



Reasons Behind the Lack of Academic Achievement of Native American Students

This study contains the emerging findings of a study that Dr. Ferrer conducted in the state of Arizona to find out, from the students' perspectives, the reasons behind their lack of academic achievement and low-test scores on the Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS).



Wherever there is a gap, we can build a bridge...

May 16, 2007

Dr. [REDACTED]
Native American School District [REDACTED]
PO BOX 1500
[REDACTED] Arizona 2500

Dear Superintendent:

I am pleased to present to you "*Reasons Behind the Lack of Academic Achievement of Native American Students*" report.

This report contains the thirteen (13) Emerging Findings of the study that was conducted at your school district, on March 8, 2007, in order to find out, from the Native American students' perspective, the contributory grounds for their poor performance on the Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS). It also contains six (6) Recommendations that could help your district improve the academic achievement of your students and the written responses of the students who participated in this study.

The students who participated in this study were all high school students enrolled in advanced courses. Through a focus group conversation, more than twenty students reacted to a Power Point presentation about the role of education in today's society, what a quality life means in the United States and the state and district students' performance on the AIMS. After an hour-long discussion, they were asked to answer, in writing and individually, the following two questions:

1. Why Native American students score lower than other ethnic groups on the AIMS?
2. What can the school do to help Native American students improve their performance on the AIMS test?

I support the efforts that you as the Superintendent, the Board, the administration, the school principal, and the school faculty are making to improve the academic achievement of Native American students. It has been my privilege to serve you and your District.

Yours truly,

Dr. Lourdes Ferrer

STUDY FINDINGS:

The following findings emerged as the views of Native American high school students regarding their lack of academic achievement and low test scores on the AIMS.

1. Students' Lack of Academic Mentoring

The students expressed that they did not have caring adults they could go to for guidance and support. According to the students, their parents lack the academic experience to monitor their academic careers and the teachers, guidance counselors, and the school administration in general, which had the ability to do so, did not care about their education and were not interested in helping them succeed in school.

2. Teachers' Apparent Non-caring Attitudes

The students, in an overwhelming manner, expressed their belief that their teachers did not care about their current academic success or their future. They think that they are being taught by professionals who are there “just for the money” or did not have any other options but to teach at their school. They think that teachers in general are not interested in connecting or establishing a relationship with the students.

3. Misalignment Between School Curriculum and Assessments

The students articulated that the instruction that they were receiving in class was not aligned to the state graduation test (AIMS) or college entry tests such as the ACT and the SAT, neither in content nor in rigor. According to the students, they were being assessed on things that they had never been exposed to in class. They were also convinced that even the material that had been covered in class was not rigorous enough to prepare them to pass any of these tests.

4. Inadequate Classroom Instruction

The students perceived the kind of classroom instruction that they were getting as deficient. They think that the teachers are not using classroom strategies that would engage students in classroom activities and/or motivate them to learn. They expressed that some of their teachers' comments and attitudes were non-conducive to learning. They consistently described their classes as boring, not-engaging and not challenging.

5. Outdated or Lack of Instructional Materials

The students believe that the instructional materials such as books and science equipment are either outdated or not existent. They feel that the District's resources are spent on sports related projects, such as the sports complex building. It is their belief that the school system demonstrates more concern about sports than on students' academic achievement. They expressed great frustration with the school's media center and the science labs specifically.

6. Students' Limited English Proficiency

Students believe that their lack of English proficiency is one of the reasons why they are outperformed by their peers of other ethnicities. The AIMS, ACT and SAT are in English and they view English as their second language and Navajo as their first language. They believe that this lack of English proficiency is demonstrated in their inability to comprehend what they are reading, solve mathematics word problems and understand what the teacher is teaching. The students articulated that their English vocabulary and understanding of the language structure is not high enough to pass the State and college entrance tests.

7. High Absenteeism Rate Among Teachers

Students expressed that their teachers' absentee rate was too high. They believe that an excessive amount of the instructional time is provided by substitutes. They see their substitute teachers as unqualified to take over the class since they don't have the academic background or degree to do so. They feel that instructional time with substitute teachers is time that they are not learning.

8. Alcohol and Drug Abuse

The students believe that alcohol and drug abuse in their families was a deterrent to their academic success. They think that students who grow up in families where there is alcohol or drug abuse are more likely to become addicted to these substances. They voiced that alcohol abuse in a family creates a home environment that is not conducive to academic success; it places a great burden on the students who feel that they must take over responsibilities of the abuser.

9. Inadequate Test preparation

The students who participated in this study believe that they do not perform well on the AIMS because they are taking the test without the right kind of preparation. They expressed that they were not receiving enough time to prepare since test preparation usually started few weeks before the actual test. They strongly believe that the test preparation they were receiving lacked quality in terms of content and rigor level.

10. Role and Responsibilities at Home

The students expressed that one of the reasons for their low performance was the lack of time. They had numerous responsibilities at home besides being students. After a full day at school and a significant time traveling to school and back home, they were also expected to support their families by taking care of younger

siblings, their elders, the crops, and the livestock, leaving little or no time and energy to do homework or study for a test.

