

**Lakeland Union High School:
Native American Achievement Project**



Final Project Report
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Project Overview

In January 2007, Lakeland Union High School (LUHS) contracted with Bowman Performance Consulting, LLC (BPC) to conduct a study with Native American students who attend or attended LUHS. The purpose of the study was to document and understand the causes for successful and struggling Native American students who have or are attending LUHS. There were 349 adults and 248 students from the LUHS and Lac du Flambeau (LDF) community that participated in the study. The study primarily documented experiences of Native American students and families served by LUHS over the years. Non-Native students and adults from the school and community were also included in the study to a much smaller degree. The information generated from this study is being used to help LUHS craft strategies, policies, and programming to improve the academic performance, create more positive educational experiences, and/or increase the levels of parental involvement of LDF families. The guiding questions for the study as noted in 12.20.06 e-mail, 1.16.07 e-mail, 1.28.07 contract, and 2.8.07 e-mail are:

1. In what ways is educational success defined?
2. What are the educational experiences of Native American students and families that LUHS serves?
3. Are the educational services provided by LUHS meeting the needs of Native American students and families?

An overview of the study timeline and major activities is included in Table 1 below. A more detailed description of the study work plan, data collection timeline, and participant sample sizes for each data collection activity is included in the appendix.

Table 1: Study timeline and major activities

Timeline	Activity
January 2007	Project Study Concept Designed
February	Instrument Development & Comprehensive Literature Review Completed
March	Student Longitudinal Database Development & Key Informant Interviews Began
April	Community Focus Groups/Surveys & LDF/Community Documents Collected
May	Mid-Project Meeting with LUHS & Student Focus Groups/Surveys Conducted
June	LUHS Adult Focus Groups/Surveys, Curriculum & LUHS Documents Reviewed, & School Site Audit Completed
August	Report Completed & Presented to LUHS Administration
September	Administrative Feedback Received and BPC Did First Revisions
October	Curriculum Committee Feedback Received and BPC Did Second Revisions
November	Final Report Presented to LUHS Administration

Study Design

This technical report was based on a scientific research design that is academically rigorous, culturally responsive, and contextually inclusive (American Evaluation Association (AEA), 2004; Hood, Hopson, Frierson, 2005; Kirkhart, 2005). A success case method design (Brinkerhoff, 2003) was used to understand strategies at LUHS that worked and did not work for Native American students and families. A robust data collection came from multiple Native

American and non-Native American sources, spanned multi-generational voices, and included participants from the LUHS, LDF, and the broader community. Quantitative data was collected through longitudinal databases that held academic, behavioral, and other academic data. Surveys and school audit data also produced quantitative data. Qualitative data was collected through focus groups, interviews, observations, and key artifacts collected during the school audit via audio and digital recordings. BPC shared and received approval of the design elements (methods, instruments, participants, sampling, protocols, and other procedures) throughout the entire study from LUHS administration. Additionally, regular weekly e-mails (18 e-mails per week on average from February through November 2007) and a mid-project report allowed LUHS and BPC staff to meet, discuss, decide upon, and modify (if needed) design elements as the study was implemented in the LDF and LUHS communities. BPC also received major feedback from administration (August 2007) and the curriculum committee (September 2007) and made two revisions before delivering the final report (November 2007). This final report will be reviewed and considered by the LUHS school board in late November 2007.

The study was designed so that there was scientific, cultural, and contextual rigor. Scientifically speaking, the mixed-methods design was created as a case study longitudinal design (de Vaus, 2001). This design allowed rich qualitative and quantitative data and also enabled study stakeholders to co-construct (Thomas & LaPoint, 2004) and participate in the study's design. The study produced historical, cultural, and contextual data which provided meanings from the past to the present regarding Native American achievement and experiences at LUHS. The three guiding questions for the study were answered using the following methods (in parenthesis) and the specific instruments used in the study are included in the appendix section:

1. In what ways is educational success defined? (focus groups, surveys, key informant interviews, observational notes, field notes, transcripts)
2. What are the educational experiences of Native American students and families that LUHS serves? (focus groups, surveys, key informant interviews, longitudinal database, document review, observational notes, field notes, transcripts)
3. Are the educational services provided by LUHS meeting the needs of Native American students and families? (longitudinal database, document review, literature review, curriculum review, surveys, and school site audit)

Information given by Native American and non-Native American participants provided a strong context in which to understand the educational encounters of Native American students and families that attended or currently attend LUHS. Beyond the experiences of Native American students and their respective families, the case study included experiences of non-Native students, teachers, and administration attending or employed at LUHS. These non-Native study participants have observed the Native American experience and/or have participated with Native Americans at LUHS in one form (peer) or another (adult). Senior educational staff from LUHS, community elders, and/or older family members also provided a layer of insight by providing data from the past 30 years to confirm or further investigate emerging themes seen in the project through monthly member checks during the project. Use of key documents from the LDF and LUHS community also provided a historical perspective of the educational experiences of Native Americans. These key documents included administrative, staff, program, community, and external reports or articles previously generated.

To strengthen the validity and reliability of the data generated by the study, regular member checks with LUHS and LDF participants throughout the research process helped BPC understand if the methods for collecting data, analysis of data, and emergent themes were plausible. These member checks also generated discussions for more deeply investigating topics that an external research team may have not necessarily experienced or observed. They also necessitated further data collection, additional stakeholder discussions, and modifications to the project and reports. This needed process across LDF and LUHS stakeholders prolonged the publication of this final report. Key informants, external reports, and information from organizations in the LUHS and LDF communities helped provide diverse and historical perspectives from various authors about the LUHS educational system, school/community relations, and experiences of Native students and families for analysis. Multiple source evidence was triangulated (using a minimum of three sources of data). Triangulation of data from internal and external sources emphasized that the study findings were trustworthy. Therefore, the findings of the study were based on at least three or more than three sources of data. Final raw data has been returned to LUHS for a secondary analysis, if needed.

