

(Sept 2004)

Report to the South Dakota Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights
Native Americans and Education in South Dakota

I. Introduction and Methodology

A high school diploma or college degree creates limitless possibilities for future generations, and is one of the few factors which helps to level the oft-publicized and ever-widening income gap in the United States. The optimism and faith in the capability of the public schools is not unfounded, however there is considerable indication that many minorities are slipping through the cracks of what has become an increasingly complex and bureaucratic system.

South Dakota has significant minority populations (especially Native Americans) represented in public schools. These groups have long struggled to achieve at the same level as their white counterparts, or just to stay in school. Statistics referencing Native Americans in the public school system are particularly disturbing; few complete high school, and an even smaller percentage are able to pursue higher education.

This study employed several methods to survey the programs, services, and quality of public education currently offered to Native American students in South Dakota. Telephone interviews with superintendents, longitudinal data, and evaluations of textbooks and State Department of Education material were combined to create an overview of the status of public education with regards to Native American students.

Employment and district longitudinal data for the 2003 school year are drawn from the South Dakota Department of Education. Report cards for individual school districts under the No Child Left Behind Act are also referenced; as well as newspaper articles, press releases and other studies. Throughout the report, schools are ranked according to the percentage of Native American students enrolled, in descending order.

To review the resources and support provided to these students, a total of twenty-five school districts were selected based on three criteria: any district whose student body is more than 25% Native American or has over 500 Native American students, and reservation border town districts with a school age population of greater than 3,400. The selection criteria allowed for the inclusion of border towns which may have experienced prior racial tension. Overall, 83% of Native American students in South Dakota are enrolled in the public school system, and this study includes more than 80% of that population.

Following a 1999 hearing of the South Dakota Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights held in Rapid City, Commission Chairperson Dr. Mary Frances Berry requested information on the inclusion of Native American history in South Dakota school curriculum.¹ Concerns about biased instruction or educational materials used in South Dakota public schools led to the analysis of state K-12 history standards as well as two different U.S. history texts utilized by districts in this study.

¹ Letter from Ray Christensen, Secretary, Department of Education and Cultural Affairs, to John F. Dulles, Regional Director, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Feb. 2, 2000.

South Dakota boards of education are granted considerable freedom in determining curriculum; the state does not assign textbooks nor does it provide a list of approved materials. Rather, the texts must meet requirements outlined in the State History Standards (see appendix A).² The majority of elementary schools in South Dakota do not use official U.S. history texts, and instead rely on a selection of library books or other support materials. The State Department of Education does, however, give fourth grade teachers an entire U.S. history curriculum, which is evaluated in a subsequent section of this report.

The other text selected for evaluation was *The Americans*³, a middle or high school U.S. history book used by several schools in this study, as well as additional districts statewide. The districts contacted all used books of recent publication, although copyright dates varied. The text analyzed in this report was published in 1994. The books are assessed according to Nancy Keenan's guide, *Evaluating Native American Texts and Other Materials in the Classroom*.⁴ A copy of an evaluation form used to assess language, illustrations, and content is included in appendix B.

II. Background

There are 187 different school districts in South Dakota (see map, appendix C), however Native American students tend to be concentrated in public schools either on a reservation or in surrounding border town areas.⁵ All but two of the school districts in this study are classified as high need LEAs (Local Education Agency), and receive Title I impact funding.⁶ Eighteen of these school districts also benefit from Title VII (formerly Title IX) Indian education funds.

Despite the range of federal monies funneled to various school districts, the average salary for a certified K-12 educator in South Dakota, excluding gifted, deaf and blind, or special education teachers, is only \$32,302. For a corresponding non-certified teacher, that average salary is \$28,826, (however the number of non-certified teachers in South Dakota public schools is insignificant.)⁷ For at least the past decade, South Dakota has consistently ranked 50th and 51st in terms of average salary for elementary and secondary school teachers.⁸ The average salary for a teacher in the United States is now \$45,891, and South Dakota once again ranks last.⁹

There has been significant attention aimed at improving the provision of education to Native American students in South Dakota. The Indian Education Summit took place on April 19-20,

² Office of Curriculum, Technology and Assessment, Department of Education, South Dakota. <http://www.sd.us/deca/OTCA/contentstandards/social/standards/912stand/htm>.

³ *The Americans*, published in 1994 by McDougal Littell, a division of Houghton Mifflin, Inc.

⁴ Nancy Keenan, *Evaluating Native American Texts and Other Materials in the Classroom*, Montana Office of Public Instruction, Helena: 1997.

⁵ 2002-2003 South Dakota School Districts. <http://www.state.sd.us/deca>.

⁶ High Need LEAs—South Dakota. June 7, 2002. <http://www.state.sd.us/deca>.

⁷ 2002-2003 Staff Information—Instructional Positions, Office of Curriculum, Technology, and Assessment. <http://www.state.sd.us/deca/>.

⁸ Ralph J. Brown, 'An Analysis of South Dakota Elementary and Secondary Teacher's Salaries,' Business Research Bureau, School of Business, University of South Dakota: 1999.

⁹ National Education Association, 'Average Teacher Salaries'. <http://www.nea.org.edstats>.

2004, during which Governor Mike Rounds asked delegates to “look beyond cultural differences to find a common bond that will improve education for both Indian and non-Indian students.”¹⁰

Secretary of Education Rick Melmer also spoke at this first annual state-organized summit, whose attendees promoted the hiring and retention of Native American teachers to work at public schools, and exchange programs of students and teachers from state universities and tribal colleges. Tribal representatives spoke to the need for accurate instruction in history and social studies, an issue which “has been a major problem for years.”¹¹

The State Indian Education Advisory Council, composed of representatives from higher education, teachers, and other professionals, also convenes on a regular basis to discuss issues in Indian education.

The Advisory Council makes recommendations directly to the governor, however at this time the newly-founded organization is still working on defining its goals and duties.¹²

One of the qualifications for teacher certification in South Dakota is participation in a mandatory three hour class on ‘Human Relations and Indian Studies.’¹³ In addition to the council, the state Office of Indian Education was also recently established and is currently in the position of searching for a director.

