

Dropout Prevention Program  
HB 137 Representative Carol Juneau

Testimony Bud Williams, Deputy, Office of Public Instruction  
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*Talk about what I've discussed  
on several - 48% off several 52%*

Reducing the dropout rate and increasing the graduation rate for American Indian students in Montana is not only a constitutional obligation but a moral one. A goal for our Montana educational system would be to have a system set up where students can experience success no matter where their school is located. The issues facing American Indian education are complex and there are no easy answers or solutions. It will require ongoing collaborative efforts on the part of all stakeholders: teachers, parents, board members, tribal councils, OPI, and other support systems.

Currently, Montana has a federal dropout grant that serves a limited number of schools/students. Money and resources are needed not only in these schools but in others to assist them in efforts to reduce the dropout rates for American Indian students. This model program is in the last year of funding. Reducing dropout rates for students in Montana is a state obligation. Federal funds won't always be there to support our efforts.

Breaking down the culture of low expectations that has existed for American Indian students will take a concerted effort and time. The issues are complex and historical in nature.

The National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPC/N) identified 15 strategies that can have a positive impact on the dropout rate:

1. systemic renewal that focuses on school policies, practices, and organizational structures;
2. school-community collaboration that sustains a caring supportive atmosphere for students;
3. safe learning environments that make schools a positive experience for students;
4. family engagement that gives children the support they need outside of school;
5. early childhood education that provides children with a solid beginning to their school experience;
6. early literacy development that gives children the necessary foundation for effective learning in all other subjects;
7. mentoring/tutoring that addresses specific academic needs;
8. service-learning that connects school with the outside world;
9. alternative schooling that provides at-risk students with a variety of options that can lead to graduation;
10. after-school opportunities that enhance learning and eliminate information loss;
11. professional development that assists teachers who work with at-risk students;
12. active learning that involves students in the learning process;
13. educational technology that delivers instruction in creative and innovative ways;
14. individualized instruction that allows teachers to consider individual differences in deciding teaching methods and motivational strategies; and career and technical