11. Short of Supervision from Administration

Students expressed frustration about the school administration's lack of involvement in their education. According to the students, the school administrators are not seen visiting classrooms and supervising instruction. The students feel that the administration's short of supervision demonstrates lack of interest in the students' academic achievement.

12. Parents Low Academic Expectations

Students expressed that many of the Native American students had parents who did not expect their children to excel in school or do well on the AIMS or college entrance tests. They believe their parents' low expectation are due to the fact that they have already achieved academically more than what their parents achieved when they were in school. They think that parents do not want their children to leave the reservation; therefore, any college entrance test is perceived by the parents as a move towards leaving what is valued the most - the family and their heritage.

13. Misalignment in Life Paradigms

According to the students, there is a cultural discrepancy between the Native American and non-Native American people regarding what is expected for the students to achieve. The American educational system expects students to do well in school, pass the graduation test (AIMS), do well on college entrance tests (ACT and SAT), pursue a college career, make money and live a "quality life," as defined by American mainstream culture.

On the other hand, Native American parents (and the community) expect their children to stay in the reservation and preserve their heritage. Students are

expected to embrace the values and beliefs of the Native American culture and pursue what they consider true wealth, which includes preserving the family unity, taking care of the family livestock, and acquiring knowledge of the sacred stories of their ancestors.

STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following recommendations are a respond to the findings that emerged as the views of Native American high school students regarding what causes their lack of academic achievement and low scores on the AIMS.

1. Leadership Meeting (s)

Organize and conduct a meeting or meetings in which (1) board members, (2) District administrators, (3) schools' administrators and (4) community leaders have the opportunity to learn about their students' perceptions regarding their low performance on the AIMS. It is advisable that during and after these meetings, participants have the opportunity to react to the students' perspectives, brainstorm and present strategies to increase students' achievement in school and improve their performance on the AIMS.

2. Staff Development Opportunities

Provide staff development opportunities in which school administrators and teachers:

- Learn how to a) mine, b) analyze, c) use and d) communicate student assessment data for instructional purposes
- Study proven-to-work classroom strategies to increase the students' English Language Proficiency
- Become skilled in applying research-based classroom strategies that increase the Comprehensibility of the English Language in academic subjects such as mathematics, science and social studies
- Go over the state's academic standards and discuss how to align them to daily classroom instruction
- Practice building classroom assessments that are aligned to the AIMS in a) content, b) format, c) rigor and d) administration
- Learn about test-taking strategies to improve students' performance in any testing situation

- Gain knowledge of how to motivate and get students engage in the instructional process
- Study how to build productive student-teacher relationships and mentor students to increase their academic achievement

3. Student Development Opportunities

Facilitate seminars or courses in which middle and high school students:

- Learn and practice test-taking strategies to improve their performance on any standardized test
- Discuss the role that standards, assessments and accountability play in today's educational system
- Talk about challenges they face in their academic careers and come up with ideas on how to overcome them
- Discuss the role that a quality education plays in their pursue of a quality life
- Discuss the negative impact of drug and alcohol abuse on the students' academic achievement, their families, their community and the future of the Native American community

4. Evaluation of Instructional Materials

Assemble a team of 3-5 teachers and school administrators to evaluate and report to the superintendent the quality of the school's classroom instructional materials, science lab equipment and media center resources.

5. Assessment of the Instructional Staff Attendance

Analyze the teachers' attendance records to determine the validity of the students' complaint about their teachers' high absentee rate. If the complaint proves to be valid, find out from the teachers' perspective the underlying reasons for the high absentee rate.

6. Further Studies and Solutions

Conduct additional qualitative studies to a gain deeper understanding of the misalignment that exists between the Native American and the non-Native American life paradigms, including values, beliefs, attitudes, perceptions and expectations.

The findings of these studies should help the leadership of the school district reconcile both worlds' perspective and make education relevant to the students' life and the Native American community at large.

STUDENTS' QUOTES:

The overarching research questions of this study were - What are the underlying reasons for the lack of achievement among Native American students? The following quotes are the students' responses the subsequent two interview questions:

1. **Why are Native American students' scores lower than their peers?**
2. **What can the school do to help Native American students improve?**

NA: Native American

11: Student # 1/Question # 1

12: Student # 1/Question # 2

NA11:

I believe that we as the Native American people or as Native American don't have high scores because we don't have great teachers to help us! The teacher we have here are here for the money and not for us. They just want money and think it is ok to not help us. A great teacher would want to come to work to help us and make a difference in our lives and help us make a difference in our community. I also think that the teachers are not teaching the right things or they are not teaching us everything that we need to know to help us pass the AIMS test. Some of the teachers here want to see us fail. I have seemed a lot of things that effect why we do not pass the test and our education. Bad teachers, no supplies, alcoholism and no one to tell us what and how we need to do something. I come from a family where only two people were able to make it to high school and made it as far as college, and some of them never made it this far. So I have to be the one to help change my community, Nation and family.