Contextual elements were included in the study to allow for more authentic and meaningful participation by the diverse stakeholder groups. BPC reviewed key LDF and LUHS historical documents, artifacts, policies, and databases. Reviewing community reports generated by school, Tribal, and/or community researchers from over the last 20 years were included as part of a comprehensive effort to honor past work done and include appropriate information to complete the study. The research team also engaged key informants for assistance with data collection activities, for member checks, and to gain trusted access to school, home, and community members. Finally, rural and Native American elements in general, as well as LDF and LUHS local academic reports were included to inform the study which made it both contextually and culturally appropriate.

From a cultural standpoint, the study was designed to capture the school atmosphere as experienced by Native and non-Native Americans across generations (elder, adult, and student participants). Use of a multi-ethnic research team included elders, adults, and students; Native, non-Native, and multi-racial researchers; and research tools that included Native and other academic instruments, methods, and other processes (member checks, co-construction, and use of LDF cultural/linguistic elements to name several) so that the study was culturally responsive. BPC used incentives and give aways (Native term used for thanks and appreciation) that were traditional for Native Americans and age appropriate for participants. Employing elders for working with the community as well as younger generations, who work with the LDF youth, made the project youth-centered so their voices were included in the research design and in the research itself. Inclusion of and empowering the community or group studied in a scientific research project was critical to the discovery of truth and creating new understandings. Without the inclusion of voices from traditionally disenfranchised, underserved, and/or at risk communities, our scientific work would not have been as academically robust, socially responsible, or useful to the communities we purport to serve (Hood, Hopson, Frierson, 2005). Therefore, by the design and active engagement of the LDF community in the study, we are confident these findings are authentic and defensible to a larger academic community.

Selection of Study Participants

It was important to design a study that included LDF community members, students, and families living on and off the Tribal reservation because only 53% of Tribal members actually

reside on the LDF reservation (LDF Enrollment Department Website, November 2006). The LDF community was defined for this study as the LDF Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (Ojibwe) Indians primarily residing on the reservation in southwestern Vilas County. It also included those community members living off the Tribal Reservation in the southeastern portion of adjacent Iron County, Minocqua, or the LUHS service area.

Participants in the study included past and present LUHS students (Native and non-Native); LUHS administration, educators, and staff; and other LDF students, families, and community members residing in the LUHS service area. The LUHS service area included Native American students and families from the Lac du Flambeau Tribal Reservation community in Lac du Flambeau, WI. Native Americans were also included in the study who reside in the non-Reservation communities that feed into LUHS: Arbor Vitae, Boulder Junction, Harshaw, Hazelhurst, Lac du Flambeau, Lake Tomahawk, Land O' Lakes, Manitowish Waters, Minocqua, Presque Isle, Winchester, and Woodruff. These 12 communities have students who attend the local PK-8 schools which feed into LUHS (9th – 12th grade). The four LUHS feeder district schools that were included are: Arbor Vitae Woodruff; Lac du Flambeau; Minocqua, Hazelhurst, Lake Tomahawk; and Northland Lakeland Elementary.

Nearly 90% of the data collection activities kept Native and non-Native participants separate. Separation along racial lines was developed by consensus in order to create sacred spaces of trust, forthrightness, and anonymity. With exception to this were the community focus groups, the mid-project status report meeting, and the LUHS focus group which included mixed-race staff members that support Native American programming at LUHS. One educators group participated in the study in which 15 LUHS teachers were randomly selected and invited to take part in a focus group. Of the 15 invited, 13 participated in this activity. Special care was taken to keep students and adults separate during data collection to allow for youth-centered research strategies. Finally, Native student participants were separated by grade level to better understand the data generated at the various developmental levels as LDF students move through their four years of secondary education at LUHS. Table 2 below summarized the scope of the study and size of the data collection activities:

Table 2: Summary of scope and sample size

Data Collection Activity	Sample Size
1. Document Review	N=86
2. Key Informant Interviews	N=22
3. Key Informant Surveys	N=134
4. Adult Focus Groups	7 focus groups (N=132)
5. Student Focus Groups	7 focus groups (N=123)
6. Student Surveys	N=107
7. Community Surveys	N=43
8. 4MAT Surveys	N=34
9. Online Curriculum Units Reviewed	N=65
10. Comprehensive Student Database	9 academic years (1998-2007)
11. LUHS School Site Audit	N=29 rooms (100% bulletin boards, display cases, corridors, & external space reviewed)

The data collection for the study primarily focused on the Native American student and family experience to, “determine the possible causes for successful and struggling Native American students” (p. 1, BPC/LUHS contract) and to understand the levels of Native family involvement with LUHS. Past efforts of research, school reports, or current LUHS initiatives did not consistently have representation of the LDF students, families, or community as a primary or first source for data. Examples include: No data or minutes from stated weekly meetings between LUHS administration and LDF Tribal Education Director and no evidence of monthly meetings or minutes between LUHS and LDF Tribe as stipulated by the Ley 2007 report “historical conflicts” (p. 3). Perspectives, hypothesis, educational philosophies, programming, and other decisions made for Native Americans as noted in past reports were overwhelmingly derived from non-Native people and sources. Therefore the multi-ethnic research team felt strongly that the primary sources of data should be gathered from Native American participants, Indigenous literature bases, and other local resources. This data collection method ensured that for the first time the authentic experiences, diverse perspectives, and educational resources existing in the LDF and larger Native American community would be comprehensively documented and thoroughly grounded. As secondary and tertiary data sources, LUHS and other community reports, resources, and related information was used for the study.

LDF community and family members with students currently in LUHS were selected for the study as were students of LUHS themselves. Native and non-Native students attending LUHS participated in focus groups and completed student surveys. Native youth (presently attending LUHS) or young adult LDF focus groups (recent graduates of LUHS) were completed on the LDF reservation. The location for these focus groups on the LDF Reservation was to secure higher levels of participation, anonymity, and a comfort level of being in their own Tribal community. Participants of the focus groups as well as the Native students currently attending LUHS were also asked to complete student surveys. Non-Native students were also given an opportunity to complete a student survey and participate in a non-Native focus group during the study.

