

Debbie Critchfield, State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Idaho State Department of Education
650 W. State Street
Boise, ID 83702

Dear Superintendent Critchfield,

I am writing to express my profound concern regarding the recent support for the inclusion of the PragerU supplemental K-12 curriculum within Idaho schools. After discussions with major stakeholders, numerous concerns were raised regarding the PragerU curriculum. The materials, particularly the videos addressing Native American histories and cultures, are not only misaligned with Idaho's social studies standards but also contribute to adverse educational outcomes against Native American students.

Idaho's educational standards emphasize the recognition and understanding of Indigenous peoples throughout K-12 education. These standards aim to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, and contributions, fostering respect and awareness of their ongoing significance in Idaho. The PragerU materials promote narratives that overlook or exclude Native perspectives. It magnifies the colonial stereotypes by justifying colonization and the erasure of Indigenous cultures, while ignoring the ongoing impacts of intergenerational historical trauma.

Such an indoctrinating curriculum severely undermines the educational experience of Native American students in several ways. The curriculum reinforces systemic inequalities directly affecting the classroom learning experiences of Native American students. This curriculum jeopardizes the classroom atmosphere where every student should feel valued and empowered. It suppresses cultural identities, reinforces stereotypes, and negatively impacts students' identity, engagement, and achievement.

Misrepresentation or exclusion of Native histories and values alienates students, disconnecting them from their heritage, and shrinks their sense of belonging in the classroom. Students face additional stress when their identities and histories are ignored or inaccurately portrayed in the classroom. Schools must strive to create inclusive, equitable, and culturally responsive educational environments. This not only supports the well-being and success of Native American students but also enhances the learning experience for all students by promoting cultural awareness and mutual understanding. PragerU fails to integrate Native American perspectives and histories, making education less meaningful and relevant for Native American students, while also making this curriculum inaccurate.

I urge the Idaho State Department of Education to reconsider its support for the PragerU curriculum and instead uphold the standards that prioritize culturally responsive education. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that every student, including Native American youth, receives an education rooted in truth, respect, and equity.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I am available to discuss these concerns further and collaborate on ways to support the success and well-being of ALL Idaho students.

Respectfully,

Iris Chimburas, Director of Indian Education
Lapwai Indian Education Department, Lapwai School District #341