Tribal education leaders have also testified (April 2004) before the State Tribal Relations Committee of the state legislature about the need for a joint effort by the state and tribes to improve Indian education.¹⁴ Representatives voiced concerns about the possible impact of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, which they believe effectively punishes schools by withholding funds for poor attendance and performance on state achievement tests. The act does not account for the poverty prevalent on reservations or in rural areas, which leads many students to be late for classes, or to miss school altogether. “If they can’t get to school they get a tardy; they get too many tardies and then they get an absent and soon they’re in court,” commented Art Zimiga, Director of Indian Education for the Rapid City School District. Superintendents also reported that the high stakes testing has eroded student self-esteem and positive attitudes, and has profoundly affected the confidence of students who may have had low morale to begin with.

Native American students face many of the same problems as their non-Indian classmates—poor attendance, lack of motivation and parental involvement. However, the economic and social environment in which Native American students are raised creates formidable barriers to both academic and psychological development. Hopelessness, depression, as well as sometimes mental and physical abuse at home, contribute to an extremely high suicide rate among Native

¹⁰ David Melmer, “South Dakota Hosts Tribal Education Summit,” *Indian Country Today*, Apr. 27, 2004.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Dan Prue, Office of Finance and Management, Department of Education and Cultural Affairs, S.D. Personal interview with Johann Lenkner, research intern, Rocky Mountain Regional Office, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (hereafter cited as Personal Interview), Aug. 5, 2004.

¹³ Office of Accreditation & Teacher Quality. <http://www.state.sd.us/deca/OPA/Teacher%20Certification/>.

¹⁴ David Melmer, “South Dakota Hosts Tribal Education Summit,” *Indian Country Today*, Apr. 27, 2004.

American students. It is the second leading cause of death for Native Americans 15 to 24 years old and the overall suicide rate is 190% of the U.S. average.¹⁵

While rates continue to climb, suicide is not a new problem: from 1985 to 1996 almost five hundred Native American children committed suicide, and death rates for Aberdeen were more than five times greater than the national rate.¹⁶ Native American students also have a disproportionately high dropout rate, and even reservation schools find that only 35% to 40% of their students will graduate.¹⁷

The Crow Creek Schools, Lower Brule School District, reported 49 suicide attempts within a span of two months, part of a painful epidemic that many superintendents referred to during the interviews.¹⁸ The frequency of the attempts is unprecedented, leading Mr. Zimiga to explain what he referred to as 'copycat suicides.' "For whatever reason our students are getting the message that there are no other options," and this causes them to see suicide as a way out, as preferable to the circumstances in which they currently find themselves.¹⁹

While districts are still grappling with the most effective means of addressing the epidemic, the passage of the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act may give schools and parents an additional weapon. The legislation, according to Senator Tom Daschle, includes "grant funding to education systems, tribal organizations, juvenile justice systems, local governments, and private nonprofit entities engaged in activities focused on mental health outreach and treatment and suicide prevention and intervention."²⁰

Francis Harris, Superintendent of the Smee School District in Wakpala, described the funeral ceremony taking place at the school at the time of the interview, the funeral of a student who had recently committed suicide.²¹ In October 2004, the school planned to hold a suicide prevention workshop moderated by Colorado State University's Tri-Ethnic Center.²²

Discrimination

There is substantial evidence that in border town districts where few Native American students are enrolled, they suffer the brunt of hostilities and discrimination. The Faith School District is located three miles from the Cheyenne River Reservation, but only seven of its three hundred students are Native American.²³ There have been several complaints against the district which are being investigated by the Office for Civil Rights (U.S. Department of Education), and many more have been filed protesting the treatment of Indian students by staff and other classmates.

¹⁵ Broken Promises: Evaluating the Native American Healthcare System, July 2, 2004. A draft report of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Steve Young, "Poverty, Despair Cloud Future of Indian Children," *Argus Leader*, Dec. 16, 2001.

¹⁸ Tom Daschle, Senate Democratic Leader, Floor Statement, June 3, 2004.

¹⁹ Art Zimiga, Indian education coordinator, Rapid City School District (SD). Personal Interview, July 12, 2004.

²⁰ "Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act Passed," *Lakota Journal*, July 16, 2004.

²¹ Francis Harris, superintendent, Smee School District (SD). Personal Interview, July 19 2004.

²² Ibid.

²³ Christine Rose, Students and Teachers Against Racism, "Is South Dakota Burning?", 2002. <http://www.racismagainstindians.org/Education/Kalli.htm>.

The ACLU filed two lawsuits in 2002 against the Wagner School Board for discrimination against Native Americans, and for improper teacher conduct in Wagner classrooms.²⁴ The former suit was brought “on behalf of seventeen Native American students who were terrorized when school officials and law enforcement officers allegedly brought a German Shepard dog in to conduct a suspicionless drug sweep of all K-12 classrooms.”²⁵

ACLU representatives indicated that while the use of drug sniffing dogs in classrooms was not unheard of, it was, to their knowledge, the first time they had been used in elementary school classes. The dog was brought through classrooms on two different days, while children were told to keep their hands on their desks and to “avoid making any sudden movements.” In some classrooms children were even told that this would cause the dog to attack. On at least one occasion the dog chased kindergarteners around the room after escaping its leash.²⁶

The second lawsuit was filed against the Wagner School District by Julie Wedell and two other plaintiffs alleging lack of representation on the school board. Although Native Americans make up 40% of the district’s population, none were on the district board as of May 2002. Electing board members from the entire district rather than smaller areas within it “[diluted] the Indian vote.”²⁷ According to Tribal Chairwoman Madonna Archambeau, the perceived bias against Indians at Wagner leads many people to choose the Marty Indian School instead, a boarding institution managed by the Yankton Sioux.²⁸

Both lawsuits have been resolved. Wagner changed its voting procedure to ensure greater representation for Native Americans—if, for example, three seats on the school board were open, a citizen could cast all three votes for the same person. The changes seem to have produced results: this year there are two Native Americans on the school board. Drug sniffing dogs have not reappeared in any Wagner classrooms.

Bennett County School District also reported racial tension and conflict between parents, students, teachers, and community members.²⁹ Sandwiched between the Rosebud and Pine Ridge reservations, it is understandable that these schools would be a focus of conflict, given the range of different people who interact there on a daily basis. Domestic and family issues and a lack of parental involvement continue to trouble the district, although there are mothers’ groups and other parent organizations which are working to remedy these problems.