Data collected for the LUHS focus groups was based on a purposeful sample of participants. For this project, BPC chose a small sample to be more statistically representative of the target population to conduct the focus groups for students and teachers. This allowed a subset of populations to be included in the study. Participants in the LUHS focus groups (all non-Natives) were randomly chosen for the educator focus group. The other adult focus groups included the specific staff at LUHS that support Native American students, families, and programs for the LDF community. Participants in these adult groups were guidance counselors, Indian mentors, LUHS administrative staff, Tribal education staff, Intercultural Leadership Initiative (ILI) staff, LDF culture and language staff, and LDF elders, community members, and government officials.

The comprehensive research design produced robust data. Given the social, economic, racial/ethnic, and educational demographics of the primary participants in the study (Native Americans), it was critical to include a design that was culturally responsive and empowering to these members (American Evaluation Association, 2004). The readers of this report can be assured that the findings were trustworthy and valid because of the strong design elements mentioned earlier and particularly due to the inclusion of the five elements of multicultural validity in the study’s design (Kirkhart, 2005):

1. Consequential – The social consequences of understandings and judgments and the actions taken based upon them

2. Experiential – Congruence with the lived experience of participants in the program and in the evaluation process
3. Theoretical – The cultural congruence of theoretical perspectives underlying the program, the evaluation, and assumptions of validity
4. Methodological – The cultural appropriateness of measurement tools and cultural congruence of design configurations
5. Interpersonal – The quality of the interactions between and among participants in the evaluation process

Data Analysis

From the data collection activities, BPC team members recorded data using instruments and methods LUHS approved. Data was cleaned, coded, and entered into a digital database after each trip to the LDF and LUHS communities. Recorded audio data was typed into transcripts and coded using keywords related to the three guiding questions for the study mentioned earlier. Quantitative data from surveys and the comprehensive student database was entered into Excel spreadsheets and an analysis of variance was completed to determine statistical trends. All data sets were analyzed and discussed by no less than three BPC staff to record impressions, discuss the validity/accuracy of the findings, and give formative feedback to one another. For the mid-project status report and final project report, the BPC team met, conducted a sociological process recording technique to analyze data, and discussed major findings to see if field observations by BPC staff were consistent with summarized data given by participants. These process recording sessions were taped, transcribed, and analyzed by the Project Administrator. Final raw and cleaned data was returned to LUHS. At the July 2007 meeting with LUHS, this report was shared with stakeholders to consider and discuss the study's findings, confer about the impact of the study, and determine best information dissemination strategies so LDF/LUHS stakeholders and community may learn about the study. BPC did two revisions to the initial July report (August 2007) based on feedback from administration (September 2007) and through a second round of feedback from the curriculum committee (October 2007). In the future, BPC will address any questions stakeholders may have, will work with stakeholders to prioritize recommendations (short and long term), and give consideration to possible next steps for stakeholders, if contracted to do so by LUHS.

Discussion & Findings

As an overview of the LUHS demographics from the last ten years, BPC created a multiple page Excel document that tracked vital statistics for students at LUHS from 1998 through 2007. Databases were developed to analyze the following academic, behavioral, and demographic data sets over time: number of Native/non-Native students; grade level (9-12) populations; low income populations; special education populations; science, English, math, and social studies scores; graduation, attendance, drop out, expulsion, and suspension rates; and grade point averages (GPA). During the most recent academic year (2006-07), LUHS served a total of 941 students in grades 9 through 12. Of the total students, 211 (or 22.4%) were Native American and 730 (or 78%) were non-Native. On average from 1999-2007, the following statistics have been documented:

- LUHS served an average of 961 students annually
 - 795 were non-Native students (82% of the student enrollment)
 - 167 were Native American Students (17.3% of the student enrollment)

- Of the 17.3% Native American student body
 - 62.3% or 104 of Native students were in poverty
 - 21.6% or 36 of Native students were labeled special ed

Table 3: Native American GPA averages at LUHS

NATIVE AMERICAN GPA AVERAGES at LUHS								
Grade	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	AVG % change
9th	1.9829	1.6844	1.3383	1.6188	1.9645	1.7809	1.7152	1.7264%
10th	1.7502	1.904	1.7317	1.6476	1.717	1.9468	1.7828	1.7828%
11th	2.0268	1.7374	1.9177	1.9931	1.8889	1.832	1.8643	1.8943%
12th	2.3063	2.5598	2.4022	2.3953	2.3033	2.403	2.1774	2.3639%

Defining Educational Success

Defining educational success was derived from focus groups, surveys, key informant interviews, observational notes, field notes, and transcripts data. It was clear that there was not one definition for educational success at LUHS. After a mid-project meeting with LUHS in June 2007, a secondary analysis of project data was conducted to learn about how participants in the study define educational success, educational barriers to success, and recommendations for being more successful at LUHS. Project participants had 1,147 individual pieces of information that were gathered and categorized into three areas: educational success, educational barriers, and recommendations. Each of the three areas also provided specific examples and/or concrete strategies for improving educational services at LUHS. This information was then delivered via e-mail to LUHS administration as an 11 page supplemental document on August 7, 2007.

The initial analysis completed in June 2007 as well as the 11 page supplemental document showed that definitions for success were drawn based on two very different perceptions grounded in the LDF and LUHS community. LUHS school staff and administration based educational success more strictly upon good grades, graduation, transitional activities, and going to college (nearly 100% of the time based on interviews, transcripts, field notes, document review of LUHS administrative documents, and through field observations). LDF students, families, and community members also recognized this as part of educational success (24.8% of the 426 defining educational success responses) but over 90% of the time LDF participants in the study also noted other affective and comprehensive definitions for success beyond the traditional academic definition used by LUHS. These included: trying hard, extracurricular participation, respecting others, dedication, feeling successful, being cooperative, having a good attitude, and helping family or community, to name several.

