coach, a mentor, relocates to a chair beside Chris. Shoulder to shoulder, he invites Chris to join the football team. "A big strapping boy like you is exactly the kind of player we need," says the coach. Chris grins from ear to ear. Already he appears excited. The coach and Chris continue the dialogue about the high school football team. Later in the week, Chris is seen in the hall, where he is now walking toward the gym with an older athletic looking student; no doubt they are on their way to football practice. This time, Chris has a smile on his face and appears to be more confident. A sense of belonging can be the first step in building a successful young person.

—Marilyn Iverson  
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# Program Profile

## Traditional Values: Family and Respect

by Laury Roberts Scandling

In the tidal wave that is high school reform, one statistic is not making much of a splash: the graduation rate of America's first peoples. At 54%, it's near the bottom. That should and can change—and in at least one district, it is.

For more than a decade, the mission of the Juneau, Alaska, school district has emphasized Native student success. Such a goal is as natural as it is imperative in a district where Alaska Natives comprise 20% of the 5,300 student population, but whose dropout rate is double that of non-Native students.

But it's been only recently, in the wake of overtly racist incidents at the city's main high school, that meaningful interventions have been deliberate. These initiatives seem to be having a positive impact as the graduation rate of Alaska Natives in 2006 was 12% greater than in 2005.

So, what were the interventions? First, it's helpful to understand key traditional values of Alaska Native culture. Such a context can allow a more accurate interpretation of some student behaviors.

During my 15-year work with Alaska Native students, they have taught me that two defining values of their culture are "family" and "respect," which in their unique manifestations can confound school expectations.

For example, students may experience extended absences in the wake of a clan member's passing or to accompany a relative to medical treatment. In some cases, the health of family members may force students to step in and prematurely shoulder grown-up responsibilities, which can lead to school losing its priority.

That respect could negatively impact student success seems counterintuitive. However, a Native student's display of *quiet respect* may be interpreted by a classroom teacher as reticence, obstinacy, or worst of all, ignorance. A Native student's



disciplined practice of quiet listening, of not interrupting, of not asserting one's needs above those of others can be misidentified as *lack of respect*. A Native student's intentional reserve can result in missed opportunities to seek and receive necessary support.

Effective interventions recognize and build upon these traditional traits.

As family is primary, there is a fundamental first step to create family at school: Make relationships matter.

In the small, alternative high school I manage (150 students, half of whom are of Alaska Native heritage), the emphasis is on being a family, on working together as people who know and care about each other.

We do this on a daily basis through small, personalized classes of 16 or fewer, a proactive advisory system which ensures that every family has a "go-to" advocate and every student understands his or her path to graduation. Our staff has worked with the regional heritage institute to design and implement a culturally relevant (not race-based) curriculum.

At the main high school, the Early Scholars program nurtures a cohort of college-aspiring Native students and recently was doubled in size. Counselors and specialists track the progress of specific students. At both schools,

a three-year federal grant has allowed the district to hire Tlingit cultural specialists to teach indigenous language and art.

When culturally responsive curriculum is combined with intentional relationships and school structures aimed at dissolving barriers, we choreograph family.

With the value of "family" operationalized, the second step is to front-load respect by providing proactive support. At Yaakoosge Daakahidi ("house of knowledge" or "place where learning happens," in the Tlingit language) we don't wait for kids to ask for help. Students who slip below 70% are required to get tutoring during "mandatory make-up." Traditional twice-yearly parent conferences become weekly team meetings with students and families in response to the outcomes of our every-Friday student status staff discussions. Our mandatory parent meeting, held the first day of school, sets the tone for the year and connects attendance to academic success.

This "respect through support" approach is practiced at the main high school as well, where any freshman with two or more first quarter Fs meets with a counselor to form a progress plan; similar interventions occur with seniors who appear to be sabotaging their graduation.

These recent interventions are realizing positive outcomes. However, the question remains: Was this gain due to a bundle of interventions or is it an anomaly, a rogue spike disingenuously amplified by a small sample? Stable and steady implementation and continued monitoring of disaggregated data over time will tell. For now, we sense we are making important progress.

—Laury Scandling, Principal  
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Alternative High School  
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# Book Review

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*Reclaiming Youth At Risk: Our Hope for the Future* (Rev. 2002). Larry K. Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg, & Steve Van Bockern Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service [ISBN 1-879639-86-6]

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**R**eclaiming Youth At Risk: Our Hope for the Future is an educational program that presents a powerful Native American framework for understanding the universal needs of youth at risk. "Native American philosophies of child management represent what is perhaps the most effective system of positive discipline ever developed." emerging from cultures where the primary purpose of life was the empowerment and education of children (p. 35).

