

MEDIA RELEASE  
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JKL Anishinabe School is making strides and changing lives

SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich. - Michelle Ribant, state of Michigan's Director for 21st Century Learning, presented what she called "remarkable" data to Joseph K. Lumsden Anishinabe School teachers and paraprofessionals on Jan. 16. She compared JKL socio-economic status data with the state of Michigan's. Ribant found that, overall, JKL economically disadvantaged students are 50 percent better prepared than state students. The data shows that JKL's economically disadvantaged students are not academically disadvantaged at JKL.

The K-8 school is a Bureau of Indian Education grant day school chartered by Northern Michigan University. Located on Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians trust land, JKL has over 500 students with 61 percent Native American enrollment.

Ribant used Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP) scores in English, math and social sciences. M-STEP is a test designed to gauge how well students are mastering state standards. In every subject and every grade, JKL's economically disadvantaged students were better prepared, with more students in the advanced level of the subject.

Michigan is facing a difficult problem. The state's economically disadvantaged students are on a different trajectory than those who are not economically disadvantaged. They are at the lowest levels of academic achievement without the proficiency to move on, and the state doesn't know how to change that. At the same time, JKL is "making strides and changing lives," said Ribant.

Ribant started with third grade English language arts. At JKL, 15 percent non-economically disadvantaged students and 18 percent of economically disadvantaged students were at the lowest end of achievement - pretty even. In the state, 15 percent non-economically disadvantaged students and over 40 percent - almost three times as many - of the economically disadvantaged students are at the lowest end of achievement. Also at JKL, twice as many economically disadvantaged students are in the advanced level as opposed to the state.

As Ribant compared more classes and more subjects, the same pattern kept emerging, with similar good results for JKL and similar not-so-good results for the state. Somehow, said Ribant, JKL programming supports economically disadvantaged students to steer away from the trajectory set in the state.

People want to know what you are doing to elicit this kind of response, Ribant told the group. She asked them why they thought JKL was doing so much better.

JKL staff across the room brought up a number of factors:

- Teachers take the time to work closely with students. The students are making great strides with these academic services.
- Relationship building is practiced all day, every day.
- Teachers use a multilevel approach to teaching that covers different learning styles.
- The Anishinabe culture of respect and traditional teachings is woven into the school's daily routines.
- They will use a full education remedial team with the teacher, paraprofessional and support services.
- JKL has created a sense of belonging, community and team.
- Community services are also emphasized: "If they don't have shoes, books, crayons at home we make sure they get them."

"Community support, a culture of learning and inclusion," summed up Ribant, and a strong culture of academic

achievement, she added.

Ribant acknowledged that JKL's results were not perfect, but, she stressed, they are manageable. Overall, 40 percent of state's economically disadvantaged students are at the lowest level of academic achievement, compared to less than 20 percent at JKL. That's a manageable number, said Ribant. Whereas at the state, there are so many, it is not manageable.

"You are making getting out of poverty possible for these students," said Ribant. "Congratulations. This data is really good. The reversing trend quite remarkable."

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*Michigan's director for 21st Century Learning, Michelle Ribant, oversees the Office of Educational Technology and Data Coordination and is responsible for implementing the state's online learning graduation requirement, the Michigan Educational Technology Standards (METS) and accomplishing the eight goals of set forth in the state board's Educational Technology Plan. The office also serves in the vital role of encouraging and coordinating the use of data to drive decision making in schools and at Michigan's Department of Education.*