

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION
STRATEGIC DIRECTION
SEPTEMBER 2, 2017

VISION STATEMENT

The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) is the preeminent provider of high quality-educational services and supports to students¹ at BIE funded schools² to foster lifelong learning.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the BIE is to provide students at BIE-funded schools with a culturally relevant, high-quality education that prepares students with the knowledge, skills, and behaviors needed to flourish in the opportunities of tomorrow, become healthy and successful individuals, and lead their communities and sovereign nations to a thriving future that preserves their unique cultural identities.

CORE VALUES

BIE employees carry out the mission to achieve the vision through guiding organizational principles underpinning how the work of the BIE is successfully accomplished.

- **Excellence**: The BIE achieves success through continuous self-assessment and improvement.
- **Focus**: The BIE is student-centered, committed to addressing the holistic needs of students.
- **Integrity**: The BIE maintains high standards of character and professionalism as the foundation upon which the agency is built.
- **Respect**: The BIE fosters communities of support through mutual regard and collaboration.
- **Service**: The BIE supports students through proactive and responsive teamwork with schools, tribes, and communities.

¹ Throughout the remaining document, the word “students” refers to any student attending a BIE funded school.

² Throughout the remaining document, the word “schools” refers to BIE funded schools, including colleges and universities.

GOALS and STRATEGIES

Mission Area: High-Quality, Early Childhood Education

- **Goal 1: All students will enter kindergarten academically, socially, and emotionally prepared to succeed in school.**

Goal Explanation

When students enter kindergarten with pre-academic skills (e.g., having a large vocabulary, number sense) and social/emotional skills (e.g., being able to share, cooperate, listen) needed for learning, they have the confidence to engage, learn, and articulate their thoughts. Kindergarten readiness is not only about preparing students, but also supporting families and communities to engage in their child's education. This includes creating and supporting early learning settings that respect cultural and individual differences, and collaborating with communities and partners to support families and early learning settings. Investing in early learning builds a strong future for students and their families.

- **Strategy 1.1: Establish Partnerships with Early Childhood Development Organizations**

If the BIE partners with early childhood development organizations and tribes to increase access and supports for high-quality, early childhood education, then barriers to accessing high-quality, early childhood education will be addressed, and all students will enter kindergarten academically, socially, and emotionally prepared to succeed in school.

Strategy Explanation

Research has shown that high-quality, early childhood learning experiences have short- and long-term impact on a child's cognitive and social development. Strong partnership with families, family child care providers, tribes, Head Start, early Head start, and public and private pre-school programs have shown to impact the availability and quality of early childhood services and increase family and staff knowledge and skills on early learning. More children can have access to early learning experiences through strong partnerships focused on addressing the barriers to early childhood education. Partnerships can also improve the transition from preschool to kindergarten so the experience is positive for both children and families.

- **Strategy 1.2: Strengthen Family-School-Community Connections**

If the BIE provides services and supports to strengthen family-school-community connections, then there will be more opportunities for parents, primary caregivers, and communities to engage in their child's learning as their first and most influential teacher, and all students will enter kindergarten academically, socially, and emotionally prepared to succeed in school.

Strategy Explanation

The role of families and primary caregivers is first and foremost in a child's cognitive and social development and wellbeing. Research has shown that when family practices are aligned with early childhood expectations and family supports, a child's learning and development improves. Strengthening the school-family-community connections can result in positive learning experiences and better transitions for children entering kindergarten.

- **Strategy 1.3: BIE Preschool Initiative**

If the BIE establishes a BIE-funded, high-quality pre-school initiative, then families, communities and schools will use the additional early education opportunity for students, and all students will enter kindergarten academically, socially, and emotionally prepared to succeed in school.

Strategy Explanation

There are possible funding mechanisms that might be available to fund a pre-school initiative. Exploring this possibility could result in an additional source for preschool education for children in BIE funded schools. The preschool initiative could be developed, piloted and then expanded to effectively implement and evaluate the initiative.

Mission Area: Wellness, Behavioral Health, and Safety

- **Goal 2: All students will develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary for physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing.**

Goal explanation

The physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of students is an end in its own right; it is a critical foundation for success. Access to school and community coordinated wellness supports and behavioral health services and supports for students and their families is of utmost importance. Knowledge, skills, and behaviors of wellbeing, including self-advocacy skills, should be intentionally taught and reinforced by well-trained and supported principals, teachers, and school staff. Safe, secure learning environments that have routines in place to maintain student safety and reinforce pro-social behaviors are also an important component of meeting the wellness, behavioral health, and safety needs of students.

- Strategy 2.1: Student Wellness

If the BIE develops programs and supports for student wellness, then schools will provide proactive programs and interventions that foster an encouraging and supportive environment, and all students will develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary for physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing.

Strategy Explanation

With proactive supports and interventions, which address the holistic needs of student wellness, students can overcome challenges, increase resiliency, develop growth mindsets, and excel in their personal lives. The BIE will provide and implement proactive policies, practices, and supports which address the holistic needs of students. Individualized interventions and supports may include, but are not limited to, nutrition curriculum, exercise programs, and self-esteem building practices.

