

Aaniiih Nakoda College HiSET Report - June 2024

1. This past year we have made a few changes while working to improve our HiSET program. What we have continued to work with, and we know works, is the use of our Aztec Online platform. With this tool, our students can study from a distance, and we are able to keep track of their progress through the admin portal in Aztec. Taking into consideration the fact that a significant percentage of our student population come from outlying towns 45+ minutes away, it is convenient that they do not need to drive to our office every time they wish to study. The only negative facet of Aztec is the lack of internet on the Fort Belknap Reservation. While the agency area and college have easy to access internet, the more rural you get, the less likely that is to be the case. Due to this, we also offer access to textbooks and workbooks that students can sign out and usually bring back when they are done. This year, the weather was not as bad as it had been in years prior, but we still had one month, being January, in which testing was cancelled. We also had one month, February, where our test proctor forgot about three tests in Havre. Despite these minor issues, we have had at least one student test every month since July, averaging at around 4 per month, which is great considering our rural location.

We have also raised the requirement for what counts as a “passing” grade when requiring our students to take a practice test before taking an official HiSET test. It used to be a 60%, but now we require at least a 70 in order to be sure that every student is ready to take their tests, thus saving us money on students who need to re-test. Due to this, we have significantly reduced the number of students who fail tests.

Our biggest issue this year has been related to our math tutoring capabilities. While we have the Aztec system, and plenty of textbooks, we are unable to afford or find a consistent and capable Math tutor, which has left a number of our students stuck on their final test. We have been working with faculty at the college as well as some community volunteers and it has managed to get a few students through their battery of tests, however, they are not stable or permanent work arounds. We have also struggled with transportation, as was the case with last year, particularly when the weather is bad. When the winter sets in and the weather gets bad, sometimes we will go an entire week without seeing a single student, since they are simply unable to make it in due to bad driving conditions or a lack of transportation options.

Within the community, we have increased the work we have done with the local High schools, and also created partnerships with the tribal 477 office that also aids students in getting their HiSET and other important life goals like driver’s license and even college classes. We are coordinating with them to make sure that the students that are enrolled in both programs are committed to their work, by signing specific time sheets with the number of hours that they have spent in Aztec listed. By doing this, we can make sure that students are making the most out of their time in both programs.

Overall, we have learned that students who want to pass, will work hard for it. At first, we were wanting to hold every student’s hand through every issue, but that does not properly prepare them

for these tests. We provide access to study supplies, tools and materials and will even provide tutoring for inquiring students; however, the students must want to try and put in the work that is needed to pass these tests.

2. For our HiSET students, the majority have a desire to matriculate further into college or at the very least further their education. There seems to be an even split as to if they want to go into a traditional college track or do industrial trades and trade schools. For our most recent HiSET graduate, he aspires to go to college, and is considering doing summer classes this year at Aaniiih Nakoda College. We keep track of this data and keep in touch with the graduates from our program. This is made easier since the students who have graduated and went to college, chose to go to college at our location.
3. Yes, our HiSET students self-report on their goals with their application to our program. It seems to be an even split for students who are wanting to pursue their education, and those who want to go into the workforce. Since our college offers multiple degrees and certificates in various trades, that is often where the interest of our students is directed.
4. Yes, our HiSet efforts are successful, in that we have quite a few students that are working hard and pushing to finish their full battery of tests. The difficulties we face are mainly due to either a lack of sufficient help with math and/or or inability to hire anyone who could aid us in tutoring. In fact, my own salary has had to be supplemented by other grants at the college, since the HiSET grant itself no longer has enough funds to continue with those payments. Despite this, we have students coming from all around the area to work on their HiSET and towards being self-sufficient in their own lives. The community knows who we are, what we do, and how we work; to the extent that we get multiple calls every day regarding new students who are interested in enrolling in our program. The difficulties lie in pushing these students to the point that they feel confident enough to finish their tests.
5. We absolutely support further funding of HiSET testing and tutoring. Without services like these, many of these students would not know where to go, or who to talk to in order to begin their steps on the road to bettering themselves. Particularly in rural communities like Harlem and Fort Belknap, there are numerous hurdles both monetary and geographic that prevent students from being able to take the HiSET. Every student I talk with for the first time does not know anything about the HiSET, formerly GED, as it is not widely advertised outside of our testing preparation services. While the resources are out there on the internet, many of our students are not tech savvy or do not have access to computers or internet. Without services like ours, we would be condemning an entire demographic of rural Montanans who were unable to finish high school to a life without education.
6. Our funds are mainly used to purchase supplies and licenses for software in order to aid out students in their efforts in studying. Firstly, we purchase our Aztec software which allows our students to study without the need to drive the 45+ minute drive to our location. We also purchase gas cards to help them afford their trips down to the testing site when they are ready to take an official test. Without these, some of our students would not be able to afford the trips to the test site as easily.

