

Counting American Indian Students

There are two primary counts of American Indian students in Minnesota. The “legacy count” or “state count” includes persons who identify as American Indian, as well as persons who identify as multiracial. The state count is used for the state’s American Indian Program aid and to determine whether a district has ten or more American Indian students, triggering a state law requirement that the district have an American Indian parent committee. This count identifies 26,794 public school students, or 3.1 percent of the total student population, as American Indians in the 2022-2023 school year.

The federal count does not include students who self-identify as American Indian and another race, or as American Indian and Hispanic. The federal count is used for federal reporting under federal law and state reporting in the Minnesota Report Card, and determining integration revenue. The federal count identifies 14,901 prekindergarten, kindergarten, elementary, and secondary students identifying as American Indian students, or 1.7 percent of the total student population, enrolled in Minnesota’s K-12 public schools in the 2022-2023 school year.

School Options

Most American Indian students in Minnesota attend public schools operated by Minnesota’s school districts and charter schools. Approximately one-third of these American Indian students attend public school in the seven-county metropolitan area and two-thirds of the students attend public school in greater Minnesota. American Indian students also attend federally funded Tribal schools located on the Fond du Lac, Mille Lacs, White Earth, and Leech Lake reservations and nonpublic schools.

Total American Indian Enrollment; 2021-2022 School Year

School	Total Students	Federal Count American Indian Students	Fed. % American Indian	% of Total Fed. Am. Ind. Pop.	State Count American Indian Students	State % American Indian	% of Total State Am. Ind. Pop.
School Districts	796,518	13,786	1.7%	88.7%	24,944	3.1%	90.9%
Charter Schools	66,480	945	1.4%	6.1%	1,601	2.4%	5.8%
BIE Schools	635	635	100.0%	4.1%	635	100.0%	2.3%
Cooperative Units	7,508	170	2.3%	1.1%	249	3.3%	0.9%
State Totals	871,141	15,536	1.8%	100.0%	27,429	3.1%	100.0%

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School District Enrollment

Most American Indian students are enrolled in school districts. The tables below list the districts with the highest numbers and highest concentrations of American Indian students.

School Districts with the Highest Number of American Indian Students 2021-2022 School Year Based on the State Count

Rank	District	Total Students	State Count American Indian Students	State % American Indian	% of Total State Am. Ind. Pop.
1	Minneapolis	30,115	1,667	5.5%	6.1%
2	Red Lake	1,467	1,466	99.9%	5.3%
3	Bemidji	4,874	1,253	25.7%	4.6%
4	St. Paul	33,475	1,233	3.7%	4.5%
5	Anoka-Hennepin	38,230	1,139	3.0%	4.2%
6	Cass Lake-Bena	1,165	1,069	91.8%	3.9%
7	Mahnomen	701	599	85.4%	2.2%
8	Duluth	8,487	592	7.0%	2.2%
9	Waubun-Ogema-White Earth	699	575	82.3%	2.1%
10	Detroit Lakes	2,805	549	19.6%	2.0%

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

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**School Districts with the Highest Concentration of American Indian Students
2021-2022 School Year Based on the State Count**

Rank	District	Total Students	American Indian Students	% American Indian	% of Total State Am. Ind. Pop.
1	Pine Point	72	72	100.0%	0.3%
2	Nett Lake	40	40	100.0%	0.1%
3	Red Lake	1,467	1,466	99.9%	5.3%
4	Cass Lake-Bena	1,165	1,069	91.8%	3.9%
5	Mahnomen	701	599	85.4%	2.2%
6	Waubun-Ogema-White Earth	699	575	82.3%	2.1%
7	Browns Valley	173	98	56.6%	0.4%
8	Onamia	561	294	52.4%	1.1%
9	Kelliher	297	143	48.1%	0.5%
10	Deer River	901	421	46.7%	1.5%
	State Totals	871,189	15,533*		

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

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Charter School Enrollment

Approximately 6% of American Indian students attend charter schools. The tables below list the charter schools with the highest numbers and highest concentrations of American Indian students.