NA12:

The school can help us improve the test scores by teaching us what we need to help us go on in life and pass the test. We need new textbooks. I use one that had my mother name in it, and she graduated seventeen years ago. We need teachers that make what they're teaching more fun and more hands-on. This will make it more fun and will make us come

to school to learn. It would make us know more. The school can do a lot to help us, but they think it's going to cost a lot. They want the money for themselves, so they can be better than everyone else, which is not helping us.

NA21:

Most Dine (Native American) children acquired the Native American language as their first language, so it is kind of hard to talk, write, and read English. Our first teachers were probably our parents or grandparents and all they knew was how to accept life as it comes. With this in mind they never wanted to live the life of a white person, who only cares about money and never has a place for their family in their heart. In the Native American way of life the true wealth is family, livestock, and the knowledge of the sacred stories of our ancestors. I think that all we ever knew is how to accept life because some of us never tasted the life of vacations and all new things that cost money. When we say we should help our community we mean our family because Native Americans have clans and stay with those clans; it is kind of like our jurisdiction. That's probably some of reasons why some Native Americans don't need to live the life of a rich person, but I do know it is good to be wealthy, money wise that is. I do want to live life rich. I won't quit my education because this is how I will know how to learn to adapt and live a life as if I was white. I lost my native tongue in kindergarten and I am a shame to my family because education is taking me away from my family; I cannot talk to them in my native language. I made my peace with education. Every time I fall, I can depend on it and it takes me higher in knowledge, especially when I lost my brother to alcohol.

NA22:

The only thing that Native American students need to succeed in education is teachers who know how to teach and interpret and how to read and understand. Sometimes I think that education is the key to succeed, but isn't the only thing leading to more money. I don't have this luxury yet, but it'll be good to have it

NA31:

Growing up in the reservation with a low-income family that can't really provide for themselves is pretty hard. Looking back on my life, I had to provide for myself and for the rest of the family. And the fact that the Native American people are really involved in their culture and in their Native language is kind of a problem because for all of us the English language is a second language. Because when we are at home we spend a lot of time with our families that usually speak the Native American language. There is some difficulty dealing with this at school because when some teachers talk to us, some of us don't understand as well as we should. Another problem is with the school curriculum. The teachers and the school should teach us the things that are going to be in the ACT, SAT, and the AIMS tests. The teachers need to take more time teaching us all as a class because at times the teachers do favor one or two students out of the whole class. And when they (the teachers) aren't there, they should at least give us substitutes that should at least know what they are going to be doing and what they are going to be teaching. The teachers are taking more time on leave than time actually teaching us. We as Native American People need our teachers to be able to understand us and be able to connect with us so that we actually know what's going on with the work that they assign us. Because in my high school experiences I have learned that if the teaches won't make that much of an effort to teach us, then we need to re-evaluate the whole school. I say this because some of my teachers just give us the work and tell us to look it up in the book and tell us to follow the directions without even trying to explain what it is that the book is saying. Because our Native language is my first language I do have trouble figuring out some of the English language and what some of the words do mean.

NA32:

You could say that we as Native American people, who are very spiritual with all our surroundings, need to let go sometimes and take a chance because nobody is going to get the med school to accept me. Nobody is going to make me do the things I want to do in life because at the end I'm the one that is going to make the final decision on things. Although some of our parents here would disagree with where we are going, they have to try and make an effort towards things. They do this because we as a Native American culture are really bound with our families and really tight with the people around us. It is

hard to let go with our families at times. The school also needs to make a good attendance system because when we are on a school activity, which should be marked as an excused absent, they are marking it as an unexcused absence, the schools attendance personnel. The school has to concentrate on us more as a whole and get us new supplies to better our education process. The Wildcat den is there as another school "yeah"; but in what way are we going to be learning if we are moving the classrooms around during school hours? The School board needs to pick up their act and start helping us get through school, which leads me back towards the teachers. Teachers need to be completely certified in their field and be more into what they teach and not make the classroom environment so boring all the time The schoolteachers need to make this school a ground area where they motivate students to want to learn more and be more cautious of their surroundings.

NA41:

The reason why Native American students' scores are so low is because of the language barrier that we have in our homes and in our community. For example- some of the kids that go to our school are not very fluent in the English language because they are forced to learn the Native American language. I have experienced this first hand because my uncle has sometimes gotten after me for not speaking the Native American language fluently and I really can't say anything to him because he does not know how to speak a word of English. That is one of the problems here and I think that it is a big one. Another reason is because of the fact that some kids have big responsibilities at home and they have to tend to them before anything else, so they really can't get to their homework or anything that pertains to school. Most Native American families, but not all, tend to leave their children with the oldest child and they leave to go to the casino or they leave to go to rodeo or to western dances. And when this happens, it causes a total disaster for the child that has to take care of his/ her siblings. They end up taking care of little babies all night. The student that is taking care of the child hardly has any rest or time to get school work done.