We purchase vouchers which we use to pay for the tests themselves; and we purchase test preparation textbooks for students who are either not computer literate or prefer to work with a more physical medium. A full budget will be attached with this report as well.

7. We have served 43 students this last year, served being the number of students who are enrolled in our Aztec program and have either come in for tutoring or used the Aztec program since July 1st.

We have had 41 tests completed by 17 different students since July as well, the specific numbers of tests that have been signed up for by students is as follows:

Science: 10 total (7 passed, one awaiting results)

Social Studies: 9 total (9 passed)

Math: 6 total (3 passed)

Reading: 10 total (10 passed)

Writing: 6 total (6 passed)

Grand total: 41 tests were taken, with 35 passed and 1 is awaiting results.

We had six tests taken on the 16th of May, and of these six, two of them have successfully completed their whole HiSET battery, which make our total completes for the year three in total.

8. In this past award cycle, we have had 34 students pass their HiSET tests, with a possible additional 2 that are still awaiting results. We have also had three students pass the whole battery of tests, one of which is 17 years old, and is planning to take summer courses and at least one college course this coming fall 2024.
9. We are anticipating having a similar number of students as this past year, with hopefully a few more as well. Since we partnered with the 477 tribal offices, we have gotten 4 new applications for new students, with more on the way. With these additional students, we will certainly improve our numbers for students using our program, and mostly likely improve our testing numbers as well. As more students graduate, we know they will tell others in the community that they can utilize our services as well.
10. The mission of Aaniiih Nakoda College HiSET Program is to provide quality academic HiSET preparation for the residents of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation and surrounding communities who do not have their high school diplomas. The college promotes individual and community development by maintaining and revitalizing the indigenous lifeways of the Aaniinen and Nakoda Tribes and by preparing students to succeed in an American technological society.
Our goals are:
 - ❖ To Prepare students for success on their HiSET test
 - ❖ To provide free HiSET preparation by offering individual tutoring and/or online resources through the Aztec software we invested in

- ❖ Increase student responsibility, giving students the ability to take control of their own learning.
- ❖ Help create a clear college/career pathway post HiSET

Of the goals stated above, we have stayed true to each one in this past reporting period. We work to provide successful HiSET results and use our budget to ensure free HiSET testing for students who reach our standard for practice testing on our Aztec Software. We provide work plans and regular consultation for students of all ages to take the reins on their own education and succeed. Out of the 43 students who we served this past period, many of them aim to apply for admission to Aaniiih Nakoda College once they graduate with their HiSET. This statistic falls in line with our biggest advantage as a HiSET program; that we give these students an opportunity to mingle and work with college students, making this goal seem like an achievable one.

11. If at any point we feel that we are not appropriately meeting these goals, then we will push harder to recruit for our HiSET program. What we do here works, and you can see it in the number of tests that are passed every month from this program. Our only real concern is with regards to math and math tutors; however we are lucky to have had faculty at the college step up and working with a number of our HiSET math students. In this past year, we have worked and created new policies to meet and surpass our goals, such as:

- Requiring a 70% or higher on Aztec practice tests before using a voucher to pay for testing (previous number was 60%)
- Requiring at least two in-person practice essays for the writing portion before registering for the writing test.
- When enrolling in the program, the student must talk with the HiSet Coordinator twice, once when receiving the application, and once when turning it back in to me in person. This enables us to discuss the expectations and create a plan on the order in which the student will take the battery of tests.
- We only enroll students in a maximum of 1 online subject class at one time, so that the students can focus down one subject at a time and prevent any distractions.
- We raised our age requirement to 17 to be allowed to test, since the amount of work needed to get testing available for 16 years old is quite strenuous *this is waived if the parent or guardian is willing to do this work for us

Thanks to these changes, we have noticed an increase of students who come in more frequently, and work harder on the single subjects that they are enrolled in for their practice tests. We have also worked to become more knowledgeable with the Aztec system, in order to jump in and help with their material or look up the specific results to find what sections they students need to work on more specifically. We are willing to do the work to make sure that these students can pass their HiSET, and so that we can effectively achieve these goals.