



NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
**Native Youth Community Project**  
PUBLIC INFORMATION BRIEF • YEAR 3 • DECEMBER 2020

*This information brief presents selected findings from the RMC Research Evaluation Report, based on data collected October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020.*

The Nevada State Department of Education's *Native Youth Community Project* (NYCP) seeks to prepare American Indian (AI) students in grades 7-12 for college and careers using a three-fold plan that includes: (a) the support of a College and Career Coach (CCC) and Community-based Instructor (CBI); (b) activities designed to improve student academic performance, including tutoring, summer programs, and conferences designed to engage students and guided visits to colleges; and (c) community collaborative events.

Three tribal groups in two different geographic locations receive support in these efforts. Members of the Yerington Paiute and Walker River Paiute Tribes attend school in the Yerington, NV area. Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone tribal members attend school in the McDermitt, NV area. A total of 116 AI students in grades 7-12 participated in the third year of the project's implementation at these sites.

This information brief includes key points from the evaluation of the project's implementation in Year 3. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used to collect information for this report. Quantitative methods were utilized in the analysis of community event participation, parent participation, student academic learning plan completion, college tour participation, academic achievement and attendance data, advanced course enrollment, and college/trade school applications. Qualitative methods were used to collect information from administrators at the Nevada Department of Education (NDE), school administrators, site and project staff, parents, and students during virtual visits to the two sites. In addition, quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze data from surveys distributed to parents/caregivers and students.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Although project plans were extensively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent school closures, and numerous activities were conducted online rather than in person, the key project components were implemented as planned.

In Yerington, one CCC and two CBIs who were hired early in Year 1 continued to provide the functions described in the project application. The McDermitt community experienced frequent staff turnover and vacancies in the first two years of the grant due to its isolated geographic location. Still, they were able to have a full team of one CCC, one CBI, and three School Community Liaisons in place by March 2020.

At both sites, the CCCs focused on preparing students for college and careers, worked directly with the students on improving academic achievement and behaviors, presented community and parent presentations on college and other topics, conducted intensive four-to-five-week summer programs for selected students, organized college tours (including virtual tours), and facilitated the completion of the individualized academic plan for each student. The CBIs and School Community Liaisons worked closely with the CCCs throughout Year 3. They promoted communication and relationships between the CCC, school, parents/caregivers, and tribal communities. They jointly assessed needs and established community activities to support the needs of the communities.

Additionally, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, all NYCP site-based staff worked diligently to provide essential services to students and their families. Through their efforts, students received a variety of supports, including (a) daily meal and homework packet delivery following the closing of schools in March, (b) laptop computers, (c) internet service, and (d) frequent, ongoing communication and virtual coaching to help ensure academic progress and overall well-being.



*McDermitt NYCP staff deliver school supplies to a student in the Winnemucca area.  
Photo by Darla Camas.*

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted the cancellation of two annual conferences, the Statewide American Indian/Alaska Native Youth Education Summit and the Native American Youth Summer Camp. Nonetheless, students at both sites attended the first-ever virtual UNITY conference and participated in in-person college visits earlier in the year and virtual visits later in the year. The website, Amplified Nevada Native Youth (ANNY) was established to provide a virtual platform for students and their families statewide to strengthen college and career pathways.

Additionally, NYCP students were able to attend virtual sessions that featured a variety of nationally known speakers. The analysis of student perception data collected through surveys indicated that NYCP positively impacted their postsecondary aspirations and preparedness. All students agreed that the NYCP support increased their commitment to graduate from high school.

For the project targets overall, the NYCP met or exceeded 11 of the 12 performance measures across all five goal areas. These included measures related to

increased community collaborative efforts, increased GPA, participation in college tours and advanced courses, improved attendance, increased student motivation and readiness to attend college or vocational training, increased rate of college or trade school applications, parent/caregiver participation in their child's education, the occurrence of community events that promote and educate families and communities on the importance of education, and the extent to which parents/caregivers indicate that these events help them support their child's learning. The only performance target not met was the target pertaining to the percentage of completed academic learning plans.

## SELECTED FINDINGS

### GOAL 1: Implement a Successful NYCP that Promotes and Prepares AI Students for College or Careers

- Administrators at the state, district, and school level described many beneficial aspects of the project. These encompassed the trusting and respectful relationships developed between students and the Native staff who worked with them; the leadership opportunities provided to students by participating in UNITY groups; the academic, social, and emotional supports given through counseling and tutoring sessions; and the opportunities for students to consider future educational and career plans through activities such as college visits and career fairs.