III. Longitudinal Data

While enrollment is declining, there are close to 13,000 Native American students in South Dakota public schools (see appendix D).³⁰ The number and percentage of Native American

²⁴ American Civil Liberties Union, “South Dakota School Officials Terrorized Kindergarten Classes with Drug Sniffing Dogs,” press release, July 25, 2002.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ CNN, “Suit: School Board Elections Unfair to Indians.” <http://www.cnn.com/2002/fyiteachers.ednews/04/25/indian.school.board.ap/>. Apr. 25, 2002.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Mike Stroup, superintendent, Bennett County School District. Personal Interview, Aug. 18, 2004.

³⁰ Source: <http://www.state.sd.us/deca/finance/data/stats/fallenroll/2003/2003%20pub%20EC12%20by%20ETH>.

students in each school district surveyed are presented in table 1 below. The poverty level of each school is in the adjacent column, and with a few exceptions, is a direct function of the percentage of Native American students enrolled. Average ACT scores seem to be inversely related to the percentage of Indian students, and are steady or rising. This has significant consequences for the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act: while many South Dakota school districts will feel the influence of this legislation, clearly Native American students will be disproportionately affected.

Table 1
Poverty Level/District

School District	% Native* Students	No. Native* Students	Poverty	Avg. ACT**	Dropout Rate ^{31**} (grades 7-12)
-Smee	99.59%	230	54.55%		13%, falling
-Shannon	98.90%	986	35.85%		2.3%, falling
-Todd County	94.89%	1,986	40.29%	18.2, rising	6.4%, falling
-McLaughlin	89.13%	410	37.87%	17.8, steady	3.3%, falling
-Eagle Butte	86.42%	280	29.72%	17.3, steady	4.8%, falling
-Dupree	76.28%	195	41.37%	17.6, rising	3.8%, falling
White River	74.68%	289	27.36%	22.3, rising	2.6%, falling
Andes Central	64.74%	246	34.22%		3.2%, falling
*Bennett County	57.20%	298	34.18%	18.4, falling	6.5%, steady
-Sisseton	52.07%	617	22.28%	20.2, steady	1.8%, falling
Timber Lake	50.16%	153	26.77%	21.2, steady	1.9%, rising
*Wagner	46.66%	342	26.67%	20.9, steady	1.8%, falling
*Wood	44.68%	21	21.79%		0.0%, steady
*Kadoka	41.44%	138	30.85%	19.4, steady	1.6%, steady
*Waubay	40.09%	91	22.29%	21.1, steady	1.7% falling
*Bonesteel-Fairfax	31.48%	51	27.36%	22.7, rising	0.0%, falling
*Chamberlain	28.63%	260	19.24%	20.1, steady	0.5%, falling
*Lyman	27.53%	106	29.07%	22.1, steady	0.0%, falling
*Flandreau	30.52%	206	12.68%	23.0, rising	1.0%, falling
*Mobridge	25.69%	148	22.04%	20.4, steady	1.9%, falling
*Rapid City	16.05%	2,087	12.39%	22.3, falling	2.0%, steady
*Aberdeen	7.58%	284	7.68%	20.7, steady	1.7%, falling
*Sioux Falls	3.77%	740	7.42%	22.7, steady	2.6%, falling
*Yankton	3.17%	98	6.13%	22.4, rising	1.9%, falling
*Watertown	3.31%	127	7.49%	21.6, rising	2.1 %, steady
TOTAL (average)	30.7%	10,495	25.50%	20.59	2.78%

*Denotes Border Town -District Located on a Reservation ~7 districts did not report a dropout rate for 2003, and 37 did not report ACT scores; they are not included in the South Dakota average.

pdf and <http://www.state.sd.us/deca/finance/data/03digest/longitudinal.data.pdf>.

³¹ Percentages in this table are 2003 dropout rates. The direction of the rates (up or down) are determined by the rates from the previous four years.

Source: *<http://www.state.sd.us/deca/finance/data/stats/fallenroll/2003/2003%20pub%20EC12%20by%20ETH.pdf>.
 **<http://www.state.sd.us/deca/finance/data/03digest/longitudinal.data.pdf>.

While dropout levels fluctuate, they directly correspond to the percentage of Native American students enrolled, and are considerably higher than the South Dakota average. These numbers are significant. While the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) also monitors dropout rates across the country, the agency provides data for only four racial/ethnic groups: White, Black, Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander.³² That high dropout rates among Native American students are not reflected in NCES charts may mean that the epidemic receives less attention on a national level, and South Dakota Department of Education data does not necessarily reveal the extent of the problem. In the absence of a comprehensive tracking system, it is extremely difficult to determine how many students in a given school or district are currently attending classes. Mr. Zimiga estimated that 78% of American Indian students drop out of school.³³

No Child Left Behind

While No Child Left Behind (NCLB) presents many impending difficulties for South Dakota schools, it provides significant information with regards to the performance and status of education in the state. An NCLB report card provides data on attendance and graduation rates, as well as math and reading scores, which are based on the DakotaStep State Achievement Test. The test is administered to third to eighth and eleventh graders. The students from each school in each district are ranked into four categories: advanced, above average, basic proficiency, and below basic proficiency, and that data is further broken down by race, gender, and ethnicity. The data sets provided in table 2 show the number of students who were below basic proficiency levels.

Table 2
No Child Left Behind Longitudinal Data

School District	District Population	Below Basic Proficiency Math	Below Basic Proficiency Reading	Attendance	Graduation
South Dakota					
All Students	123,058	5%	3%	96.14%	95.95%
Native American	12,899	15%	7%	91.28%	83.98%
Smee					
All Students	231	24%	18%	91%	41.63%
Native American	230	24%	18%	90.97%	39.13%
Shannon County					
All Students	997	23%	9%	94.98%	DNMM
Native American	986	23%	9%	91.98%	DNMM
Todd County					
All Students	2,093	19%	4%	93.38%	93.33%
Native American	1,986	20%	8%	90.32%	DNMM

³² M. Alt, P. Kaufman, C. Chapman, *Dropout Rates in the United States: 2000*, NCES, 2000.