Understanding these stated differences, between the LDF and LUHS communities, as well as the educational philosophies and practices not so explicitly stated, was critical to broadening the definition of educational success so it was inclusive of the Indigenous population at LUHS. This will lead to new understandings between LDF/LUHS and will help the process for improving the educational outcomes for Native American students and families that LUHS serves. Other noted study statistics highlight the difference in how education is defined by the Native and non-Native groups at LUHS:

- 69% of students said family support was “very helpful” for their educational success and of these respondents:

- 88% of the non-Native students stated parental support was “very important” to educational success
- Only 7% of Native American students stated parental support was “very important” to their success at LUHS
- 70% of *non-Native* students perceived any challenges to them being educationally successful *due to the choices they made*
- 60% of *Native* students perceived any challenges to them being educationally successful due to the *choices others made* which negatively impact them
- Native and non-Native students also reported differently on where their educational support systems come from as illustrated in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Educational support systems for students

Sources of Support	Non-Native Students	Native Students
Peers/Self	83%	43%
Family	75%	40%
School (all sources)	50%	25%

Seventy percent of the non-Native participants defined educational success in terms of traditional educational achievement levels and standardized test scores. Subject or classroom test scores, grade point averages, standardized test scores, and graduation rates were most commonly cited to define educational success at LUHS. Interviews, observations, field notes, and transcripts further support educational success being defined by LUHS via traditional test scores. Academic rigor was the standard used by LUHS administration to measure success and was provided to students as part of the educational package that LUHS delivers. At LUHS, definitions of educational success were isolated from contextual and cultural meanings or definitions. Information was collected through site visits, observational notes, focus groups, school classroom audits, and surveys. This was observed through low/no use of community, Indigenous, or regional resources, authors, or use of local topics in curriculum, classrooms, or school. The pedagogical strategies and traditional delivery of curriculum content (textbooks, heavy reliance on photocopied worksheets, and using a lecture method to deliver subject content from experts in classroom texts in 77% of the classrooms to name several) reinforced LUHS’ definition of educational success through a more traditional educational service delivery model. This educational model had outcomes that reinforce and measure individual outcomes through grade point averages, standardized test scores, and college placement exam scores. The traditional model that LUHS utilizes does not necessarily connect to or primarily define educational success through measuring social and community outcomes which were seen as important by the Native American participants in the study.

Comparatively speaking, only 30% of Native American respondents used these traditional academic definitions to define educational success. Of the 30% responding, getting good grades, graduating from high school, and “going to college *and* graduating” were the traditional definitions of educational success noted by Native Americans in the study. An average of 92% of Native Americans responded on the survey instrument that their notions of educational success were defined in terms of having positive relationships in school, feeling a sense of being respected or valued, and/or using education as a tool to help others they know in their families or community. Sixty-three percent of Native respondents said that being able to

attend school daily, doing well despite current school conditions, and/or having home and school support for their education was how they define success at LUHS. Education was mentioned by 100% of the Native American respondents as a foundation that they will have to support their families and/or communities in some way. Several examples of support given by LDF participants included: getting good jobs, creating a better life, being a leader/role model, and being seen as someone who is “doing good” for their community or family. Native Americans in the study defined educational success as something to be meaningful, understood, and helpful to others beyond themselves. This affective and communal understanding of educational success by Native Americans moved well beyond a more traditional definition that LUHS used which uses grades or academic rigor as a unilateral definition – a key distinction between the LDF and LUHS community.

Educational Experiences of Native American Students

The educational experiences of Native Americans was generated from focus groups, surveys, key informant interviews, longitudinal databases, document review, observational notes, field notes, and transcripts which provide empirical information. The data also strongly informed if and how LUHS meets or did not meet the educational needs of the Native American constituents they served. The statistical trends provided in this section demonstrate that there were long-term problems that LUHS had not been able to solve when it comes to the education of Native American students. The report will speak about the educational experiences for Native Americans first. Secondly, this section concludes with how the qualitative and quantitative data deepen our understandings about the impact of LUHS on Native American students.

Related to the educational experiences of Native Americans at LUHS, it was interesting to note that both Native and non-Native participants write or speak about experiences that were observed or lived regarding Native Americans at LUHS. Evidence regarding this question was very strong because despite the age, race, economic, academic, or other demographic indicators, several findings held true across the various sub-groups of participants (or held true using multiple internal and external databases). There were strengths and numerous positive strategies that LUHS used as noted by study participants:

- Positive strategies which have worked for Native students/families are:
 - 69% listed support programs/services to be helpful (ER West, Journey, ILI, Native student mentors to name several examples)
 - 54% listed programs with culture and language were positive
- Native American strengths: Native culture/history, perseverance, strong elders/families, & ER WEST provide good experiences
- The Intercultural Leadership Initiative program provides a direct link on the school web page to assist Native and non-Native youth
- 12 teachers and/or teaching staff were specifically identified by Native/non-Native youth and adult participants as having classrooms that were particularly positive places for students within LUHS
 - These classrooms have strong connections to Native American students and families and have the best local and broad Native American curricular resources based on site visits and the school audit. Examples found include:
 - Cultural and traditional materials (tobacco pouches, artwork locally created, local Native music, etc)

- Lesson plans and units incorporating local, WI, and Midwest Tribes into the curriculum
- Books, textbooks, media, and other educational materials that were scientifically and culturally rigorous for Native American students
- High and/or consistent levels of student, family, and community participation in their classrooms
- Good experiential knowledge of the community, resources, appropriate behaviors, and some linguistic knowledge

The research team found many initiatives and practices of how LUHS staff had been working to improve the educational outcomes for Native American students over the past 20 years:

- Weekly meetings and joint activities by Tribal Education Director and LUHS Curriculum Director were reported by LUHS administration
- Use of learning communities and book discussions by LUHS staff on relevant topics for Native American students
- Use of LUHS and LDF budget and grant dollars to support personnel positions for Native American mentors, guidance counselors, and other educational support staff
- Shared Curriculum Director between LDF and LUHS
- Several small and large multiple year grant awards secured for Native American programming and services
- Evidence of Superintendent, Principal, & Curriculum Director review of data, staff thematic units, and classroom observations to improve the educational content and delivery to Native American, at risk, special education, and students in poverty
- Specialized studies, in-house trainings, external professional development certificates, and coordination of services with the LDF tribe, Great Lakes Intertribal Council, and other community based organizations that can assist Native students and families
- Multiple and on-going review of school data used in staff data retreats and to inform administrative decisions on an annual basis (at minimum) was noted for increasing/strengthening services to Native American students/families, increasing achievement scores for Native American students, and strengthening family involvement at LUHS
- Native American information was included on 77% of the daily bulletins from January to June 2007 that provide resources which would be important to LDF students and families
- Senior educational staff, counselors, and community member working for 20 or more years to join the LDF/LUHS community in social and educational spaces when appropriate and possible
- Evidence of meetings with mentors, teachers, and specialized staff (ILI) that support Native American students and families.

