Frequently Asked Questions

Achievement and Integration Program
Minn. Stat. § 124D.861-124D.862
Minn. School Desegregation/Integration Rules 3535.0100-0180

This list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) is based on questions submitted to the agency. Its purpose is to provide additional information on basic program parameters to the general public and to districts participating in the Achievement and Integration (AI) program.

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Frequently Asked Questions

How does a district apply to be in the Achievement and Integration (AI) program?

Districts do not apply to participate in the AI program. Instead, districts are notified by the commissioner of education that they are either required or eligible to be in the program based on their annual fall enrollment data.

What process does the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) use to identify districts to participate in the AI program?

MDE determines which districts participate by comparing adjoining districts' percentage of enrolled protected class students. It also compares the percentage of enrolled protected class students between schools within a district that serve the same grade levels.

Every year, the commissioner analyzes fall enrollment data from every district to look for these racial enrollment disparities between districts and between schools. When a district and one of its adjoining districts have a 20 percent or higher difference in their number of enrolled protected students, the district with the higher percentage is considered *racially isolated* (RI).

When the difference of enrolled protected students at a school is 20 percent or higher when compared to a school in the same district serving the same grades, the school with the higher percentage is considered a *racially identifiable school* (RIS).

Districts that are *racially isolated* or have a *racially identifiable school* are required to be in the AI program. At least one of the RI district's adjoining districts must also participate and work with the RI district on cross-district programs for students.

Once the enrollment data has been confirmed, the commissioner notifies the district that it must be in the AI program and develop a plan to increase achievement and decrease racial and economic enrollment disparities. This process for identifying districts and schools is included in Minnesota Rules, part 3535.0110, subpart 6 and subpart 7.

What does the phrase "protected class students" refer to?

When determining which districts are eligible for this program, *protected class students* means students who self-report as being in one of the ethnicity categories used by districts and MDE to track student enrollment. These categories are American Indian, Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Black, not of Hispanic origin, and White, not of Hispanic origin.

Which districts are required to be in the Achievement and Integration program?

Racially isolated districts and districts with *racially identifiable schools* are required to be in the program. The commissioner notifies districts that physically adjoin a racially isolated district that they are eligible to participate in the AI program. Under Minnesota School Desegregation/Integration Rules (Minn. R.3535.0110-0180), a racially isolated district must work with at least one adjoining district to implement cross-district achievement and integration interventions.

Are intermediate districts able to participate in the program?

Intermediate districts are not included in eligibility calculations for the Achievement and Integration program for the following reasons:

1. The schools that intermediate districts provide are excluded by Minnesota School Desegregation Rules 3535.0110, Subpart. 8: ALCs, special education sites and treatment facilities.

2. The revenue formula describes adjusted pupil units, which intermediate and joint powers districts do not have. There is also a levy component to AI revenue, which is limited for intermediate districts.

3. The rule requires a comparison of percentage of enrolled protected students to those in contiguous districts. Intermediate districts are comprised of multiple member districts so their boundaries would encompass many districts and prevent any meaningful comparison.

Once the Minnesota Department of Education notifies a district that it is eligible for this program, what does the district have to do?

Participating districts must submit an AI plan aligned with its World's Best Workforce Plan. For *racially isolated* and *adjoining* districts, the plan must be completed 12 months after notification from MDE. For districts with a *racially identifiable school*, the plan should be completed six months after notification or by the end of the school year, whichever is longer.

MDE staff work with districts to meet plan requirements. One of the requirements includes getting community input when developing the AI plan (see the information on multidistrict collaboration and community collaboration councils below). The AI plan template is available on the MDE website.

Districts receive funding to implement their plans. To receive achievement and integration revenue, a district must submit a budget to MDE every March 15. These budgets must align with requirements included in the [Achievement and Integration Budget Requirements](#) available on the MDE website.

The Minnesota School Desegregation/Integration Rule requires districts to establish groups for providing input on new Achievement Integration (AI) plans. The Minnesota Department of Education recommends that districts convene a leadership team for their AI programs. Don't these two groups serve the same purpose?

No, these groups serve different purposes.

Districts are strongly encouraged to establish a leadership team for their AI programs. The role of this leadership team is to develop and actively manage the district's AI program as it is implemented over the course of three years.

The Minnesota School Desegregation/Integration Rule requires districts to convene councils to provide input on AI plans. The intent is to ensure that AI plans reflect the diverse perspectives of school-specific or district-wide communities.

The type of council a district convenes depends upon how the district qualifies to be in the program:

- Racially isolated and adjoining districts must establish a multidistrict collaboration council (MDCC). This MDCC provides input to help districts establish integration goals and cross-district integration strategies for districts' AI plans.

- Districts with a racially identifiable school (RIS) are required to convene a community collaboration council (CCC) to assist in developing integration goals and to identify ways of increasing racial and economic integration at the RIS.

Membership for both of these councils should reflect the diversity of the participating districts or the RIS community. An American Indian Parent Committee representative must be included in an MDCC and CCC if the district has such a committee.