³³ David Melmer, "South Dakota Hosts Tribal Education Summit," *Indian Country Today*, Apr. 27, 2004.

McLaughlin					
All Students	460	10%	6%	95.16%	100%
Native American	410	11%	7%	92.16%	DNMM
Eagle Butte					
All Students	324	17%	7%	91.91%	92.94%
Native American	280	17%	8%	91.76%	92.95%
Dupree					
All Students	256	8%	0%	96.87%	100%
Native American	195	11%	9%	96.57%	DNMM
White River					
All Students	387	8%	8%	92.96%	100%
Native American	289	12%	9%	91.91%	100%
Andes Central					
All Students	380	7%	0%	95.56%	92.38%
Native American	246	10%	0%	90.94%	DNMM
Bennett County					
All Students	521	5%	3%	92.39%	87.80%
Native American	298	8%	4%	90.14%	80.77%
Sisseton					
All Students	1,185	12%	5%	93.32%	95.35%
Native American	617	16%	5%	91.34%	85.71%
Timber Lake					
All Students	305	0%	4%	96.04%	100%
Native American	153	0%	3%	94.51%	DNMM
Wagner					
All Students	733	5%	6%	93.51%	100%
Native American	342	9%	9%	88.98%	DNMM
Wood					
All Students	47	7%	0%	95.78%	DNMM
Native American	21	13%	0%	94.80%	DNMM
Kadoka					
All Students	333	8%	4%	93.38%	93.33%
Native American	138	15%	8%	90.32%	DNMM
Waubay					
All Students	227	3%	5%	96.41%	89.29%
Native American	91	5%	11%	94.85%	72.73%
Bonesteel-Fairfax					
All Students	162	9%	5%	94.86%	100%
Native American	51	19%	15%	90.95%	DNMM
Chamberlain					
All Students	908	3%	0%	95.91%	96.30%
Native American	260	10%	5%	94.19%	DNMM
Lyman					
All Students	385	0%	0%	95.16%	100%
Native American	106	0%	0%	92.16%	DNMM

Flandreau					
All Students	675	6%	4%	96.49%	100%
Native American	206	12%	4%	94.22%	DNMM
Mobridge					
All Students	576	3%	0%	95.49%	96.88%
Native American	148	6%	6%	92.74%	DNMM
Rapid City					
All Students	13,001	7%	3%	94.44%	97.28%
Native American	2,087	18%	4%	92.74%	87.50%
Aberdeen					
All Students	3,747	4%	0%	97.37%	94.68%
Native American	284	11%	5%	96.22%	DNMM
Sioux Falls					
All Students	19,623	6%	4%	94.98%	92.35%
Native American	740	19%	8%	91.98%	69.23%
Yankton					
All Students	3,091	5%	5%	95.72%	91.63%
Native American	98	6%	0%	92.38%	DNMM
Watertown					
All Students	3,838	3%	4%	96.13%	94.51%
Native American	127	12%	15%	93.13%	DNMM

Source: <http://www.state.sd.us/deca>.

DNMM ~ Signifies that the group did not meet the minimum population size to be included.

*Math and Reading scores are based on the Spring 2003 DakotaStep Test, administered to grades 3-8 and 11, which measures achievements based on South Dakota Content Standards in reading and math. For both categories, a small percentage of students, usually from 0%-3%, were not tested.

In 2003, only 32 schools in South Dakota were targeted for improvement under NCLB, or slightly more than 4 percent of all schools. However, 28 of those schools representing 12 school districts were examined in this study.³⁴ The following year, the number of schools targeted for improvement jumped to 109, or about 15% percent of South Dakota public schools. Seventy-one of those schools are represented in this study, representing nineteen school districts: Aberdeen, Andes Central, Bennett County, Bonesteel-Fairfax, Chamberlain, Eagle Butte, Flandreau, Kadoka, McLaughlin, Mobridge, Sioux Falls, Smee, Rapid City, Wagner, Watertown, White River, Yankton, Shannon, and Todd Counties.³⁵

A school is 'targeted for improvement' under NCLB when it does not meet goals in assessment, attendance and graduation set by the State Board of Education the previous year.³⁶ (Senate Bill 40, passed in 2003, created a statewide accountability system for all public schools and districts, and assigned to the State Board of Education the task of implementing policy associated with

³⁴ 2003 No Child Left Behind Report Card, S.D. <https://sis.ddncampus.net:8081/nclb/portal/>.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ 2003 Summary of Major Education Legislation, South Dakota Department of Education and Cultural Affairs. <http://www.state.sd.us/deca/OPA/Session%20Summaries/2003SessionSummary.htm>.

NCLB.)³⁷ Clearly there are many reasons a school might not reach those goals. Special education and LEP (Low English Proficiency) student test scores are included in NCLB data and lowers averages as well. Many superintendents expressed concern that these special needs students do not receive separate assessment tests.

There are several significant conclusions to be drawn from this data. Of greatest concern is the number of schools whose graduating Native American population does not meet minimum required numbers to even be included in the statistical evaluation. Under NCLB regulations each state sets its own quota for the minimum number of high school graduates, and for South Dakota that figure is ten students. Seventeen of the twenty-five districts did not meet this minimum quota, meaning that *less than ten* Native American students graduated from those schools in 2003.³⁸ Only three schools managed to graduate more than 80% of their Indian students.

If we assume that nine students graduated from each of the districts whose graduating Native American population did not meet the state minimum of 10 students, a phenomenal picture emerges. This means that *at best*, of all of the Native American students enrolled in the twenty-five districts represented in this study, only a fraction of over 10,000 Native American students in the schools surveyed will graduate from high school.

IV. Employment Data

Recruiting and retaining teachers is difficult for all districts, but particularly for those in rural, isolated areas which may have many Native American students. However, even in schools located on reservations, a majority of the instructional and administrative staff tend to be white. Although the state mandates a three hour 'Human Relations and Indian Studies' class, that minimal instruction does not approach an adequate understanding of the challenges and issues facing Native American students.