Charter Schools with the Most American Indian Students 2021-2022 School Year Using the State Count

District	Total Students	American Indian Students	% American Indian	Geographic County
Minnesota Transitions Charter School	4,893	222	4.5%	Hennepin
Naytahwaush Community School	145	144	99.3%	Mahnomen
TrekNorth High School	251	127	50.6%	Beltrami
Bdote Learning Center	100	98	98.0%	Hennepin
Aurora Charter School	435	96	22.1%	Hennepin
Duluth Academy	987	79	8.0%	St. Louis
Voyageurs Expeditionary	100	64	64.0%	Beltrami
Aurora Waasakone Community of Learners Charter School	113	44	38.9%	Beltrami
Venture Academy	307	39	12.7%	Hennepin
High School for Recording Arts	311	35	11.3%	Ramsey

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**Charter Schools with the Highest Concentration of American Indian Students
2021-2022 School Year Using the State Count**

Rank	District	Total Students	American Indian Students	% American Indian	Geographic County
1	Oshki Ogimaag Charter School	29	29	100.0%	Cook
2	Naytahwaush Community School	145	144	99.3%	Mahnomen
3	Bdote Learning Center	100	98	98.0%	Hennepin
4	Voyageurs Expeditionary	100	64	64.0%	Beltrami
5	TrekNorth High School	251	127	50.6%	Beltrami
6	Aurora Waasakone Community of Learners Charter School	113	44	38.9%	Beltrami
7	Vermilion Country School	27	10	37.0%	St. Louis
8	Augsburg Fairview Academy	99	32	32.3%	Hennepin
9	Aurora Charter School	435	96	22.1%	Hennepin
10	Jennings Community School	62	11	17.7%	Ramsey

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

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Tribal Contract School Enrollment

Tribal contract schools are schools that were originally established by the federal government starting in the 1870s. Today, there are about 183 schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), and 130 of these are “Tribal contract” schools, meaning American Indian Tribes have contracted with the BIE to manage the schools. In Minnesota, there are four Tribal contract schools.

Minnesota’s Tribal Contract Schools; 2021-2022 School Year

School	Total Students	American Indian Students	% American Indian	% of total State Am. Ind. Pop.
Fond Du Lac Ojibwe (Fond du Lac)	181	181	100.0%	0.7%
Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig (Leech Lake)	208	208	100.0%	0.8%
Circle of Life (White Earth)	103	103	100.0%	0.4%
Nay Ah Shing (Mille Lacs)	143	143	100.0%	0.5%
Total BIE Students	635	635	100.0%	2.3%

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American Indian Education Act of 1988

The Minnesota Legislature passed the American Indian Education Act (Minnesota Statutes sections 124D.71 to 124D.82) in 1988 to provide American Indian people with education programs that meet their unique education needs. The act has since been amended; a summary of some of the provisions in the act follows.

At the state level, the act requires the commissioner of education to consult with the Tribal Nations Education Committee (TNEC) on all issues relating to American Indian education, including the administration of Minnesota's American Indian Education Act and other American Indian education programs, American Indian scholarship and postsecondary preparation grant awards, and recommended education policy changes affecting American Indian students. The commissioner must also appoint an Indian education director to, among other things, serve as a liaison with American Indian Tribes and organizations and evaluate the state of American Indian education in Minnesota. The Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board must, in consultation with TNEC, grant to eligible individuals teaching licenses in American Indian language and cultural education.

At the local level, districts in which there are ten or more enrolled American Indian children must consult with a parent committee regarding curriculum that affects American Indian education and the educational needs of the students. The Act also provides American Indian aid for school districts, charter schools, and Tribal contract schools operating an American Indian education program and serving more than 20 American Indian students. The programs are designed to support postsecondary preparation; support academic achievement; make the curriculum relevant to the needs, interests, and cultural heritage of American Indian students; provide positive reinforcement of the self-image of American Indian students; develop intercultural awareness among students, parents, and staff; and supplement state and federal programs.

Curriculum

The commissioner of education must include the contributions of Minnesota's American Indian Tribes and communities when reviewing and revising state academic standards. All school districts and charter schools must provide students instruction in accordance with the state academic standards. World language and culture programs must encompass Indigenous American Indian languages and cultures.



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