- Site staff and project staff agreed that the relationships developed with the students had a positive impact on students' academic progress as well as their behavior. They noted that students were proud of their identity as Native youth and that incidents of racism in the schools had decreased. Project staff also saw themselves as strong role models for the students and as advocates for the well-being of Native students and their families. Project staff felt they had worked well as a team and had stepped up to meet the demands of the project.

Nevada Department of Education, district, and school administrators and project and site staff described some of the most beneficial impacts of the project:

*I think the most positive thing is our kids having consistency and having someone there they could rely on...it is a positive piece for kids who have sometimes come from pretty hard situations. And to encourage kids to have healthy interactions with one another and show them how to do this. Also, providing professional development to teachers who don't know much about tribal practices and being Native. We have people at the sites who understand the kids for the first time.*

*Bringing the community together and recognizing the accomplishments of the students. Showing them that we care about what they do and we are proud of them. This has helped the students to realize their worth as young people. I don't think we could have done that without NYCP.*



*A drum made by a student in the Yerington summer program.  
Photo by Amber Torres.*

## **GOAL 2: Increase Student Academic Performance**

- Project staff collected baseline student cumulative GPA data in September 2019. In September 2020, cumulative GPA data were once again collected for each student and compared with their cumulative GPA from September 2019. Across the two sites, 104 of 127 students (82%) demonstrated an increase in their GPA.
- During the 2019-20 school year, 37 students from Yerington enrolled in AP or college courses, and 5 students from the Fort McDermitt Paiute-Shoshone Tribe enrolled in AP or college courses.
- Between the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years, there was a 19.3 percentage point decrease across the two sites in the numbers of students who were chronically absent.
- Project and site staff believed that student academic engagement and achievement had increased due to having a team of people providing ongoing support to students and families. Services such as counseling and tutoring were viewed as essential to students' success.
- Staff also thought that engaging students in traditional Native activities, such as powwows, berry picking, and pine nut gathering, as well as inviting students to see colleges in other cities and states, had motivated students to work harder in school.

<sup>1</sup> Due to school closures related to the COVID-19 pandemic, student GPA is based on grades as of March 2020.

### **GOAL 3: Increase Student Motivation and Readiness to Attend College or Vocational Training**

- In Year 3, across both sites, 106 of the 135 students (79%) participated in college tours, in-person or virtually.
- State, district, and school administrators thought the project supported student motivation and readiness to attend postsecondary education by introducing students to strong and successful Native role models, encouraging them to enroll in advanced classes, and taking students to see colleges in Nevada and other states.



*Students and tutors working on math problems during the summer program in Yerington. Photo by Debra Keats*

### **GOAL 4: Increase Parent Involvement in Their Children's Education**

- In alignment with findings from the first two years of the evaluation, respondents agreed that the project played an essential role in forging bonds between the schools and families.
- The percentage of students whose parents/caregivers attended at least one parent-teacher conference, an IEP meeting, or a project-sponsored activity was calculated by examining participation logs. In McDermitt, 36/38 (95%) and in Yerington, 85/89 (96%) of parents/caregivers were “involved.” Across both sites, 121/127 (95%) of parents/caregivers were “involved.”

### **GOAL 5: Promote the Importance of Education Among the Community and Participating Students' Families**

- Across the two sites, 37 community collaborative events with nearly 1,400 participants occurred in Year 3. The overarching purpose of all these events—focusing on Native language and culture, student academic success, physical and mental well-being, and college financial literacy—was to support student learning and achievement and increase both motivation and readiness for college and careers. The online nature of many of these events encouraged higher levels of participation across the two sites and in other Native communities across Nevada.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

Members of all respondent groups believed that NYCP played a strong and irreplaceable role in increasing student motivation and readiness to attend college or vocational training. Project impact was attributed to a number of factors, including the consistent presence of staff in students' lives, the variety and quality of support services provided to students and families throughout the year and during the pandemic, in-person and virtual opportunities to visit college campuses and conferences, and the involvement of parents in project activities. These factors contributed to students having a greater awareness of postsecondary options and seeing themselves as capable of succeeding in education programs beyond high school.

*To receive additional information about the evaluation of the Nevada Native Youth Community Project, please contact Dr. Elizabeth Bright at RMC Research Corporation in Tampa, FL at 1-800-762-5001.*