Beyond the three hour class required for teacher certification, most school districts did not provide any opportunities for increased learning or immersion in Native culture. About half of the schools ran workshops or had some type of in-service training offered to teachers, but these were mainly confined to reservation schools or those with larger numbers of students. Opportunities for further learning in Indian studies were usually offered annually at best, and frequently were not geared specifically towards Native culture or studies. While superintendents did not object to staff pursuing further training in Indian studies, few proactively encouraged this type of instruction. Smaller districts did not offer this type of programming, and many superintendents cited difficulty in finding appropriate programs within close range of a given district.

The data in the table 3, outlining district employment, speaks for itself. Only sixteen of more than six hundred management staff, a category which includes principals, superintendents, education directors, and coordinators, are Native American. A mere one hundred and twelve teachers, or 1%, of more than 8,500 educators in the state are Native American. Even less staff

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Susan Woodmansey, director, Statistics, South Dakota Department of Education. Personal Interview, Aug. 5, 2004.

are employed overall as a percent of the state population, as shown in table 4. Only .14% of school employees in South Dakota are Native American, compared to Native Americans accounting for 8.3 of the state’s population.

**Table 3
Employment Statistics**

Position	African American	Asian	Native American	Hispanic	White
Management Staff	0	2	16	0	609
Instructional Staff	8	8	113	12	8,977
School Service Specialist	2	0	16	1	654
TOTAL	10	10	144	13	10,2392

Source: <http://www.state.sd.us/deca>.

**Table 4
Employment as Percentage of Population**

	African American	Asian	Native American	Hispanic	White
South Dakota	.6%	.6%	8.3%	1.4%	88.79%
School Employees	0%	0%	.14%	0%	99.83%

Source: <http://www.state.sd.us/deca>.

*Management includes: CEOs, superintendents and assistant superintendents, building managers, curriculum specialists/coordinators, special education directors, and all principals and assistant principals.

*Instructional Staff: includes pre-K, special education, deaf/blind, electronic/distance, gifted, elementary, middle, and high school teachers.

*School Service Specialist includes: guidance counselors, librarians, speech/language pathologists, psychological examiners and psychologists.

~Statistics include all personnel.

Certified: Person who is fully certified through the Department of Education and Cultural Affairs (DECA) or has an approved authority to act.

Non-Authorized: Person holding an active certificate but is not authorized for one or more current assignments.

Non-Certified (CEO, Building Manager): Person who does not hold an active certificate.

~Population figures drawn from the 2000 U.S. Census.

The absence of Native American or minority educators has significant consequences for the success of Native American students. A ‘lack of role models’ has become almost a catch phrase, but the extent to which minority students suffer from the absence of adults to whom they can

easily relate cannot be overemphasized. Students may feel more comfortable presenting problems, asking for help or simply participating in class when they feel that the educator has shared their experience. Knowing that this educator has overcome obstacles, faced challenges and succeeded, is empowering, especially in a society where “there’s no positive image of being Indian.” “Kids in urban areas can identify with Michael Jordan, but the kids on the reservation have no image like that,” Judge William Thorne commented in a recent news interview. “When kids have no dream of the possibilities, they give up.”³⁹

The lack of Native American staff also points to other significant voids. While the need for qualified teachers exists, and high rates of unemployment on reservations also persist, why have Native Americans been unable to take advantage of these positions? Why are superintendents having difficulty finding certified Native American teachers? In what ways have school districts actively recruited Native American teachers or aides, and what kind of training or incentive programs are provided by local colleges or institutions?

V. Curriculum

State Standards

Local school boards have complete authority with regards to curriculum design and the selection of texts. “Any role the Department [of Education] had in monitoring schools’ curriculum on any subject was taken away when the 1995 South Dakota Legislature repealed more than 500 statutes and administrative rules governing K-12 education, including rules that had previously defined subjects to be taught, and number of minutes-per-week to be allocated to each subject.”⁴⁰

The only guidelines teachers and boards of education must adhere to in creating courses or selecting material are state standards set by the Department of Education. These regulations dictate many aspects of district operation as concerning curriculum and academic instruction.

Department of Education standards for ninth to twelfth grade history do not include any explicit reference to Native Americans.⁴¹ Civics students do, however, “compare...state, local, and tribal governments...”.⁴² Might Native Americans be included in the analysis of the impact of industrialization, the civil rights movement, urbanization, immigration or the Great Depression on American society? Or perhaps in the “settlement patterns, migration routes, and cultural influence of various racial ethnic and religious groups” in early America?⁴³ Clearly teachers have the ability to incorporate elements of Native American history in their courses, however the standards essentially sanction the exclusion of Native American history, should an individual teacher wish to do so.

Although eighth grade students are to “study U.S. history in chronological sequence”, the standards contain a single mention of Native Americans, embedded in standard seventeen which

³⁹ Serenity J. Banks, “Child Welfare not a Lost Cause for South Dakota,” *Lakota Journal*, Aug. 13-20th 2004.

⁴⁰ Letter from Ray Christensen, Secretary, Department of Education and Cultural Affairs, to John F. Dulles, Regional Director, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Feb. 2, 2000, p. 8.

⁴¹ Office of Curriculum, Technology and Assessment, South Dakota Department of Education, <http://www.state.sd.us/deca/OCTA/contentstandards/social/standards/68stan.htm>.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

instructs students to “explain how, following the Civil War, massive immigration combined with the rise of big business, heavy industry and mechanized farming transformed American life with emphasis on: western settlement and changing federal policy toward the Indians, obstacles faced and the contributions made by immigrants, and the growth of American cities.”⁴⁴

The standards imply that Native Americans in this rendition of history are simply another casualty of industrialization and westward expansion, rather than independent nations with cosmologies and economies which continue to flourish to this day. Or perhaps Native Americans are to be a footnote in this analysis, subject to the whims of the U.S. government and devoid of initiative and achievements of their own? Impacts and developments prior to the 20th century are nonexistent, unless perhaps, they are included in standard twelve, in which students must “analyze settlement patterns of the American people ... focusing on how and why the land was acquired and settled, to include the Louisiana Purchase, Florida, Oregon and Texas”.⁴⁵

The absence of Native American history is a double edged sword—not only are Native American children deprived of that of which they should and could be proud, but it allows for the perpetuation of negative stereotypes. Native American and non-Native children alike may grow up believing that Native Americans may be alcoholics, do not pay taxes, or are dependent on welfare.