Achievement and Integration legislation says that one purpose of the program is to create equitable educational opportunities. How is this related to providing culturally responsive classroom instruction and programming if most of the students in my classroom are white?

Culture is a central component to teaching and learning. Culture affects how people think, communicate, interpret the world, solve problems and make decisions. It is important for students and teachers of all backgrounds to develop cross-cultural competence and understanding of cultural differences. It is just as important for white students to learn about difference as it is for students of color who must navigate systems of difference on a regular basis. An equitable education means teaching all students the value of multiple perspectives, critical thinking skills, and the ability to build relationships with others who don't look like them, believe the same things they do, or live in their neighborhoods or communities. This is a critical aspect of integrated schools.

Adjoining and voluntary districts are in the AI program to work with racially isolated districts on increasing opportunities for racial and economic diversity and integration. The AI program provides districts the opportunity to build cross-cultural relationships and create shared learning opportunities for students of color and white students from the racially isolated and adjoining districts. Providing these opportunities for increased student interaction is one aspect of fulfilling districts' responsibility to provide an equitable education for each student.

What are the reporting requirements for districts in the Achievement and Integration program?

At its annual World's Best Workforce meeting, a school board must publicly report on its progress toward its Achievement and Integration (AI) plan goals. The board must provide longitudinal data demonstrating its progress in the AI goal areas: 1) reducing the disparities in student academic performance and 2) increasing racial and economic diversity and integration. (See Minn. Stat. § 124D.861, Subd. 3 b.)

At least 30 days before the meeting, the school board must post its plan, a preliminary analysis, relevant student performance data, and other longitudinal data on the district's website.

Districts also submit an annual progress report to MDE in order for the commissioner to evaluate each AI plan at the end of its three-year cycle.

Can a school district make changes to its AI plan after it has been approved by MDE?

A district's MDE-approved AI plan is the guiding document for a district's AI efforts and use of revenue. If done well, the plan is based on a careful analysis of data that identifies student needs. All plans are meant to remain in place for three years. For these reasons, requests to *significantly change* or *expand the scope* or goals of an MDE-approved AI plan will not be approved.

Approved plans *may* be modified in the following situations:

- When there are unanticipated changes in funding, in availability of staff or other resources critical for implementing the approved plan; or

- When the proposed changes are based on an analysis of relevant data that identifies critical student needs *not* reflected in the current plan; and

- When it becomes evident as part of the continuous improvement cycle that an intervention needs to be refocused.

Here are the key things to consider for plan amendments:

- Changes to an AI plan should align with the plan's goals: think about how the amendment aligns with the scope of the current plan.

- Changes should be supported by a needs assessment and be based on a review of relevant data: think about how the revision is supported by a needs assessment and how it is supported by data.

- Changes to the AI plan can build on existing interventions by adding a related initiative or activity. That is, a district may amend its plan by adding an intervention which somehow expands on an existing one.

What if we don't get school board approval for our AI budget or plan until *after* the March 15 deadline for submitting plans and budgets?

The March 15 deadline is stated in legislation and does not change from year to year. A district can use this date to plan for creating and getting school board approval for its annual budget and three-year plan.

If a district is unable to get board approval by the March 15 deadline, it may request an extension by emailing MDE at mde.integration@state.mn.us. In its request for an extension of this deadline, a district should (1) explain the reason for its late submission, and (2) specify the earliest date following board approval that it will submit its plan or budget. Requests for these extensions should be submitted well before the March 15 deadline.

When a district wants to amend its MDE-approved budget, does it need school board approval?

School board chair and superintendent signatures are needed for an amended budget only if the amended budget increases the amount of total revenue. Districts have until **April 1** to amend their Achievement and Integration budgets. More details on budget amendments are included in the Achievement and Integration Budget Requirements posted on the MDE website.

Is Achievement and Integration revenue provided through a grant?

Achievement and Integration revenue is not administered as a grant. It is a 70/30 percent levy/aid appropriation. AI aid payments are made to districts through the state's education IDEAS aid system.

How does a district know how much Achievement and Integration revenue it is eligible to receive?

Achievement and Integration aid estimates are reported in the Minnesota Funding Reports (MFR) section of MDE's website. Step-by-step directions to these reports are listed on the [Achievement and Integration web page](#).

School Finance staff Janice Carlson can provide detailed information on levy or aid estimates and reporting. You may contact Janice at 651-582-8342 or email her at janice.carlson@state.mn.us.

Finally, it's important to know that the amount of AI revenue a district receives is based on the *lesser* of the following three things:

1. The maximum amount of revenue a district is eligible to receive based on its *actual* rather than *estimated* fall enrollment data,
2. The amount of revenue approved by MDE during its annual review of budgets submitted by districts, or
3. A district's actual expenditures as reported in its final annual UFARS report.

Is pre-K enrollment data included in a district's annual Achievement and Integration revenue estimate and can a district fund pre-k costs with that revenue?

Yes, MDE uses pre-K through 12th grade enrollment data to determine districts' estimated and updated annual revenue amounts. Legislation allows these funds to be used for pre-K through grade 12 learning environments that include "enrollment choices" (see Minn. Stat. 124D.861 Subd. 1 (c)). Given this, AI revenue may be used for allowable costs at a pre-K program that offers school enrollment choices.

