



## **ISAI AH's Response: Integration Revenue Replacement Task Force Recommendations**

ISAI AH leaders closely followed the progress of the *Integration Revenue Replacement Task Force* throughout its deliberations, because we believe that the path to a healthy and prosperous future for Minnesota is rooted in opening access to opportunity, restorative investment, and communities growing together. **We call on the legislature to follow the example of the Task Force, and come together across partisan lines to create the “Achievement and Integration for Minnesota” (AIM) program based on their recommendations.**

ISAI AH is committed to racial and economic equity, which we define as the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all Minnesotans. We believe integration revenue, and all public policy, should increase equity, in order to advance our collective health and prosperity.

Despite significant differences among the Task Force members in approach, political orientation, and understanding of the charge and purpose of the Task Force, after many hours of learning together and serious discussion, they were able to come to agreement in support of a set of recommendations.

As people of faith, we know that our individual health and wholeness depends on the health and wholeness of our community. The health and prosperity of our entire community depends on our ability to learn, work and grow together, across race, class and geography. **The proposed AIM program would build our ability to do this, while addressing some of the equity gaps that have excluded and held back students and families of color.**

Truly integrated schools affirm the identity and cultures of all students, and provide equitable access to opportunities and to power. They break down stereotypes and barriers to full participation, build relationships across difference, and teach skills for working together and sharing power. They provide students and families of color with access to opportunity, power and resources, and white students and families with access to wholeness and the opportunity to exercise faith and hope. Integrated schools are essential for the health of our democracy, the foundation for a future of shared prosperity.

**The AIM program as outlined in the Task Force Recommendations would create the accountability and transparency that were found to be lacking in the previous program. It would promote collaboration and shared learning among school districts across our state, increasing effectiveness and efficiency of district efforts.** The limited resources dedicated to the AIM program would be leveraged through collaboration among districts, and the convening

role of the Department of Education. Promising practices would be identified, shared, and used to inform professional development, planning and policy discussion. When districts collaborate and learn from one another, our whole state benefits from local innovation.

**We urge the legislature to act together, in the current session, to create the “Achievement and Integration for Minnesota” (AIM) program recommended by the bi-partisan Task Force, for the good of our whole state.**

Specific Responses to Task Force Recommendations  
(Referenced recommendations noted in parentheses)

We strongly support the recommendation that a revised integration rule “address a new vision that is measured beyond reading, writing and math and includes a more complete measure of achievement and access to opportunity.” (1.a.)

Because we believe that transparency and accountability to the community is an important aspect of the path to racial and economic equity, we support local establishment of goals, and accountability and reporting to local communities. (1.a.iv.)

The current exemption of Area Learning Centers within the integration rule has led to extreme examples of racial segregation across Minnesota. We support the elimination of this exemption, in order to provide equitable access to opportunity and quality education. (1.a.v.)

Accountability and oversight at the state level is crucial. An adequate level of AIM staffing is necessary to make this possible, and this has been part of ISAIAH’s agenda with the Governor since his election. (2.a.)

An evaluation process, with metrics that go beyond standardized assessments, to include a more complete measure of access to opportunity, is crucial for AIM to succeed. As noted, these metrics will require further work by MDE, in collaboration with districts. The Education Equity Collaborative, in which ISAIAH participates, is currently working with MDE to develop a set of metrics to track progress toward equity at the school level. Others, such as the National Equity Project, have experience AIM could build on. In addition to the metrics proposed in the recommendations, AIM evaluation should look at access to opportunity in advanced level programs, tracking based on race or class, staff diversity and parent involvement. (2.d, e.)

We strongly support the development of innovative and integrated learning environments that promote both integration and achievement. However, historically, ‘school choice’ has had the impact of segregating schools and leaving behind disadvantaged students and families. It has not been an equitable system. (3.a.)

Our state owes all students and families an adequate education and equitable access to opportunity. We support efforts to decrease barriers to ‘choice’ for families of color and low-income families. However, we believe that the emphasis on ‘choice’ allows us to ignore our responsibility to ensure that all students, in all schools, have equitable access to opportunity. (3.a.iv.)

We strongly support the use of AIM revenue for family engagement, particularly programs that increase parent power and their ability to impact what happens in schools. (3.b.)

We strongly support the use of AIM revenue for professional development. We need teachers that are ready, willing and able to validate the cultures of all of their students, and implement instruction strategies that support all their students in meeting high expectations. The student-teacher relationship is the key to classroom success. (3.c.)

We strongly support the use of AIM revenue for access to opportunity programming. (3.d.)

We strongly support the use of AIM revenue to increase the diversity of teachers and administrators. This is in the shared interest of teachers, students and families, and addresses one of the existing equity gaps in our schools. (3.e.)

ISAIAH supports the examination of the merits of one collaborative Metropolitan Integration District. Its service area would coincide with that of the Metropolitan Council, which would provide enhanced opportunities for collaboration on housing and transit to promote stable conditions and access to opportunity for students across the Metro area. (4)

#### Responses to Fiscal Principles

**We disagree with the recommendation to cap the revenue program at the current level.** As best practices are developed, and as the state becomes more diverse, we may find it in our collective interest to increase AIM revenues in the future. (1)

We agree there is a need to level fiscal disparities between demographically similar districts. (2)

We strongly agree with the idea of creating incentives for districts to cooperate to reduce racial enrollment disparities. This is a regional problem that demands regional solutions. The current system penalizes 'sending' districts, and this should be changed. (2.b.)

We strongly support adequate funding and staffing of AIM oversight and accountability by MDE. (3)

Past public policy has divided and stratified our society by race and class, and institutionalized inequities, often unintentionally. Schools that mirror this division and stratification can only perpetuate systemic racism, marginalizing students of color and socializing white students into the lie of white superiority. They create deep racial disparities in student outcomes. They sustain the divisions that rob us all of our wholeness, and put our democracy in peril. As long as we allow our current reality of deeply segregated schools, classrooms, and opportunities to stand, we abandon all hope of a bright future for any of us, whatever our race, in an increasingly diverse Minnesota.

Truly integrated, equitable schools can seem an impossible dream. But our history teaches us that when we act together with faith and courage, new things are possible. Either we believe that all African American, all Latino, all Asian, all Native American children can achieve, or we don't. If we believe, then we know our institutions are failing these children and their families. If we

believe, we do not have the choice to give up simply because it is not easy, or because we have not yet found the right approach.

Integration and the pursuit of equity is not a social experiment, but a moral and societal imperative. As people of faith, we deeply believe that healthy, equitable communities are possible. We must summon the courage to co-create bold solutions that can transform our society, and put us on a path to shared prosperity, grounded in racial and economic equity.

**The Minnesota Legislature should come together courageously, as the Task Force did, to enact the Achievement and Integration for Minnesota (AIM) program outlined in the Task Force recommendations.** It will be an important step toward the bright future we know to be possible.