Primary curriculum similarly includes very few references to Native American history. First, second, and fifth grade history standards contain a single mention of Native Americans. Fourth grade seems to be the only level to receive a comprehensive treatment of Native American history, in part due to its focus on local South Dakota history, the text and curriculum of which is described below in more detail.

The Weekly South Dakotan

This Department of Education online publication does an admirable job of presenting an accurate account of South Dakota’s history, beginning with Clovis hunters and working through the American Indian Movement (AIM). This ‘Treasure Chest for 4th Grade History’ has nine units with four chapters each, and concentrates on historical developments as they affect the state of South Dakota.

The *South Dakotan* does not give the impression that Native culture is simplistic or primitive, nor that its inception corresponds to the arrival of Columbus. Economic production and social systems are given considerable treatment. While none of the subjects are examined in depth, they are all fair in their characterization of Native American culture and society. Notable is a chapter devoted entirely to tribal governance and citizenship, as well as the overall inclusion of Siouan vocabulary in the text.⁴⁶ The text also includes a Lakota tale about buffalo, as well as recognizing the achievements of Native Americans and non-Indians equally in its famous people section.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Office of Curriculum, Technology, and Assessment, South Dakota Department of Education, <http://www.sd4history.com>.

Native American history is well integrated throughout the text, however noticeably absent from the rendition is an accurate portrayal of the economic circumstances or current political and social circumstances of Native Americans. No indication is given that Native Americans continued throughout the century to experience removal from their homes or renegeing by the government on treaty rights. The trust relationship is not discussed, nor are more recent developments in Native American culture, economy, or law. Clearly the text needs to be appropriate for a fourth grade audience, but the absence of an adequate contemporary Native American perspective is unacceptable. Native American history did not end with the reservation system or westward expansion, and that needs to be reflected through the inclusion of contemporary figures and achievements children can relate to.

Aside from a brief mention of AIM and Wounded Knee, the reasons Native Americans were fighting for political and social recognition are neglected. Throughout the text the authors employ phrases such as “Native Americans did not want this” in reference to missionary activity in South Dakota, or other European intervention.⁴⁷ However the dialogue ends there. There is no indication that there were serious and important reasons for resistance to assimilation or Christian ideas. Even the addition of, “Native Americans had their own beliefs which were very important to them. They felt strongly about these ideas in the same way that the [given group] felt about theirs,” would remove the slightly negative tone left to the reader.

The Americans

This McDougal Littell (Houghton Mifflin) text was well used throughout South Dakota. While publishers are known for changing very little beyond a cover illustration in subsequent editions of a textbook, most schools used books with a relatively recent copyright date. Although date of publication did vary; the text evaluated in this study was published in 1994.

The Americans has eight units with thirty-six chapters. Native American history is barely included—sporadic references to battles or federal legislation surface throughout a few chapters in selected units. According to the book’s index, Native Americans are mentioned only in units one, two, four, and six, and each devotes only a few paragraphs to the ‘contributions’ of Native people.

The book begins its first chapter with one section on North American tribes, and cites only Pocahontas and Squanto as notable figures in a small box on page four. Four pages of text cover Indians of the southwest, southeast, plains, and Central America. Several maps of North America and a few photographs of artifacts, pueblos and mounds accompany the sparse dialogue. The only other mention of Native Americans in the first chapter comes in section three, which delineates the ‘Help from the Indians’ the Europeans received when “one day an Indian came up and dumbfounded the Pilgrims by speaking in English.”⁴⁸

Nancy Keenan, former superintendent of Montana Office of Public Instruction, emphasizes that rather than stating that pilgrims were the recipients of Native American assistance, it is better to point out that the colonists were forced to adopt Native practices and farming techniques out of necessity. This technology was essential to the tribes, and had allowed them to flourish for

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Jordan, W. D., Greenblatt, M. Bowes, S. *The Americans*. McDougal-Littell Publishers, Evanston: 1994, p. 26.

thousands of years. Colonists recognized that they would need to follow the example of their Native American neighbors if they wanted to survive. However *The Americans* does not discuss the advanced agricultural, social, and economic systems of early North American communities.

The second chapter's single and passing reference to Native people comes in 'Disagreement over Indians' in which Virginia governor, "crusty old William Berkeley looked upon Indians as subjects of the king. Accordingly, he believed it was his duty to protect them against attack by settlers."⁴⁹ The other reason the governor wanted to treat Indians with care, the text continues, is because "he and his wealthy friends had a fur trading arrangement with them" and did not want the exchange disturbed. The 'poor people of the backwoods', however, "lived much nearer to Indians and Indian lands"; they wanted more land and preferred to fight for it than buy it.⁵⁰ The last few sentences tout the success of Nathaniel Bacon in driving out the said Indian population.

Although the third chapter is entitled "Conflict with Indians and England," only the first section refers to warfare between Indians and whites on two and a half pages outlining the Pequot and King Phillips' wars. Chapter four is equally negligent, with a few mentions of Native American assistance to the French or British during struggles between the two colonial powers. Chapter five excludes Native Americans completely, even though many individuals and tribes were active participants on both sides during the Revolutionary War. Native Americans do not reappear until chapter eight of the second unit, in which the Indians are defeated and 'Americans win on the Western Frontier.'⁵¹

In this cursory treatment of plains battles, six short paragraphs outline Cherokee claims to land, and the stance of tribes during the revolutionary war. A few more paragraphs in chapter nine continue this train of thought, as War Hawks in Congress initiate more battles, and homesteaders move west, occupying Indian lands. "We lived the same as the Indians" one quote goes, "exceptin' we took an interest in politics and religion." The text does nothing to indicate that Native Americans had their own politics and religion which they practiced with equal fervor and intensity as the white settlers, if not to a greater extent, considering that pioneers were often far removed from any form of government or organized religion.

Jackson's Indian Removal policy, the Cherokee nation and the Trail of Tears are granted a page in chapter ten, and then disappear until the next chapter. A three page special section in chapter eleven gives the book's only information on housing, economy, or social customs of Native Americans, specifically tribes of the Southwest.⁵²

The next mention of Native Americans comes in chapter sixteen of the fourth unit, as tribes are permanently displaced. Only the first portion of the chapter is devoted to this saga, explaining the Dawes Act and Americanization, Wounded Knee, and the Chivington Massacre.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 40.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 219.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 329-331.