The program is premised on the Native concept that all children are sacred, and have four basic needs: belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. The authors claim that these needs make up *The Circle of Courage*. When one need is unmet, the circle is broken, resulting in behaviors that can lead to problems for youth; and ultimately, society.

**Belonging** is defined as the need all individuals have to be a part of something greater. Youth will go to far-reaching lengths to meet this need. When positive options are unavailable, almost any group will suffice, including unhealthy groups, such as some violent and destructive gangs. **Mastery** is the need one has to have to feel a sense of accomplishment. This can be translated into anything from solving a geometry problem to navigating a wilderness trail. **Independence** involves obtaining autonomy; being able to work on one's own. It is particularly important for youth at risk to be able to claim responsibility for their behaviors and become independent problem solvers. **Generosity** is defined as the need to be of service to others. This can be demonstrated by community service-learning or civic engagement.

*The Circle of Courage* offers rich opportunities for youth at risk to be engaged with their community in a healthy way. The model is so simple, and yet, so integral to the success of youth, who could otherwise be disengaged from the world around them.

—Dr. Jerri Shepard, Associate Professor, School of Education,  
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## Also Recommended:

*Next Steps, Research and Practice to Advance Indian Education*, (1999), edited by Karen Gayton Swisher and John W. Tippetconic III, ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools. This collection of writings by recognized Native scholars provides valuable insight into the important issues surrounding the American Indian student and school.

## Resources

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### National Indian Youth Leadership Project

NIYLP's mission is to nurture the potential of Native youth to be contributors to a more positive world through adventure-based learning, service to nature, community, and family. Email at [info@niylp.org](mailto:info@niylp.org).  
<http://niylp.org/node>

### American Indian Education

This Web site, located at Northern Arizona University, is designed to provide information, including links to related Web sites, on the history and current thinking about American Indian education.  
<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/AIE/index.html>

### Native American Dropout Prevention Initiative

The Arizona Department of Education was awarded a three-year, \$1.8 million grant for the Native American Dropout Prevention Initiative (NADPI). The grant initiative will result in a national dropout prevention model addressing the chronically low high school completion rates among American Indian students statewide.  
<http://www.ade.state.az.us/asd/NADPI/>

### National Indian Education Association

The National Indian Education Association is the oldest and largest Indian education organization representing American Indian, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiian educators and students. The mission of the National Indian Education Association is to support traditional Native cultures and values; to enable Native learners to become contributing members of their communities; to promote Native control of educational institutions; and to improve educational opportunities and resources for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians throughout the United States.  
<http://www.niea.org>

## Events

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Feb. 17-20, 2008 Myrtle Beach, SC  
20th Annual At-Risk Youth National FORUM, *Bringing the Community Together: Helping All Students Become Graduates*  
[www.dropoutprevention.org](http://www.dropoutprevention.org)

April 9-12, 2008 Minneapolis, MN  
19th Annual National Service-Learning Conference, *Youth for a Change*  
[www.nylc.org](http://www.nylc.org)



# Native Youth Speak Out

by McClellan Hall

The subject of school failure or dropping out for Native American youth is complex. The term dropout problem is an oversimplification and avoids a closer examination of the factors that contribute to this problem, from the perspective of the student, their family situation, the community, and the school.

To find some answers, I interviewed a small group of Native American youth who recently graduated from a large public school with a majority Native student population. All are AmeriCorps members with the National Indian Youth Leadership Project (NIYLP). In our conversations about their school experience, we talked about the issues young Native Americans face in a typical school system.

## School Factors

All agreed that the further they got into their high school years, the more pressure they felt to “fit in,” which seemed to have a mostly negative connotation. They agreed that the majority of Native students would describe the high school experience as negative. They described a self-imposed segregation, where the Native kids hang together because they don’t feel that they belong. There is also the added dimension of the mixed-blood youth, who are Native, but mixed with Hispanic, Anglo, or Black. There seems to be a “pecking order,” with the kids who live in town putting down their peers who live on the reservation and treating them as “backwards,” or “from the rez.” Indifference toward the Native students and their success, or lack of, was also mentioned as a factor, as was Native youth holding each other back from being successful.

All agreed that there were some good teachers and some great teachers. They felt that many Native students don’t get the help they need to set or achieve goals. They all knew students who couldn’t get their grades up, or keep them up, and didn’t know how to get help and were afraid to ask.