NA42:

What the school can do to help us improve on our test scores is hire teachers who want to make a difference in the district so we can be “noticed” by other ethnicities. In the past years I have had teachers that don’t give a rat’s butt about what we do or anything like that. All that the teachers say to us is “more work for you, means more work for me”. They should not be saying that because they are paid to educate us and to motivate us to go get a higher education; but they are implying that they don’t want to teach us and they really don’t want to be here. That is one of the problems I have had and when I told my mother about it she was really angry but when she tried to do something about it, no one would assist in helping her have that teacher get in trouble. That brings up another problem. When parents come in to talk about the curriculum or standards, none of the faculty members want to talk to the parent that is concerned. All they do is telling one person, who has no idea of what is going on, to go over and talk to the parent. But that is no help to the parent because they did not get what they wanted; all they got was a person, who had no clue in the world about the situation, come and talk to them. With the issue of outdated materials, we have had some luck in getting new materials for some of the classes, but not all classes were fortunate enough to receive new materials. Seriously, we have a library that is outdated by some thirty something years and it is of no help to us in anyway and sometimes it is the last resort; but again, it has no impact on us what so ever. Another problem would have to be the fact that some teachers say terrible things to us or they leave bad remarks that make the student afraid to go back to class. I have heard some of my peers say that this teacher said something to them inappropriate and they don’t really want to go to class because of that. When the student does not go to class, then the teacher doesn’t really bother with the student and just lets them be. The teachers say that they care for us and that they want us to succeed in life, but I know that deep down inside that they are full of it and they don’t want to admit it. The school can have more AIMS practices throughout the year and not just a couple weeks before the actual test comes. At Chinle High we usually have the practices two weeks before the test, but the practices are only one day out of the two weeks and it is of no help to us. It is just like a regular day of school, but we are mainly focusing on one topic and most of the time the practices are only an hour long. How is that going to help us pass the AIMS? They may think that they have done their part in preparing us for the test, but they have to think

again and again because some of the students are not even close to being prepared for the test. I just have to say that all the things I have just written here are making me angry because there are so many things that can be done, but hardly anyone is doing anything about it. After this, there better be changes because I have younger siblings that go here and I don't want them to feel bad in anyway because the school is not doing anything to improve the school.

NA51:

I think that Native Americans need more help. There's not really any communication between the student and the educator, which leads to boredom and lack of knowledge. I know that most Native Americans are shy and don't want to be outspoken, but that is why a teacher is there to break their shell of quietness, and talk and learn. Why does someone decide to become a teacher? Most likely, it's to teach students and help them with their education. They're supposed to make sure that they know what they're teaching and go to college after high school. But when there is no communication between the two, then there's no connection, which leads to nothing. Our teachers don't make learning fun; the way they teach is so boring. They're not into what they do, they just write stuff on the board and expect you to write it and know it. But that's not what teaching is. Teachers are our role models at school and the way they act about education begins to make us act that way too. We don't get as much teaching as other people do. The problem is the lack of quality teachers of the Native Americans. Also, family is the number one issue why we, Native Americans don't study or learn to improve our tests' scores. Families want us to help them out as much as possible and sometimes that makes me think, "Why should I study if I'm just going to be here after high school helping my family out and not use my knowledge and skills for something better like a degree in something?" Parents, especially grandparents, make most of us feel that way. More studying for the test, like the whole school year, would help all Native Americans pass their tests; not just studying for one month and think we will be ready for the big test that will determine our future. That's impossible!! It takes time to learn things and doing it helps even more.

NA52:

The school can have teachers more involved with the students, like one-on-one study kind of thing, so that everyone is on the right track. There should be some kind of curriculum that adds parts of the questions that will be on the AIMS so we know what to expect. Teachers should not favor one student just because they talk or he/she is a good student, but should have a connection with every student and keep them on track. I know some students are really shy, but a teacher talking to the student helps and eases the person. The school staff, like the principal, needs to come into classrooms to check if every student is doing good and getting everything down in that class. I have not seen the principal talk to one student about academic issues or even motivating them on working towards their goals. Not all the staff members are very motivating. Teachers shouldn't take so much leave and leave a substitute that does not know anything in charge and expect them to know what they're supposed to do. Teachers should make the student feel like they're number one and they can do it, if they put their mind to it. They should be like a friend that can help them out because some students feel like the teachers are superior, like they can't talk freely and ask questions openly. The students should know that they're leveled and they can ask questions any time. Some teachers say "don't interrupt me when I'm teaching" and if you have a question about that specific problem on the board, you'd have to wait until the teacher is done talking. And when you finally ask the question, they sigh and explain in a tiredly manner. School doesn't sound fun when teachers are like this, not teaching you something you need to know that will help you in life.