Conversely, project data also illustrated that many Native participants have not had positive educational experiences at LUHS. An appropriate level of inclusion for Native Americans at LUHS was not found which will be discussed next.

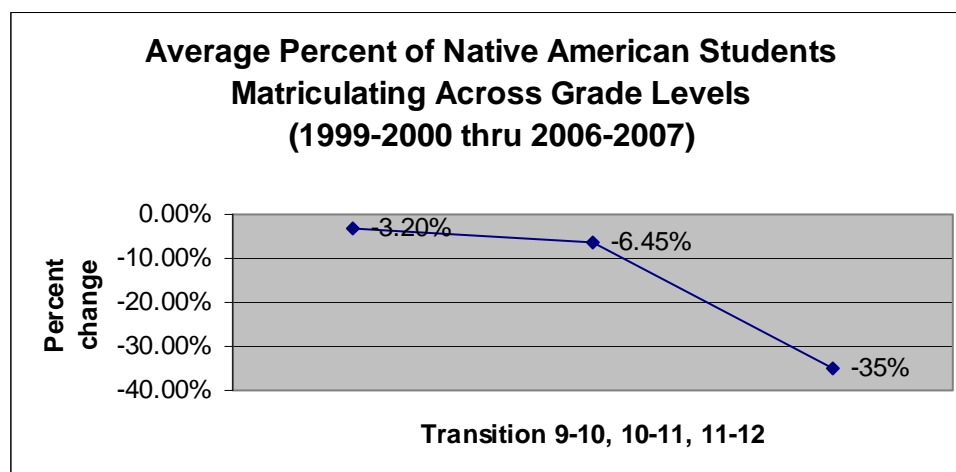
The freshman year was most often mentioned by Native and non-Native adults in the study as a difficult transition year. Participants cite this was due to LDF students moving from a

public school located on a Tribal Reservation, where they made up nearly 100% of the school population, to LUHS, where they became 17.3% of the school population on average. The switch from LDF students being a majority to a minority group in school was not the only harsh transition Native students faced when attending LUHS. On average, Native American students attending LDF experienced school poverty rates of 62.3% as compared to LUHS where the school wide poverty rate for non-Natives was only 18% on average (WI Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS) Website for LDF and LUHS, 2000-2007). Notably, the poverty rates for LDF students attending LUHS still remain at 62.3% on average. LUHS staff and administration working with these Native students need to be well educated and comfortable in implementing strategies specific for Native American families from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The cultural and linguistic diversity of these families must also be incorporated at LUHS beginning with learning about and valuing those you teach. More strategies will be discussed later in the recommendations section.

Organizationally, LUHS must also have administrative, policy, and an educational service delivery model that is responsive and appropriate for Indigenous and in-poverty learners. Knowledge deficits of the culture or contexts (Native American, poverty) that these students and their families come from will result in persistently low levels of family involvement, educational achievement, and success for Native Americans which need to be remedied and supported by a trained LUHS staff. The leadership at LUHS must incorporate philosophies and processes that will be responsive to Native communities. BPC provided an educational reference list as well as an annotated bibliography of scientifically based educational programming for Native American students. More strategies will be discussed in the recommendations section later in this report.

Statistical data on dropout, graduation, attendance, suspension, and expulsion rates showed a deeper view of LDF students as they matriculate from middle through secondary school. The study did not include data sets from middle school; therefore the research team could not make any quantitative analysis of the transition from LDF to LUHS. However, with statistics provided by LUHS (2000-2007 administrative documents) and the WI DPI (2000-2007 WINSS), we see that Native American students drop out, stop out, matriculate, and graduate at the lowest levels as compared to any other group at LUHS, in WI, and nationally (Bowman, 2003; Education Week, 2006; National Indian Education Association, 2005). As LDF students moved from 9th up to 12th grade, we have seen with statistical intensity exactly where Native American students had issues getting through the LUHS program.

Figure 1:



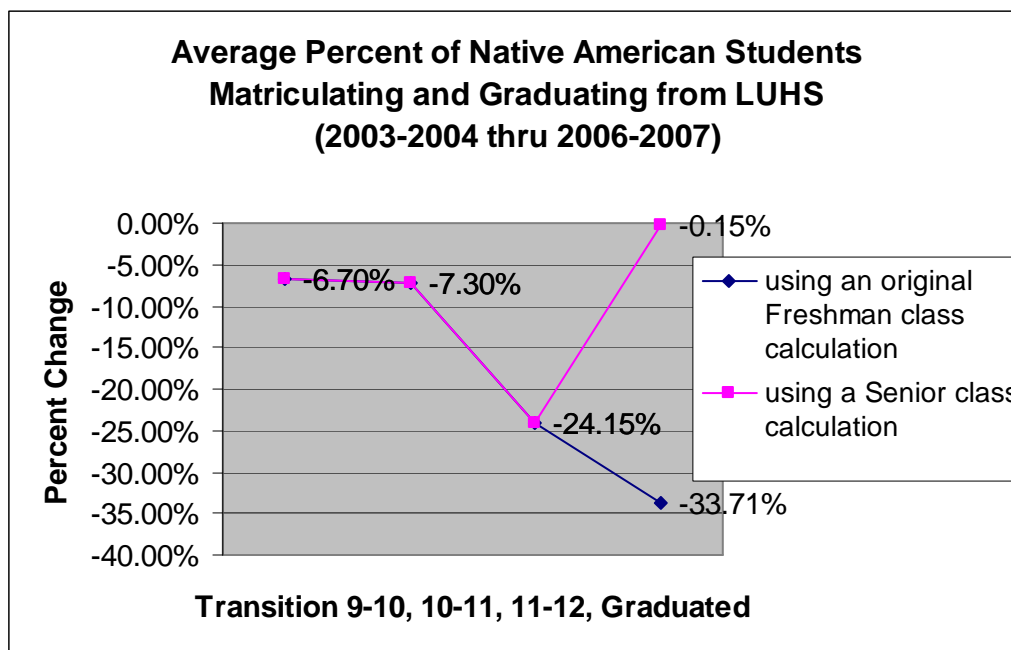
Data generated by the study confirmed that the longer Native Americans stay at LUHS, the lower their chances were for educational success. For example, by analyzing various years of LUHS class lists, student records reports, and reviewing LUHS administrative records, the Native American graduation rate was 49% on average as compared to 82.25% for non-Native students over a four year period. While there was evidence that GPA increased for some Native American students at LUHS over time, nearly half of the total Native American student population at LUHS that started in 9th grade did not graduate. For purposes of this study, graduation rates for Native American students were calculated based on the names of students who began the freshman class at LUHS and were compared to those from the original class who graduated four years later. Graduation rates for LUHS are included in Table 5 below for the years comparative data was available:

Table 5: Graduation rates for LUHS

Year	# N.A. in Original Freshman Class at LUHS	# N.A. Seniors Graduating	# N.A. from the Original Class Receiving an LUHS diploma
1999-2000	36	23 (64% grad rate)	17 (47% grad rate)
2000-01	51	31 (61% grad rate)	26 (51% grad rate)
2001-02	49	25 (51% grad rate)	18 (37% grad rate)
2002-03	43	32 (74% grad rate)	26 (60% grad rate)

Use of external data sets from the WI Department of Public Instruction, the LDF community, WINSS, and independent academic research substantiate the low levels of matriculation and graduation rates for Native American students. Notably, the student exit surveys, administrative reports, and other key documents collected during the study cited multiple ways to calculate graduation rates and provide many reasons for lower Native American graduation rates (Education Week, 2006). Using the LUHS class numbers for the senior class and the original freshman class numbers to calculate matriculation and graduation rates through LUHS, we observed the following differences:

Figure 2:



Beyond graduation, the impact of the four year experience at LUHS culminates in final statistics that affect Native American students well after high school:

- From 2002-2006, the records showed that 149 non-Native students completed AP courses as compared to 1 Native American student
- Over a three year period 467 scholarships for college were given to LUHS students and less than 5% of those went to minority students (Native American, Hispanic, Asian, or African American)

These statistics highlighted the various and long term educational risk factors for Native American students and families. These study findings were consistent with other state and national research studies for the last four decades (Beaulieu, Sparks, & Alonzo, 2005; Bowman, 2003; Coleman, 1966; Education Week, 2006; National Indian Education Association (NIEA), 2005; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2003). In analyzing the data produced by our study, the highest reasons cited for Native students not graduating were based on social, emotional, and health factors. Mental health (depression, anxiety, sleep disorders, substance abuse, etc.) and domestic matters (pregnancies, economic issues, caring for sick family, etc.) were cited for over 85% of the reasons students were habitually truant, home schooled, or stop/drop out of LUHS as listed on the documents reviewed by BPC. This was confirmed in the scientific literature published by local and national academics, where we have strongly seen the research basis of nearly 80 years that demonstrate Native Americans suffer mental, physical, social, and economic trauma at rates that are multiple times higher than any other group in the United States (Beaulieu, Sparks, & Alonzo, 2005; Bergstrom, Cleary, & Peacock, 2003; Coleman, 1966; Green & Tonnesen, 1991; Meriam, 1928; U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2003).

In summary, Native American students and families continued to get ill fitted educational programs and services that truly meet the unique social, cultural, linguistic, physical, mental, and emotional needs in the Indian community (Ley, 2007; National Advisory Council on Indian Education, 2005, 2006; National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2005a, 2005b; NIEA, 2005; U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2003; Yellow Bird, 1999). The disconnect with the Native culture and community, in the name of scientific and academic rigor, had produced the same results that there have always been. Consequently, this was the reason that 14 major educational studies on Native American education have continued to investigate and produce basically the same findings to improve Indian education since 1923 (Bowman, 2007). These academically grounded facts make it imperative for LUHS to adjust programming and practices that have been proven to work with Native American populations. Use of the supplementary resources materials in the appendix will assist LUHS with these changes.

Challenges to Educational Success at LUHS

Understanding the educational barriers to success at LUHS for LDF students was derived from focus groups, surveys, key informant interviews, observational notes, field notes, and transcripts data. After a mid-project meeting with LUHS in June 2007, a secondary analysis of project data was conducted to learn about how participants in the study defined educational success, educational barriers to success, and recommendations for being more successful at LUHS. The 1,147 individual pieces of information from 247 participants were categorized into three areas: educational success, educational barriers, and recommendations. Each of the three areas also provided specific examples and/or concrete strategies which have been shared in an 11 page supplemental document.

The initial analysis completed in June 2007 as well as through the supplemental documents showed that participants stated that at LUHS there was a culture of low expectations, fear, and distrust that permeated LUHS. A “toxic” educational culture was evident at LUHS for Native American students. Toxic culture of a school or organization is understood by educational organizational theorists (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Deal & Peterson, 2003; Fullan, 2001) as having a culture that places responsibility primarily on students and families. This type of toxic culture sees chronically low levels of educational success, lack of accountability of school staff for student success of disempowered students, and staff continue to teach, lead, and/or interact based on an incorrect set of assumptions about the very students they were trying to help be successful. In a school culture academic paper, Professor Kent Peterson says, “In a toxic school environment teacher relations are often conflictual, the staff doesn't believe in the ability of the students to succeed, and a generally negative attitude [persists]” (Cromwell, 2005).

