

Deer River Public School District  
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Abstract

**Population to be Served:** Embrace Deer River will expand full-service community school services at King Elementary School (grades Pre-K to 5) in the rural and isolated community of Deer River, Minnesota. It will also welcome Deer River Secondary (grades 6 to 12) as a new school within the local full-service community school network. A total of 1,080 students attend these two schools, which are both high-poverty buildings with diverse student bodies. King Elementary School is a Title 1 facility. The target population for the overall project is the students in both schools, their families, and community members. The project will serve an estimated 600 students, 250 families, and 100 community members each year.

**General Profile of the Community:** The Deer River Public School District is one of the poorest school districts in the state of Minnesota with 69 percent of students qualifying for free- or reduced-price lunch. In addition, 22 percent of students are enrolled in special education services, and four percent are homeless. Within Minnesota as a whole, 36 percent qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch, 16 percent are enrolled in special education services, and less than one percent are homeless. Further compounding challenges, Deer River Public School District is highly rural and geographically vast. Fifty-three percent of students are White, 32 percent are Native American, 12 percent are two or more races, and three percent are Black, African American, Asian, Hispanic, or Latino. Given the complex and interwoven challenges in Deer River Public School District, academic achievement rates are far lower than state averages. In addition, there is a persistent achievement gap between White and Native American students as well as students qualifying for free- or reduced-price lunch.

**Summary of the Comprehensive Plan:** The proposed project is designed to add much-needed staff who will coordinate and deliver direct pipeline services. Many of these services already exist as Deer River Public School District has worked for many years to support its students through innovative programming and partnerships. There exists a dire need to link such services to students and families in a coordinated manner. In addition, tremendous needs for transportation, health service coordination, social-emotional learning, increased parent involvement, transitional services, and culturally focused strategies dampen the impact of existing services and add to pressures on already tapped staff. An expanded and seamless pipeline of integrated services will provide supports that positively impact students, families, and the community in powerful and lasting ways.

**Key Project Goals:** The key project goals are to: 1) Increase coordination of supportive services for students, their families, and community members, 2) Decrease achievement gaps and increase the overall number of students achieving academically, and 3) Increase the number of students who are safe, healthy, and supported by engaged parents.

**Expected Outcomes:** The key long-term outcomes are: 1) More students achieving academically, 2) More students who are safe, healthy, and supported by engaged parents, 3) Increased coordination of services for students, their families, and community members, 4) All Deer River students are succeeding, and 5) Evaluation leads to long-term sustainability.

**Key Partner Entities:** Embrace Deer River will be built on key partnerships between Deer River Public School District, Itasca County Health and Human Services, North Homes Children and Family Services, NorTran Bus Company, Itasca County Public Health, Ross Resources, Invest Early, and the Boys and Girls Club of the Leech Lake Area.