NA61:

I believe the reason for the low-test scores among the ethnicity of Native Americans would be the lack of interest on the student's part and the teachings of teachers within the school. The curriculum of the school should be set to a higher standard, a more competitive and challenging level. Also, the motivation one would get from home from parents or their siblings should be a more positive one. Most Native American students don't necessarily have this at home or get the attention they strive for, and the inspiration to achieve this goal to pass the AIMS. Reading and math, two subjects that are the topic in this study, are two that are somewhat expected to be a "problem". I believe this

because most students here have trouble reading at a 7th grade level, let alone have the ability to solve problems containing numbers. They blame it on their teachers, yet it is their own wanting to learn that keeps them from this goal, or the thought that they have for themselves thinking there are not smart enough; so why should they bother and set goals for themselves? The lack of parent involvement is another catalyst that hasn't taken part in this area. Some parents have half the education of their children, some have a problem with alcohol, and others may not be there for their children. Parent involvement, I think would, also make a huge impact on a child's motivation to achieve and earn a passing score on the AIMS. For instance, if a more involved parent focused on their child's score in this test, they would most likely set a study time for their child after school, or have them staying after school to study on this subject. Alcoholism and the effect on a child's score is a massive one. The child may not be able to cope with the AIMS test because of this.

NA62:

For starters the school can play a big role by having AIMS prep classes as a required class, or have students who seem to have trouble with this specific subject stay after school for a study program. The school should have their parents involved in getting their child to study for this test. Provide more preparation time for the students in and out of the classes. At the beginning of class would be the best time to do this because it is homeroom time. Provide a study of vocabulary, mathematic equations, or time to read so that they may be able to comprehend what it is said, and understands the structure of what they will be tested on. Another solution to this problem would be having the involvement of teachers in classrooms and not the "fill ins" of substitutes. From self-experience I was put into a class where I have been settled with a substitute for the remaining year of my high school education and within this class. I have received a failing grade, due to lack of interests. I find that, if I am to be in a class I had signed up for, I should be receiving the education I was expecting to attain with it. And being an A-B student, I was quite disappointed with the school for not providing us with a qualified teacher within the expected field. To be fixed with a person who does not know what they are doing is quite a catalyst to

frustration. The public is another factor that the school should take into consideration. When the building of a sport complex was brought to my attention I was shocked; to what importance is a sport complex compared to a library or the education of their future minds and AIMS testers? The building of this complex was a letdown to students. It showed that the AIMS is second when it comes to sports. Academics were of no importance when the thought of a complex that is of no academic usage was built, a pointless attribute to a community of low academic scores.

NA71:

Native Americans score low on the tests because they do not give us enough freedom to expand our mind and strengthen our skills like our peers can. We have certain limitations; they do not give us enough freedom to make our own choices. We have rules that are blocking our decisions and choices that just make students go towards the wrong direction instead of having them go the way that they want to. Like they want us to do this and that, but when can we decide on what we want to do and how we feel if we don't have control over that? Most of us feel like that we are controlled too much and we will not improve if we are controlled. Like if we need to go to the restroom really bad, they tell us we only have two restroom passes for one semester; but what if the student has a problem that has to go to the "john" every hour or so? How is that supposed to help us in the future? I mean, our bosses are not going to tell us that we can only go to the restroom twice every week. That business isn't going to improve. The only businesses or communities that can improve are those in which people feel comfortable in their environment. Only a few of the teachers let us know what is going on and challenges us. While the rest are just reviewing the book that has been outdated and will only help us a little. This school spends and focuses more on the sports than they do about the facility. They are supposed to be concentrated on the student environment and make sure they have their freedom, instead of rules and limitations on what they think should be done. They are not the ones taking the test that might help the school or district improve.

NA72:

The school can allow the students a little more freedom, enough space to have us decide what we want to do. And then, the staff should be a little more supportive and understanding about our needs. If we have no support, then how can we improve without support and trust? The school can help also by keeping up to date with supplies that will allow the students to expand and strengthen their skills and have them prepared for the future. Offer more programs that are both educational and fun to be a member of. This school can succeed and improve more if a little more fun is added so it wouldn't be boring. And make sure that everyone can join instead of a few certain people that have to. Like if a person wants to hang out with their friends at that program, it will bring more ideas and be less boring than it was. More people are involved and more of their time is occupied so that they won't have any to get in trouble, they can have a place to go and stay out of trouble. Also family is another issue. They can be supportive or disagree with the school and the way they teach the students. But that is a problem that only the family can solve.

NA81:

There are a lot of reasons why Native Americans have lower scores. One of the problems is the family. Like my parents, they say do good in school. And when I have to go to college there is a struggle because they want me to stay. They just want me to go to a community college; they think that all these colleges are just the same. What they don't understand is that for me to get a good education I have to go away, that I will be gone again. With my homework there is a problem too, I mean, my parents never even graduated from high school. So in junior high, yeah, it was easier to ask for help from them; but now, the things I ask them for help they don't understand. They were never even taught that. Yeah, I can ask my sister. She graduated college but she lives somewhere else. My father doesn't like it, but that's the way it is. There are also drugs. I mean a lot of these students drink alcohol or they smoke. Alcohol is a big problem on the reservation. And it all goes back to families, it all starts there. If someone in the family drinks, there is a big possibility that they will too. And it is because of that they don't do their work and they don't even care about it; all they will care about is drugs.