The school data collection, document review, interviews, focus groups, and school site audits supported this theory that LUHS does have a toxic culture towards Native American students and families. During the site visits, the research team documented 11 teachers and/or teaching staff who were continually and specifically identified by Native/non-Native youth and adult participants as being particularly challenging, toxic, and unsafe places for students within LUHS. Overwhelmingly noted by participants as the primary reason for a toxic school culture for Native American students at LUHS was “racism”. Over 50% of the 316 responses stated that barriers to educational success or examples of barriers were related to racism. Several examples include:

- “If you are successful in this system, you are non-Native. If you are unsuccessful you are Native”

- “Culturally incompetent teachers”
- Mistreatment of students “from the REZ”
- “Non-Native students treated differently than Natives”
- “Having to put up with the bullshit the Natives go through”
- “Natives are provoked because ‘he’ thinks all Natives are in gangs”
- Frequent use of the word “Timber Nigger” or “Spearing” when referring to Native students
- “Historical feeling of unwelcome [for Natives] at LUHS”
- Administrative staff person with “no knowledge or [required] teaching of local culture”

After racism, issues with a particular LUHS staff member were the second most reason for a toxic educational environment at LUHS. Of the 316 responses for educational barriers and examples of educational barriers, 28.2% of the responses produced consistent perceptible evidence of LUHS administration and staff having a negative impact on students. One administrative staff in particular was listed by name 29.2% of the time (based on 89 responses). This administrative staff was listed by respondents as, “intimidating”; “lying about”; being “provoked”; and victimized by “intimidation” and differentiated “punishment” for Native American students at LUHS. These results and perceptions created a school environment where Native (especially and in particular) as well as non-Native students did feel fearful, disrespected, and devalued. These long-term negative feelings and toxic school culture lead to chronic behavioral, academic, and social issues – which were currently and historically seen in the LUHS longitudinal data cited in this study. Another piece of project evidence to support these findings was that the joint LDF/LUHS educational agreement stipulations were not being consistently carried out in a measurable way as agreed upon (monthly meetings, measured progress towards goals, reporting to Tribal Council, etc.). This negatively impacts students and families as well as the LDF community at large. At least 27 community members, families, and students (Native and non-Native) expressed specific concern about the lack of follow through and accountability by LDF Tribal Government and/or the LUHS School Board and Administration to carry this plan out. A recent Virchow & Krause study (2007) also strongly noted the disconnect and need for strengthening relationships between LUHS and the LDF community.

On the LUHS website the research team found no links to Native American tribes, general academic resources for teaching Native American content, or local information for Native American people, organizations, or curriculum. Intercultural Leadership Initiative was the only source cited for Native American information. A study of the physical school structure, classrooms, hallways, curriculum, library, and other physical audits conducted by the research team found little (well below 10% of all information available at LUHS) to no evidence of positive contributions, resources, or citations from or about Native Americans locally or nationally. Specific statistics from the physical audit of the school over three site visits demonstrated that 69% of the information was negative regarding LDF students based on the review of 87 documents. Posters, WebPages, and several administrative reports, which specifically included names of Native American students and families, contained primarily negative Native American information. The documented information found during the study was considered negative because any written information was about drop outs, substance abuse, family issues, and other at risk factors.

In a related way, there was a very noticeable absence of positive Native American data, reports, or resources in classrooms, within educational reading material/library books, on bulletin boards, or in the curriculum regarding Native Americans. Very few books and educational resources authored by local or national Native scholars were available in classrooms, administrative offices, or other areas (such as the library). Data, written information, and resources that show Native American strengths and positive contributions were present well below 10% of the time at LUHS. Due to the fact that there was very low positive documented information about Native American resources or partnerships contributed to the unwelcome feeling for natives at LUHS. The adult and student interview, focus group, and survey data also verified this finding and were included in the LUHS internal administrative working document #1. This was in stark contrast to the overwhelmingly positive and written documentation for the non-Native students as seen throughout the LUHS curriculum, WebPages, newsletters, bulletin boards, reports, and other internal/external documents.

The knowledge of the culture and cultural appropriateness was low for LUHS staff based on study findings. An example was that there was a taxidermied religious symbol with a European and scientific explanation of the stuffed eagle which was on display in the entry way. Native Americans have expressed the inappropriateness, cultural disregard, and at times anger and/or disgust of the ignorance of the school with regards to Native American matters. Culture and language was taught in isolation and in a room with rows and open space that echoed instead of an easy and appropriate environment for learning language. Value and contributions by LDF members and Native people in general were left up to staff specifically assigned to native students. Meaning that incorporation of Indigenous contributions was not evident across all classrooms and curriculum but was primarily limited to specialized areas within LUHS. As a response to these examples, many Native American students had chosen to be good, be quiet, and/or get along despite these symbols. As expressed by LDF students there were daily “racial slurs” and “racist comments” they endured while attending LUHS.

Racism was the number one reason provided by participants as the reason they felt uncomfortable. The second reason students stated they were uncomfortable was because of one staff member from the administrative team who made LUHS challenging for them. The level of despair, racism, and defeatism that was present at LUHS contributes to acting out or checking out of school (drop out, stop out, chronic absenteeism) by LDF students. Statistics, perspectives, and study findings suggested an overall negative school culture that impacted LDF students, their families, and the Native community. As a result, LUHS had been perceived as “unsafe”, “hostile”, “racist”, and generally not welcoming to Native American students and families. The empirical data supported findings for these claims:

- Historically (last 5-20 years), 100% of respondents said family involvement had been good at LDF as compared to only 4% for LUHS
- 64% of key informants responded that there was low/no family involvement at LUHS
- Of 73 LUHS course offerings provided to staff for credit in the LUHS professional development binder, only 1 was offered that was specific for Native American populations (Native American Psychology)
- Of the documents reviewed for 25 LUHS staff, less than 4% had recent and relevant training specifically related to Native Americans learners
- In a review of 192 articles from the T-Bird News from 2001-2007, there was a total of 11 articles with Native American content

- In a review of 24 CESA 9 newsletters, two had Native American content (November or fall issues) and there was one training documented that was available and related to Native Americans
- There were 63 books in the LUHS library about Native Americans
 - There were 0 books in the library on the Ojibwe people that have been written by local authors and the 1 Ojibwe book was published by a non-Native author from Philadelphia
 - 1 book (1.6% of the collection) had information about all 11 tribes in WI that was authentic and authored by a Native American researcher
 - 51% of the books were about the lifestyles, philosophies, and other cultural traditions of Native Americans not living in WI or even in the Midwest
 - 83% of the books were written and published by non-Native American authors

From 2005 to 2007, a review of the upcoming events calendar on the LUHS site was analyzed (one month per quarter) to document LDF or other Native community events. Five percent or a total of 80 Native American events out of 1,675 community events were documented on the LUHS website events calendar. Many of the events occurred in November (the traditional month to celebrate Native American activities through Thanksgiving) or in spring (when the WI Indian Education Association conference was held). If LDF students were truly part of the LUHS community, then there should have been school elements representative of that community to show respect, contributions, and value for the Native students and families throughout the year.