The final references to Native Americans come on two pages dealing with federal reorganization and termination policies. Only seven paragraphs outline this segment of American history, and the extent of destruction, resilience of tribes, continuation of tradition and struggles for equality are ignored. There are no references to contemporary Native American history or achievements, tribes simply disappear from the text completely.

Throughout the text, Native Americans are mentioned only in defeat—surfacing when treaties are broken, populations are massacred, or battles begin. What would a child reading this book assume about the people living in North America prior to European colonization? The reader is given no information about Native Americans nor what their cultures were like—no wonder feathers and bows and arrows are the pervasive stereotype—the sporadic illustrations provide more information about Native culture than any of the text. Native Americans are subtly presented as a problem—somehow Europeans had the inherent right to desecrate and kill and steal lands from a people curiously devoid of any kind of history of their own, beyond some simple farming techniques adopted by the pilgrims.

VI. Programming

This portion of the study is designed to give an overview of programs and activities offered to Native American students. Superintendents from each school district were asked whether or not their district offered Lakota language or culture classes, if training in Indian studies was available for teachers, and whether or not there were any extracurricular activities aimed at promoting multicultural understanding among non-Native American students. Superintendents were also asked to describe any additional emphasis on Native American culture, or support and resources provided to Native American students.

Results tended to correlate with the percentage of Indian students enrolled in each district. Schools located on reservations, or with almost completely Native American student bodies, usually provided Lakota language and culture classes, as well as more services and resources for their students and teachers. Conversely, schools located in border towns, or with smaller Native American populations and few students in general did not offer very many additional services to staff or students. These schools also fared poorly on standardized tests, and had some of the lowest attendance and graduation rates.

Only eleven districts surveyed, mostly located on reservations, offered Lakota language classes, however of these districts, Lakota was well incorporated into elementary through high school curriculum. Two schools offered an Indian studies or culture class, and another district provided an Indian art class. Several superintendents also mentioned that they were trying to hire Lakota language instructors, but that it was difficult to find certified teachers.

One district also reported having an optional after-school Lakota language and culture class, of which many students took advantage. Overall, however, off-reservation schools had few specific emphases on Native culture, although almost half of the schools reported having a Native American culture club. The majority of schools also observed Native American Day, and while students did not attend class on that day, many districts welcomed speakers and held activities the day before or the day following the holiday.

None of the school districts had any programs geared specifically towards non-Indian students aimed at promoting cultural awareness or tolerance, although several superintendents emphasized that non-Indian students were permitted and/or encouraged to participate in Lakota language or culture classes, or after-school clubs. Any other Native American celebrations were also open to the entire student body. Several superintendents reported that there was significant non-Indian participation in these events.

Smaller districts likewise had difficulty providing after-school activities or even tutoring for their students. One superintendent told the interviewer that the district did have an after-school program, then conceded that they were really remedial classes. The district is currently trying to use part of its Title I funding to keep the library open a couple of nights a week.

Another superintendent explained that he was trying to work with a diabetes organization, a local YMCA and other agencies to coordinate after school activities for students but they were not forthcoming. A local diabetes agency has a gym in its facility but informed the district it was for adults, they did not want to accept a busload of students after school.

VII. Promising Practices

Many districts have made a concerted effort to improve the academic success of their Native American students. South Dakota educators, parents, and communities have worked together in a variety of ways to keep all students, and Native Americans in particular, engaged in programs where they are able to continue their education.

Although not widespread, alternative schools and head start programs remain as two of the most effective programs. Two districts included in this study, White River and Andes Central, operate alternative schools, and a third district is in the process of securing funding for such an endeavor. These schools have different hours, and staff who gear curriculum specifically to the needs of the small student body. Students must apply to the programs and have permission from their parents to participate. Superintendents reported that a significant number of Native Americans have graduated from their programs, many of them fourth or fifth year seniors with families for whom conventional courses and hours are not an option. Increasing access to alternative schooling may well be a way to improve the academic success and choices available to Native American students.

Two schools also ran head start programs, or were in the process of adding a preschool program to their district. Not only does this considerably bolster students' later academic success by providing a foundation for literacy and further learning, but it also provides a resource for students who either have children themselves, or have younger brothers and sisters they need to care for during the day. The expansion of these kind of programs is critical, and may help students who might be at risk for dropping out, to stay in class.

Another promising program described by one superintendent in the study was an exchange program with a nearby tribal college. Not only is the school working to bring certified teachers into the district, but also to create a dual enrollment program wherein high school students would

receive academic credit for university courses. The district hopes that students who participate in the program would be more likely to enroll in the university or go on to higher education. Recent legislation also supports the efforts of this district: last year, South Dakota passed House Bill 1077, which allowed 10th as well as 11th and 12th graders to enroll in postsecondary courses, as well as removing the cap of two courses per semester.⁵³ In addition, Senate Bill 80 established the Richard Hagen-Minerva Harvey memorial scholarship, specifically to benefit Native American students.⁵⁴

Three school districts, Aberdeen, Sioux Falls, and Rapid City have Offices of Indian Education which are able to provide an array of services to Native American students and their families. The Rapid City School District's Director of Indian Education, Art Zimiga, outlined the substantial support offered to their students. Several home-school coordinators visit the Pine Ridge reservation frequently, and welcome parents into the office to discuss problems. They hold an annual buffalo feed, and have an elderly advisory council composed mostly of Native Americans who have contributed to Indian education in the past. These elders are paired with students in order to honor them and to positively influence the children. There is also a radio show broadcast weekly on KILI in Rapid City, which reaches communities in Pine Ridge, Cheyenne River, and surrounding areas, focusing completely on developments in Native American education.⁵⁵

Another program unique to the Rapid City School District is the Lakota Kiciapa Room, a classroom which is 95% Native American and into which new students are placed as a way to ease their transition into the white, urban environment. "Students come into a larger system and it's not the community they are used to; on the reservation the school is the center of activity," Zimiga noted. "The over 3,000 students they see just moving around in the halls in Rapid City are more than they would see in a year on the reservation".⁵⁶ The Kiciapa Room is funded by the Bush Foundation in Minneapolis.