NA82:

Well, there is a lot of thing that the school can do. They can get better teachers. I mean some of the teachers we have are just plain boring! They don't really get into what they are teaching. And it is because of that that we get bored and don't really care about what they are teaching, and if we don't understand we won't learn anything. Sometimes it is nice to have a teacher who can speak your language. It is actually pretty cool! I mean with that you guys can really relate to each other. There is a connection. And there are some things that actually sound better in that language. It is just funnier, or it just has more effect on us. And they also understand if something happens that is religious and that they actually talk about with you and you can become more comfortable and you can get more out of that class. And they have some classes after school, classes that can really help, but it's after school. Who would want to stay after school? Some students won't, so it would be best if those classes could be offered during school hours. And there is another thing; some students can't make it to after school classes. They have other things to attend to. Or sometimes they just can't make it. Like for me, my parents won't let me stay after school because I have other duties to do at home. Besides that the bus ride is 50- minute long. And of course the rules; I mean they don't really enforce the rules. All students just walk around in the halls listening to their MP3. Only about 5 teachers tell the students to put it away and when we walk by security, they don't tell us anything. See? They do not enforce the rules. I mean, don't they care about us? Don't they want us to get a good education? Then why are they letting us do what we want? Maybe they can make the class more challenging. I mean, all my classes are easy, and some of the things they teach I learned in middle school. Please, teach me something new and hard. I want a challenge! I want to learn! I want to learn more now so I can have a better future. Offer more classes that can prepare you for tests like SAT, ACT, and the AIMS. Sure we do that, but we only do that when those dates get closed. It's like they are just going to cram all these information in our head and hope we remember. It would be nice if we can have year round classes that will prepare us way ahead of time, so we get a chance to learn the material good. So we really know, so when the time comes we already know how to do it. So we know the structure or we know the formula. And try to get really good teachers for those classes, who can really get involved and who know what they're doing. We need someone who can make it fun to learn so we can come back the next day thirsty for more

NA91:

The main reason that Native Americans' scores are lower than their peers is because of the difference in the community surroundings. With people growing up in a different atmosphere they tend to have certain things given to them. For example, in much wealthier communities the supplies are very much given to them and as for teachers they are pretty much more qualified than teacher at public schools or underprivileged schools. I feel it has much to do with the area in which the student is exposed to. You hear of many students being exposed to gangs and violence and that has an effect on the student. There are students who go to schools where they are not exposed to gangs and violence. That somewhat broadens the gap between underprivileged schools versus private or suburb schools, being catered to the best. With issue of some students not being let go of by their parents shouldn't be a problem. If some parents want the best for their children, then they have to make sacrifices and one of those sacrifices is letting go of their child and having them experience what the world has to offer.

NA92:

With our school having to have been an underachieving school, gives in to stereotypes as Native Americans being useless and unknowledgeable, so I kind of want to break that. One way of doing so would be for the school to hire more highly educated/certified teachers. There are some teachers that I know of that only hold an associate's degree or maybe a bachelor's degree. A higher degree would give them the knowledge to teach us higher learning. There is a saying that goes - "You learn and obtain more from those who have gone before you." So I feel this is just one of those alternatives.

NA101:

I think that there are many reasons as to why Native American students have very low-test scores. Well I believe that success should start with the individual and what he/she believes they are capable of doing. He/she has the ability to accomplish anything they may desire. One reason why Native American students tend to have very low-test scores may be that teachers are not teaching to the best of their ability. They're being lazy and slacking off on their job and the student isn't being taught the accurate material.

Therefore, test scores tend to decrease. The act of being lazy can also be applied to the students. Not all students have the motivation to better themselves and if there's no motivation, the student has the right to believe that they're not capable of achieving something at a certain level. So if a student lacks confidence in their self, then they begin to think that what they're doing now is okay and that they don't have anything more to do leaving doubts in the student's mind and maybe even the teacher.

NA102:

The school could certainly offer or go about a new curriculum, since the curriculum that they are using now is not a success. For example, we have many teachers that are not here on a daily bases and substitutes are available, but do not offer as much teaching as a regular teacher would. Most of the substitutes we have aren't even certified to be an academic instructor so that only makes the situation a bit more complicated. After school programs should also be offered to any student who would like to make their education level higher. After school programs like AIMS prep, SAT prep, ACT prep, and other various courses could be a huge helping hand to any student's education. The parents of the student can also participate to help improve the test scores by giving their child motivation, talking to them, getting more involved in their curriculum, and actually being there for them physically when they're struggling. The parent can come to talk to the teacher about what their child is struggling in, be active in their daily school work by helping with their homework, and maybe just even come to the school for a weekly check-up on their grades, attendance, etc.