In summary, the chronic low levels of academic achievement, low graduation rates, and little/no use of authentic and appropriate Native American resources in the school, on the staff, and within the curriculum at LUHS supported the toxic school culture premise. Multiple reports over the last 20 years also note the significant academic, educational, and social issues seen for Native Americans at LUHS. The near absence of Indigenous presence in the school's leadership, committees, and other regular activities was startling. Organizationally, LUHS' near exclusion of an Indigenous presence within the four pillars of an educational organization (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Deal & Peterson, 2003) - symbolic, structural-functional, human resource, and political - made positive change difficult and result in the same educational outcomes over the years that LUHS has served LDF students and families.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Participants listed 323 specific recommendations and strategies for improving the LUHS educational system for Native American students and families. These recommendations were included in the 11 page supplemental document given to LUHS. Of the 323 participants 59.4% of the recommendations suggested dealing with racism directly by improving the curriculum, hiring more Native teachers, authentically partnering and participating with and within the LDF community, and having LDF/LUHS work consistently to address the chronic educational and school issues the study (and other studies) had found. Participants provided examples and helpful suggestions on content information, educational delivery, and local sources for information that could be used at LUHS which were appropriate for Native American students.

Beyond the participant's suggestions, the research team discussed and provided other helpful recommendations. The BPC team also provided a helpful reference list and the appendix also includes an annotated bibliography as well as an academic resource list for LUHS to use in

the future as they improve the educational system for LDF students. The definition of educational success must be broadened beyond academic test scores and include perspectives from the students who are not part of the majority class. Minority students, including Native Americans, as well as students from low socio-economic and at risk backgrounds need to have a place in that definition. Educational success at LUHS must be defined so that programs, policies, and personnel can be developed, implemented, measured for positive changes in educational outcomes. Trainings and staff evaluations must be used so there will be measurement and accountability for positive changes at LUHS. Programs for Native students must be comprehensive to address the social, emotional, and other needs before or as strongly as academic needs. Providing more academic rigor to compensate for the long-term issues documented in this report is not the appropriate response for this specific community of learners. And if rigor continues to be the method for “improving” the educational system for LDF students, then LUHS can expect similar educational results as they’ve seen the last 20 years.

Secondly, beyond inclusion of broader definitions, the staff at LUHS must become current with and continue to be trained on issues relevant to Native Americans, students in poverty, and at risk communities. You can’t teach or administer what you don’t know, don’t live, or aren’t held responsible for (Delpit, 1995; Gilliland, 1999). The current workforce does not possess the philosophies, content knowledge, and/or appropriate strategies to work with the Native Americans being served as noted by training binders, school professional development calendars, and classroom materials and curriculum. Native Americans are nearly one quarter of their constituents and everyone would benefit from this type of professional development. If the workforce *does* have the ability but will not employ their skills to improve student experiences at LUHS, then performance measurements individually as well as organizationally must be put in place so the staff at LUHS is successful. Engaging other Native American educators, traditional teachers, Indigenous academics, and Native organizations will help LUHS with strengthening LUHS educational programming for Native American students and families. There are many local (LDF), WI, Midwest, and national resources that are not being utilized. The annotated bibliography and other resources provided with the final report will help LUHS with this endeavor.

Thirdly, address the educational challenges and successes provided by the experiences participants shared in the study. Replicate the practices that work (sports, ILI, ER West teaching methods and scheduling, successful classrooms that have worked with Native students, etc.) in other classrooms at LUHS. Study more deeply those classrooms where Native students feel comfortable. Observe the content of the curriculum, the process of delivering the content, and listen to how the students and teachers interact. Address the areas where students feel scared, harassed, or intimidated. If it is due to inappropriate bullying or unprofessional behaviors that do not follow the school’s policy, deal with it swiftly and directly. If there are overt racial practices, institutional practices that are racist (lack of representation in the LUHS school culture, on staff, or in the curriculum to name several), or other covert activities based on race deal with them directly. Hold people accountable in and outside of LUHS and work as a team with LDF stakeholders as equal partners to make LUHS a safe and fun place to learn. Talk about these difficult racial issues and include skilled facilitators, Native academics, elders, and traditional peacekeepers to help.

Finally, other solutions provided by participants in the study suggest ways to improve LUHS educational efforts for Native American students/families. Consider and use these study participant suggestions:

- Training and regular use of Native American educational methods, discipline philosophies, and curriculum (specific to LDF when possible) by non-Native staff (see annotated bibliography and Native academic journal list in the appendix)
- LUHS needs to be actively involved outside of the school with the LDF community and culture
- Creating systemic changes through community wide efforts with Native and non-Native students, parents, and families
- Increasing Native staff in educational, administrative, and social/communal ways at LUHS as it will be a practical and symbolic step towards inclusion
- Addressing long-term issues directly by returning back to the consistent implementation and monitoring of making positive educational changes for Native students as articulated in the LDF/LUHS agreement (hire an external monitor if needed to report to LUHS and the LDF governance)
- Provide Native students more AP courses, better staff, and more support programs for academic content and study skills
- Develop social networking and community building programs that connect LDF/LUHS students in elementary and middle school on a regular basis (monthly/quarterly)
- Start an active community outreach program that includes staff experiences negotiated into their contract, as part of school policy, and/or as a formal part of the professional development plan
- Use performance measures to hold staff accountable for making culturally appropriate changes and implementing new skills in their classrooms through their annual evaluation, lesson plan review, and regular classroom observations
- Start small by beginning a parent to parent program through ILI or another trusted community organization to start building bridges into LDF (for LUHS staff) and then back to LUHS (for Native families); expand and apply this practice across cultures and communities for heterogeneous and community activities
- LUHS needs to hire staff that are Native American at the administrative, educator, and support staff level
- LUHS needs to hire and/or train existing staff in culturally appropriate methods for native students and families as proven by scientific research (see annotated bibliography and Native educational reference documents sent to LUHS in June 2007)

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