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*The dropout rate in many Native communities approaches 70%. The young people can tell us what the problems are. We need to listen.*

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## Family Factors

Family pressures were cited as a contributing factor to school failure with alcohol-related problems impacting many young Natives at the family level. Some young people leave school or get behind because they have to take on the role of parent or caregiver to younger siblings or elders. Students felt that some parents have unrealistic expectations and expect the schools to do many things parents should be doing. The students interviewed felt that, in many cases, parents are not involved enough in their children’s school life, for a number of reasons, such as the parents’ own negative experience with schools or not feeling welcome in the school. There was a clear feeling that many parents set a negative example for their children although there were also many great parents mentioned, who take an active role in the lives of their children and could be role models for other parents.

## Solutions

- **Need for Role Models.** Most said they only see Native teachers in Native language or culture classes, never in core academic subjects. The Native people they generally see in schools are bus drivers, custodians, or secretaries. There were very few, if any, Native administrators or principals. Obviously, this has implications for role-modeling, and students felt that more Native youth would aspire to higher positions if they saw Native people in these roles in the schools. The young people recommended more emphasis on recruiting, training, and hiring more Native teachers.

- **Cultural Understanding.** They felt that non-Native teachers need to be more respectful and take the time to learn more about the culture and home life of the Native students. One youth pointed out how some teachers make a point of trying to embarrass Native students who are quiet or not prepared. They agreed that student-to-teacher ratios are too high, smaller classes are needed where students can get more one-on-one attention, and more counselors are needed.

- **Improve Teacher Quality.** The students felt there was a need to screen prospective teachers more carefully, although they agreed that it may be more difficult to attract good teachers to the reservation areas because of lower pay and difficulty in securing housing. Many of their teachers were hired and placed in classes where they didn’t really know the subject area, and many had substitute teachers who stayed extended periods of time because a qualified teacher couldn’t be hired.

At a recent national conference, I overheard a conversation about current research, which suggested that the key to getting more kids to stay in school was making school more interesting so kids would want to come to school. The dropout rate in many Native communities approaches 70%. The young people can tell us what the problems are. We need to listen.

—Mac Hall (Cherokee ancestry) is Founder/Executive Director, National Indian Youth Leadership Project in Gallup, New Mexico. [machall@niylp.org](mailto:machall@niylp.org)



# Viewpoint

Word choice by educators and society may form negative attitudes and assumptions whether we want to believe it or not. For example, students who do not complete their 12 years of school are labeled as “dropouts.” Do young adults who leave school prior to graduation truly drop out of their peer groups, or experience a sense of failure for not meeting expectations, as the term suggests? Alaska Native students have been stigmatized by this judgment-laden label for too long. The term “dropout” allows the formation of assumptions by educators and community members alike and ultimately disregards the student as a contributing member of society. Often, they are labeled lazy, uncaring, and in possession of limited academic propensity. Are students really dropping out of our schools or are schools pushing them out?

We need to consider the rigidity of the system in which we operate. When looking at students whom we have labeled as “dropouts” but who may actually be “pushouts,” we must take ownership of our actions and our systems that have failed to meet the needs of these students. One size, one method, one system does not fit all!

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Although dropout prevention strategies are becoming more popular as school systems continue to hone their skills to work within the guidelines of NCLB, to what depth do these strategies address *why* students are being pushed out of our schools? Unless students find their time and energy valued and meaningful, they will not remain engaged within the school day or prepare for the next. Strategies that address the curriculum, instruction, and school environment are key to keeping students engaged and making their educational experience a lifelong ambition. However, we must be addressing the whole person by tuning into each student’s social and emotional needs as well.

School districts in Alaska have a higher “pushout” rate of Alaska Native students than other ethnic groups. To

combat this, educators in the state of Alaska have not only developed content standards and performance standards, but they have gone further by developing and adopting cultural standards. These cultural standards provide guidance for schools and communities to examine the extent to which they address the whole student, specifically the cultural well-being of a student. Perhaps these standards can serve as a tool for other school systems to utilize when developing or implementing strategies to prevent students from being pushed out. These standards affirm the identity of our Alaska Native students by providing guidance for how the curriculum, instructional strategies, and school environment can work together to provide a more meaningful educational experience for all of our youth.

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The purpose of Viewpoint is to allow professionals to express their opinions about issues related to dropout prevention. The opinions expressed by these authors do not necessarily reflect those of the National Dropout Prevention Network.

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 National Dropout Prevention Center/Network



## NEWSLETTER

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