NA111:

As a fellow student who did pass the state issued test AIMS, I was fortunate enough to grow up in a family where my parents pushed me to pursue higher education. My parents did grow up in very traditional families. If their parents had a choice to keep their children they would've done so. I'm not saying they kept them just because they could. The main reason is that most families around the reservation have big responsibilities such as livestock, younger peers, crops, and the care of their elders. My mother was fortunate enough to get two years of college out of the way and is now a certified dental assistant

supervisor. She got school out of the way because she was the baby of her fifteen plus siblings, so she didn't have to help out at home that often. My father also went to college, but he grew in totally different environment. His mother instilled in all her children that family comes first. You see, my father went to school in Phoenix, so if his mother needed help with the sheep, she automatically assumed he could drop everything and come and help her. Unlike my father, my grandmother with time realized that education beyond high school was needed. By the time my mother was born she pushed her into the education chain. So the basis of my explanation is that our Native American families need to realize education is the key to one's success. They need to understand we need to leave home for a while to help them out tremendously in the future, whether financially or spiritually.

NA112:

There are so many things the school can do to improve, but in my opinion there are two things they need to do that would have helped me out, I'm sure of it!!!! One is to hire teachers who love what they're doing. No more teachers who only come here because it was their last resort job wise. Just like my physics teacher, she has no passion to teach her kids; yeah, she has passion for herself because she knows and we don't. She makes students feel small when they go and ask her questions which made many of us stop. Part of the time when you do ask her a question, she never answers it. I had a math teacher in my sophomore year who loved his children. He had a connection with everyone in all his classes. He never stayed after school, but when you asked him he would without hesitation. Pretty soon he made it an everyday thing where he tutored all kids whether they were in his class or not. At the end of the year, he had twenty plus kids in his class every day after school. As I went into my junior year, I didn't have him. But his loving, helping attitude made me come back still for help knowing he wanted to help, not because he had to. I miss him. Another attribute that would help improvement would be to provide ACT/SAT prep classes for college bound students. They don't have that now but it would have been great. Most high schools outside the reservations have ACT/SAT prep courses. Most students don't want to study or have the time, but if there was a class I think they would take advantage of it. I would have!

NA121:

The Native Americans live on the Native American Reservation. We live on a reservation where alcoholism and drugs are a massive factor. The Native American people are people who are capable of pursuing an education and making their dreams into reality. However, we have numerous problems, which lead to Native Americans scoring low on test. The number one reason is that students have low vocabulary in reading. I think that students do not try to enter the library to check out a book and read it. The majority of the children's parents have never attended school or dropped out of school because their help was needed at home. I think the school needs to have required reading classes so students can read and understand more. The next reason is alcoholism is in the family. Students usually would think a lot about their home or parents. Maybe the day of the test the students are not focused on exceeding the test, because they have problems at home with their families. My point is that parents really need to support their kids so they can succeed later in life. Some students do not have support from family, so they think no one cares if they do not do well on tests. The support of family will really make a difference in their child's test scores.

NA122:

The teachers really need to stress to the Native American children to read tons of books. If they learn and read a lot of books at a young age then they are most likely to have high vocabulary. They will most likely exceed on any writing or reading test. Their scores will be astonishing. Also, the school needs to hire teachers who are dedicated to their jobs and who really care about their students, in particular Native Americans. Native Americans do not learn fast by just talking, but visually showing them how to solve the problem or how to be organized in an essay. Teachers need to meet with their students individually to make sure they understand the assignments. The teachers need to be like parents and every day encourage their students; telling them they can succeed by trying in class each day. The school needs to make the school more challenging to the students so they are able to take college courses. The school also needs require teachers to have their students give a lot of presentations. I attended Phillips Exeter Academy this summer

and I think our school needs to have students give more presentations in class and to have class discussions. Having class discussions would make a vast difference in having the students learn to speak to an audience. They cannot be shy, but say what they need to say. If the school does this then the students would not fear to speak in public or talk with different ethnic groups.

NA131:

Native Americans' test scores are lower than their peers because of many reasons. First of all, Native Americans have a family-based culture and many Native American families are unfortunate and depend on the children to provide for the family. For this reason, many students chose to ignore education and not come to school, or they struggle between education and their families. Second, I think that motivation from the students themselves need play a magnificent role in their choice of furthering education. The same goes for the teachers and the school district. Most teachers here are not abiding by state regulations on education in the classroom and/or they are not taking educating a student seriously. From experience in being in the classrooms, teachers are teaching what they want to teach, rather than what will be on the AIMS, SAT, or ACT tests. Those tests will determine if you are able to graduate (AIMS) or go to college (SAT & ACT). The teaching we need is the teaching of the skills and knowledge needed to overcome any obstacle. More A.P. classes and more in-depth classes with understandable teachers will surely help with the situation. A student's attitude has to change as well and I think that is a huge reason why some students don't really care.