Allowable costs include those related to policies, curricula, or new positions (trained instructors, administrators, counselors, and others) which support magnet programming, research-based instruction, differentiated instruction, or targeted interventions to improve achievement (Minn. Stat. 124D.861 Subd. 1 (c)).

Pre-K programs must be included as an activity in the district's AI plan and provide school enrollment choices that will reduce racial and economic enrollment disparities in one of two ways, either

1. Between a racially identifiable school and other sites in the district serving the same grade levels, or
2. Between a racially isolated district and its adjoining districts that are members of the same integration collaborative.

Can districts use their Achievement and Integration revenue across fiscal years?

There is no carryover of AI revenue from one fiscal year to the next. Districts must expend their revenue by June 30 of the fiscal year for which their budget was approved in order to receive aid

payments for the amount expended. In other words, expenditures of this revenue must be made between July 1 and June 30 of the same fiscal year.

A district will receive aid payments based on the amount it expended during a fiscal year if that amount is less than the amount of revenue approved for its budget during MDE's annual budget review, or less than the amount the district is eligible to receive based on actual student enrollment for that fiscal year—that is, if the amount expended is the lesser of these three amounts.

Can Achievement and Integration revenue be used to fund mini-grants?

This revenue may be used for teacher mini-grants that are included in a district's MDE-approved AI plan and aligned with the state's AI program goals. A district's plan must explain how it will determine whether mini grants proposals are aligned with the goals in its plan.

A district should be able to document its mini grant approval process, actual grant awards, and the impact of the mini grant activities.

Can a district use Achievement and Integration revenue for staff salaries?

There are two things to consider:

1. A district may use AI revenue only for costs associated with implementing interventions in its MDE-approved plan.
2. A district may fund positions proportionate to the amount of time those positions are directly involved with implementing AI plan interventions.

Here's an example: a district's MDE-approved plan includes a new tutoring program designed to reduce academic disparities between specific student groups. The new tutoring program will require .2 time of a full-time teaching position. This means that .2 of that person's salary may be funded with AI revenue.

Another thing to keep in mind to avoid supplanting is that AI revenue may not be used to fund existing positions unless staff in those positions are taking on new responsibilities created for interventions or activities listed in a district's AI plan.

In other words, districts may not simply replace one funding source (e.g., other types of categorical aid, federal grants, general education revenue, or any other) with AI revenue. This would be supplanting and would not be allowed.

The Achievement and Integration (AI) budget requirements say that AI revenue may not be used to make ongoing purchases of technology, but may be used only to purchase technology required to implement a new AI activity. What does that mean?

Districts may purchase technology when that technology is essential for the success of an activity being implemented for the first time. Once that activity is implemented and running, a district may not use AI revenue to purchase additional technology beyond that start-up purchase.

May a district continue to purchase software after making an initial purchase for a new activity?

Yes, a district may purchase additional software or renew software licenses. Like all other types of expenditures, it must be clear how software supports one or more activities in a district's AI plan. Hardware purchases will be limited to an initial purchase for a new activity.

Some requests to use Achievement and Integration revenue for memberships to professional organizations are allowable and others are not. Why is this?

Allowable memberships are those which directly benefit or support one or more AI plan activity and are specific to the district's AI plan. For example, a membership fee for a business manager's association is not specific to an AI program but supports district-wide efforts. A membership fee to a national organization supporting culturally relevant teaching is more likely to be specific to an AI plan intervention and could be approved if the accompanying explanation makes this connection clear. Districts are required to provide such explanations—referred to as budget narratives—in their annual AI budgets. The budget narrative for a proposed membership fee must explain how the membership directly supports and is specific to an AI intervention.

Do Achievement and Integration collaboratives need to submit their own plans and budgets?

In nearly all instances, districts that have formed formal AI collaboratives do not need to create collaborative plans or budgets. Instead, cross-district interventions being implemented by two or more districts in a collaborative should be listed in each district's respective AI plan. Payments to an integration collaborative should be listed as line items within a district's annual budget. There are more details on this in the [Achievement and Integration Budget Requirements](#) available on MDE's website.

An exception to this occurs when all districts in a collaborative contribute 100 percent of their AI revenue to a collaborative. In this situation, it makes sense to have one collaborative plan and one collaborative budget that each member district approves and uses as its sole AI plan or budget.

How does an Achievement and Integration collaborative receive revenue to run programs for its member districts?

State aid payments are made to districts, not to a designated fiscal host or to integration collaboratives created to facilitate student activities. A district may use some of its AI aid to purchase services from another district or from a collaborative if the services purchased are allowable uses of revenue included in the AI statute. Details on how to include this type of expenditure in a district's AI budget are provided in the [Achievement and Integration Budget Requirements](#) posted on MDE's website.

For any type of purchase made with AI revenue, districts are responsible for providing oversight and for implementing accountability measures to ensure that expenditures align with allowable uses of funds.