

BOARD RESOLUTION OF THE NATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TO IDENTIFY AND ELEVATE THE CONCERNS OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES AT ASD

DULY PASSED ON November 17, 2022

Resolution to Recognize and Support Native Language Instruction Programs at ASD

WHEREAS the first goal of this resolution is to provide administrative policy that will allow students to learn Alaskan Native languages without any barriers and unduly support from the ASD,

WHEREAS it is the board's responsibility to identify issues of inequity and to responsibly provide learning opportunities for each of its students. It is part of the board's strategic plans to elevate 3rd grade reading, 8th grade math, and high school college, career, and life readiness. It is furthermore the board's responsibility to oversee the makeup of underrepresented groups in lottery programs, and to ensure that equity is administered at a high standard.

WHEREAS current data in ASD shows that the Alaska Native/American Indian identification group scores among the lowest when compared to any other ethnic group on the grade 3 English proficiency tests and grade 8 math proficiency tests. The data furthermore shows that 8 percent of Alaska Native or American Indian students dropout of high school, which is more than double the dropout rate of any other ethnic identification group.

WHEREAS the Anchorage School District has an Indigenous population of around 8000 students and a unique historical context for learning. Indigenous families join ASD with the intergeneration scars of colonialism and education policy of a bygone era. Anchorage is on Dena'ina land, and for thousands of years, Alaska Natives have practiced education, including language, in ways that do not match formal education. Indigenous elders and modern scholars agree that language is pivotal to developing identity and adds positive outcomes for school success. Currently, in the ASD there are 22 Alaska Native languages represented.

WHEREAS The discussion on Native language development is growing on a federal level. Statements from the Federal Reserve of Minneapolis express, "[M]ost first language speakers are reaching the end of life. Without changes in trajectory, many Native languages face a likelihood of extinction." Statements from Ron Lessard, the director and chief of staff of the Federal WHIAIANE Office, express the concern for Native Languages in education: "We are beginning to elevate this issue to the crisis level that it is."

WHEREAS Anchorage School District only has one Indigenous language program. Testimony from NAC member, an Indigenous ASD teacher, and former teacher of the Bethel Yup'ik Immersion School, Georgianna Starr, expresses:

"At the [Anchorage School District Alaska Native cultural] charter school, they provide two 40-minute classes per week at the elementary level. After elementary school it stops. When they leave the program, what is the next step? The Yup'ik Immersion language program doesn't go to the middle or high school.

Historically, Native languages were not valued. Look at the languages that the school district values and offers in school: Spanish, Russian, German, French, and Japanese. These are the languages that are valued in the school district. It is

a necessary step for Alaskan Native languages to be offered for many reasons. If we do not offer these classes in middle and secondary, there is no continuation of our children's education."

WHEREAS ASD's support for other languages is felt by other Indigenous stakeholders as well, especially students. Testimony from NAC member and 11th grade student Suella Wendell, expressed:

"I am in the Spanish Immersion Program. I would have loved to learn my Yup'ik language. You can learn Spanish anywhere. It would be cool to talk with my classmates in Yup'ik instead of teaching them phrases. I would like to speak to my Upa in Yup'ik. He was one of the Boarding School Survivors who wasn't allowed to speak Yup'ik."

WHEREAS many Native families in Alaska are revitalizing their languages by learning with elders over Zoom, including attending classes organized by the University of Alaska Anchorage and Alaska Pacific University. Many of these classes occur during school hours.

WHEREAS ASD can provide healing and hope for students and families across the State of Alaska. Few other states have made headway, but some have been long standing role models for Indigenous healing. Hawai'i has emerged as a worldwide leader in Indigenous language development. The state of Hawaii has K-12 immersion which began in 1987, and currently has 21 schools that offer Indigenous Hawai'ian languages for students.

WHEREAS The Hawaiian Language Immersion Program called *Ka Papahana Kaiapuni* delivers instruction that has led to unprecedented outcomes. All families in Hawai'i are presented the opportunity to enroll in the KPK immersion program. Research from the outreach group Cultural Survival describes the program: "Many Native students are thriving in these settings, showing higher test scores and graduation rates as well as stronger connections to their culture... Virtually all students in Native Hawaiian schools now graduate from high school."

WHEREAS Other Indigenous language programs are emerging with positive outcomes for students. The Diné (Navajo) programs are scoring with or above their non-immersion peers on standardized tests, even in English.

FURTHER RESOLVED that ASD elevates Indigenous Language education as a part of its strategic plan and formal Goals & Guardrails outline through 2026.

FURTHER RESOLVED that elementary and secondary school principals are given administrative regulations to become familiar with the processes and support all students who enroll in extracurricular support Native Language education during school hours. In this AR shall be included statements such as:

1. The student needs a space to learn (corner in same room, separate room, etc.)
2. The student needs internet accessibility provided by the Anchorage School District
3. Time spent during school hours is considered "in attendance" and not "excused absence"
4. The student needs to be reasonably accommodated to succeed in the extracurricular language program.

Signed on this 17th the day of November, 2022

Suella Wendell

Suella Wendell, NAC Chairperson

Veronica Tuzrolyuk

Veronica Tuzrolyuk, NAC Vice Chairperson

Helena Schmitz

Helena Schmitz, Language Revitalization
NAC Member

Gloriana Stan

NAC Member

Lakota Holman

NAC Member

Edward L. Hicks

NAC Member

Casey

NAC Member

Jessie Rice

NAC Member

NAC Member

NAC Member

NAC Member

NAC Member