NA132:

The school can help by upgrading the curriculum that will provide more knowledge to be learned based on future tests. Having experienced going to school off the reservation and out of state, I had trouble in the most important fields of education, grammar. I was the only one in the room who didn't know how to approach the fundamentals because I was never taught in high school. I think that this is a problem the school needs to fix. Our teachers now are, to tell the truth, lazy and not that motivating. We need more certified, outgoing, understanding, and cooperative teachers to, like we said "connect with". The

same goes for our substitutes, who should have at least two years (like you said Dr. Lourdes), instead of substitutes who don't have a clue about what needs to be done in the classroom. We need more testing preparation also. We only have like several weeks that are differentiated within months, to study for the AIMS, while our preparation should begin in the classrooms from the beginning of the school year. As of right now, we do not have that, but would like to see a change. The statistics explained during the presentation have surprised most of us. I think we would like to see ourselves equal to others and to get there these changes need to happen immediately.

NA141:

I think us Native Americans have lower test scores than are peers because of the lack of confidence in us. I agree with the other students when they discussed the teacher situation. I do have a of couple classes that I feel that I'm not being challenged enough. Some teachers give you the assignment and expect you to teach yourself. If they actually thought of more interesting ways to teach the students, then I'm sure that they would get more students involved. When they get involved, they'll have a more positive outlook on their learning. They'll have a little more confidence in themselves; they will know that they can succeed. If they have this, their confidence will increase. Right now, I have a pre-calculus class and every quarter we learn about five subjects maximum. He briefly explains the work and gives us a few problems. Every day when we come in, the problems are already on the board. Some students see it as a way of getting an easy A and they think of it as just a class to kick back in. However, I want to learn something every day. When he introduces a topic, we work on that topic for two weeks. Everyday it's mainly the same problems. When we have our exam, they're some problems on there that we didn't even cover. We might have done in some way, but he never explained them. I think we score lower than our peers because we just don't have any teacher that has passion for teaching and explaining. Teachers are my main focus because they are the source of education. Without teachers there is nothing to learn. If we had passionate teachers, there is more to be learned. I also feel that people don't take into consideration that Native Americans have the power to progress. Many Native Americans probably feel that

people think of them as lower class than any other ethnicity. I know of one school that is for Native Americans; the students go there because they feel comfortable. More motivation and opportunities should be suggested. Right now, only students with a good GPA are called to special sessions to have colleges come in. I think the whole class should be present.

NA 142:

I actually agreed with one of the students when they said that a better curriculum is needed. Materials from the tests should be taught. If we are not taught what is on the ACT or SAT's, then what are we learning? The ACT and SAT are tests that determine how much I have learned and what I need to know. Most students take the test and finally realize what is on it. Then they start wanting to learn the material in the actual class. But the teachers don't do that. They teach what they feel they want to teach. If this actually happens, if the objectives from major tests are taught, then Chinle High School will succeed; test scores will increase. I also think the counselor plays a big part in this. The counselor should make an effort to try to help the students with what they don't comprehend. Every student should take the ACT and SAT, but they don't have a clue on how to do that. If the counselor actually brought them in and explained to them what they need to do about it, the student might have a better chance of graduating and getting into a college. I always hear students complaining that their class is boring and that they just slept. The teacher makes no effort to actually get the student involved. If the teacher did this, it wouldn't be boring. But another reason would be that the student doesn't feel comfortable. So it all depends on the teacher, on their communication skills, speech skills and personality.

NA151:

Native Americans test scores are lower than their peers are because they lack of self-confidence; they have family difficulties; and, the school does not provide what they need in order to succeed. Native Americans are lower in numbers so when they go to another

state or country they do not have the confidence they once had when they were on the reservation with other Native Americans. Also they feel like that the outside of the reservation, is not as safe as where they are from. They feel like they are being judge by appearance rather than by their thoughts. In some families, there is some sort of situation going on. There are many situations a student can be having with their families like being abused, a relative or sibling could be sick, or maybe one of the parents is an alcoholic. For instance, my grandma and cousin, whom I am much closed too, have cancer. When I found out, I did not care if my grades dropped. I cared about whether or not they were going to get better. When I told my cousin and mom what was happening with my schoolwork, they told me not to worry. That she'll get better and she wanted me to do better in school because they both cared. Also, in school there are not enough supplies. When there is an experiment to do in science class, usually there is not a supply to use. This happens a lot in an art class. Sometimes the teacher has to buy the supplies herself because the school would not give her the money.

NA152:

The school should buy more supplies like new textbooks, computers, and school equipment. The complex den that was built should not have been built in the first place. The teachers also should be more involved with students' academic life. They should challenge every student some more. Students here don't feel like they learned anything once they have graduated. The parents need to be involved even if they never finished high school or went to college. They should try to put some effort in their child education. Also the principal should really be more involved. I mean, the only thing I have seen him involved with are sports, more sports, and giving students suspension or something like that. All he ever does is sitting in his office and say he is working. However, when students come into his office with a complaint, he would send them to the assistant principal or someone else that works in the office. Students that have trouble in their classes, try to ask for teachers' help, but usually they don't help. A teacher should always want to help their students not because they have to. Every staff working in the school district should care about every student that walks through the front door every morning. They should

not turn anyone away even if they dress different, have a disability or illness, or are of a different race.