

BIE High School Excellence Program Explores Career Pathways

The BIE High School Excellence Initiative is moving forward with increasing student access to rigorous and relevant curriculum in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) areas. BIE is working with Loma Linda University in planning a 2 week summer health careers academy for 30 Sherman Indian High School students, and formalizing a memorandum for an advisor to be located on the Sherman Indian High School campus. The 2 week academy will focus on coursework designed to meet the rigor of career expectations in the areas of higher advanced math, reading, and human anatomy.

A recent 2 day meeting at Sherman Indian High School was extremely productive in moving this initiative forward at Sherman. BIE team members and representatives from Loma Linda University's Institute for Community Partnerships and a Professor from the School of Education at San Diego State University and President and Chief Education Officer at the Health Sciences High and Middle College in San Diego, worked diligently to craft the framework of the academy and develop the overarching concepts of the Career Pathways Program, ensuring attention to the rigor of the academic programming, the relevance for students, and strengthening the relationships students will be able to depend on as they explore career interests.

The High School Excellence Panel consists of more than a dozen educators from across the Bureau of Indian Education, representing tribal and bureau-operated schools, tribal education committees, and other interested parties. The team is currently recruiting tribal representation and leaders in business and other areas of Indian Affairs to provide a wide array of expertise toward improving educational services of BIE-funded High Schools.

In January 2009, team members visited the Denver School of Science and Technology and the Nikola Tesla Education Opportunity Center in Colorado Springs; in conjunction with the BIE Winter Leadership Institute, the team visited the Health Sciences High and Middle College and the San Diego MET High School. All four are high-performing schools, with open enrollments and student demographics similar to our student populations, although non-Indian; the individual and common characteristics of these schools of excellence have become part of the team's expanding portfolio of effective practices. These and future site visits, coupled with continued research and partnerships, will inform improved practice throughout the Bureau of Indian Education. The BIE team is strategically moving forward to affect the rigor and the relevance of the academic-related programs in our schools. Cultivating strong relationships by supporting students' navigation through learning experiences, and finding ways to seamlessly include cultural values and relevance to those experiences is a process we will continue to address.

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