Financial resources can also be an issue for some schools, especially small districts whose low number of students greatly reduces the amount of federal or state aid available. Thus the ability of those districts to provide teacher training, or tutoring and other remedial services to their students suffers. The White River School District has begun a program which hires an additional teacher using Title I funds. In this way, they were able to free up time in the schedules of highly qualified teachers who were then able to identify and assist specific students who were having difficulty in their classes.⁵⁷ Despite the additional attention, however, it is clear that even these efforts need to be redoubled to better serve these populations.

VIII. Conclusion

⁵³ 2003 Summary of Major Education Legislation, South Dakota Department of Education and Cultural Affairs. <http://www.state.sd.us/deca/OPA/Session%20Summaries/2003SessionSummary.htm>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Art Zimiga, Indian education coordinator, Rapid City School District. Personal Interview, July 12, 2004.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Thomas Cameron, superintendent, White River School District (SD). Personal Interview, July 16, 2004.

Anxiety over the potential affects of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was widespread throughout the districts surveyed. Beyond the disproportionate affect it will likely have on Native American students residing in high poverty and high need areas, there exists potential for even greater impacts on minority students in the next several years. As districts close or lose funding because of poor NCLB performance and are unable to operate, it is possible that Native American and minority students will be transferred into those schools or districts which may be the least prepared to deal with their specific needs.⁵⁸

Ensuring that excellent teachers are distributed throughout a district's schools is critical, and speaks to this impending demand on public schools. Recommendations made in the assessment of the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act in Virginia and Maryland included "the state should create and implement a system to track teacher placement that ensures that highly qualified teachers are quickly placed in high-minority and high-poverty schools".⁵⁹ South Dakota has an incentive system, providing loan deferment to teachers who transfer to high-need school districts.⁶⁰

Although tracking teacher placement is essential, it is imperative that South Dakota first focus on implementing a tracking system for students. The extremely high dropout rate certainly is impacted by the absence of a tracking system. When student dropouts or transfers are not monitored, parents may be the only adults aware that a child is not attending school. Efforts to involve parents and grant them more than a nominal role in decision-making processes is also an effective way to keep children in class—many times parents have no incentive or see no reason to insist that their child remain in school after he or she has dropped out.⁶¹

Several schools in this study cooperated with local agencies to provide services and after school programs for their students, however communities could still benefit from more dialogue and coordination between schools and other community institutions. Sports and other activities are an excellent way to increase integration, interaction, and cooperation between groups, and utilizing community or faith-based programming would emphasize shared values or interests rather than differences. For smaller school districts with limited resources, this type of relationship might be particularly helpful, and could considerably expand counseling, mentoring, tutoring, or even health services available to students. The extra time or consideration an outside agency would be able to give to students at risk for suicide or depression might significantly affect that statistic as well, although comprehensive community intervention, such as awareness training and the community preparedness exemplified by the Wakpala School is one of the most effective ways to address this type of epidemic.

Educators also play a critical role in creating and maintaining the harmony of their classrooms and communities. American educators are often asked to be far more than teachers, but also counselors, social workers, and agents of social change. Concentrating efforts on teacher

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ *Closing the Achievement Gap: The Impact of Standards-Based Education Reform on Student Performance*, draft report of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, July 2, 2004.

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⁶¹ Dr. Won Koo, North Dakota Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Telephonic meeting. Aug. 24, 2004.

training is thus essential. With regards to teacher instruction, partnerships between tribal colleges, technical schools, and secondary schools has the potential to draw more minority educators into the school system. This could also help to meet the demand for Native American teachers—several superintendents from various districts reported difficulty finding certified Native American instructors.

Increasing access to and the number of Lakota language and cultural classes would be another way to augment student morale and achievement. Research conducted by Oglala Lakota College indicated that students who were ‘well versed’ in Native culture were also more successful academically.⁶² It seems obvious that having pride for and learning about one’s past would increase esteem and value for education, however only about half of the schools surveyed offered these classes.

Additionally, diversity programming, workshops, or leadership events for students that teach tolerance, and build trust and better relations would be invaluable for schools experiencing racial tension. Involving or allowing student government or other student organizations to assist in planning and directing this type of programming can also produce significant results. Internally-generated, student initiatives—identifying racism, poverty, or other issues as a problem and then creating plans to address them can produce outstanding results.

Another area of concern is that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and reservation schools, while not treated specifically in this study, are facing equal difficulties with graduating students and keeping parents and students involved in school. Reservation schools face these challenges and more, compounded by the fact that they are working often with older facilities and operating on an even smaller budget than public schools. In addition, enrollment in BIA reservation schools is growing, and the reasons for the shift from public to reservation schools should also be investigated, especially if the perception is that these environments are either safer or would better serve Native American students.

⁶² David Melmer, “South Dakota Hosts Tribal Education Summit,” *Indian Country Today*, Apr. 27, 2004.

APPENDIX D

2003 Enrollment by Ethnicity

District	White	Native American	Hispanic	Black	Asian	Total
South Dakota	104,822	12,899	2,193	1,838	1,306	123,058
Aberdeen	3,349	284	41	34	39	3,747
Andes Central	132	246	5	5	6	3,24
Bennett Co.	215	298	2	0	6	521
Bonesteel	107	51	3	1	0	162
Chamberlain	629	260	5	1	13	908
Dupree	61	195	0	0	0	256
Eagle Butte	44	280	0	0	0	324
Flandreau	448	206	3	7	11	675
Kadoka	192	138	0	1	2	333
Lyman	279	106	0	0	0	385
McLaughlin	49	410	0	0	1	460
Mobridge	423	148	3	1	1	576
Rapid City	10,275	2,087	260	217	162	13,001
Shannon Co.	10	986	1	0	0	997
Sioux Falls	16,564	740	884	983	452	19,623
Sisseton	539	617	9	12	8	1,185
Smee	1	230	0	0	0	231
Timber Lake	150	153	0	0	2	305
Todd County	98	1,986	1	6	2	2,093
Wagner	386	342	4	0	1	733
Watertown	3,622	127	49	10	30	3,838
Waubay	133	91	2	0	1	227
White River	96	289	0	1	1	387
Wood	26	21	0	0	0	47
Yankton	2,861	98	76	29	27	3,091

<http://www.state.sd.us/deca/>