- Strategy 2.2: Behavioral Health

If the BIE develops programs and supports for student behavioral health, then schools will implement a comprehensive behavioral health plan, programs and interventions that foster an encouraging and supportive environment, and all students will develop the knowledge skills, and behaviors necessary for physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing.

Strategy Explanation

Children and youth may be exposed to unique and challenging life experiences that can impact their short and long-term behavioral health. The BIE needs policies and procedures in place to provide for student behavioral health needs. All staff at every level of BIE need to be trained and prepared to support students and their families.

- Strategy 2.3: Student Physical Health and Safety

If the BIE supports effective safety practices and interventions, then schools will implement programs and routines that support the safety of students, and all students will develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary for physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing.

Strategy Explanation

Students learn best when they are safe and supported. A safe environment teaches students the skills and behaviors needed to keep themselves healthy and safe, especially in dangerous circumstances. A comprehensive approach to student safety includes building respect and understanding of other backgrounds, reducing bullying, using behavior data to identify and address the root cause of discipline issues, and partnering with families and the community on using consistent messaging to encourage healthy choices and positive safe behavior.

Mission Area: K-12 Instruction and High Academic Standards

- **Goal 3: All students will develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to progress successfully through school.**

Goal explanation

Students should continually grow and progress through each learning experience in order to graduate ready to succeed in postsecondary study and careers, including military service. This can only happen when students are provided engaging, high-quality instruction that is informed by student data and delivered through effective teaching practices. Instruction includes developing the fundamental skills for educational attainment and successful employment. Highly effective leaders, teachers, and staff collaborating, engaging, learning, and utilizing a reflective improvement process can build a responsive learning program to address student needs so each student successfully progresses through school.

- Strategy 3.1: Recruitment for Principals, Teachers and Staff

If the BIE collaborates with schools to recruit, hire, and retain highly effective principals, teachers, and staff, including those from local communities, then schools will have the instructional leaders, teachers, and staff to provide highly effective, culturally-relevant instruction, services, and supports, and all students will develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to progress successfully through school.

Strategy Explanation

Research has demonstrated that students in grades with high staff turnover score lower in English language arts and math, and staff turnover negatively affects the health and culture of the school learning environment. However, it is not only staff turnover that is impacting student success. School leadership is the second most important influence on student learning, surpassed only by the teacher. Principal, teacher, and staff recruitment has been a long standing problem in our schools, as is retaining qualified people at all levels of BIE. In order to ensure students have the highest quality of education, it is imperative that the BIE supports an effective process to have stable and high-quality principals, teachers, and staff at all BIE-funded schools.

- Strategy 3.2: Develop and Mentor Principals, Teachers, and Staff

If the BIE institutes systems of professional learning and mentoring for principals, teachers, and staff then principals, teachers, and staff will have the knowledge and skills necessary to provide highly effective, culturally-relevant instruction, services, and supports, and all students will develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to progress successfully through school.

Strategy Explanation

Continuous learning is critical for principals, teachers, and staff to keep up-to-date with effective practices in education. Professional learning and mentorship promote development and growth for

both new and veteran principals, teachers, and staff, increasing their knowledge and skills in providing high-quality instruction, services, and supports to all students.

○ Strategy 3.3: Standards-aligned Curricula

If the BIE provides guidance and supports to schools on utilizing standards-aligned curricula to develop rigorous instruction, then principals, teachers and staff will implement standards-based instruction, and all students will develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to progress successfully through school.

Strategy Explanation

Standards help ensure a high level of learning for each student. Standards define what students need to know and be able to do to successfully progress through school. A curriculum aligned to adopted standards provide clear and consistent expectations for student learning at various levels throughout a comprehensive education program. Principals, teachers, and staff use standards-aligned curricula to guide instruction that is rigorous and meaningful for each student. Standards and aligned curricula are the building blocks for success beyond school.

○ Strategy 3.4: Curriculum-aligned Instruction

If the BIE provides guidance and supports to schools on utilizing curriculum-aligned instruction, then principals, teachers, and staff will implement rigorous, relevant instruction and all students will develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to progress successfully through school.

Strategy Explanation

Having a standards-aligned curriculum alone is not sufficient to ensure high-quality, rigorous instruction happens daily in every classroom in each school. Model lessons and resources based on a standards-aligned curriculum becomes the road map for instruction through which teachers and staff can facilitate learning and application of learned skills in meaningful ways to improve student performance.

○ Strategy 3.5: Assessments

If the BIE provides guidance and supports to schools on utilizing assessments during instruction and at the end of instructional units, courses, or grades, then principals, teachers, and staff will use data to adjust instruction and provide interventions to better meet the needs of individual students, and all students will develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to progress successfully through school.

Strategy Explanation

Monitoring student progress is a critical part of responsive instruction. Some assessments are used to provide ongoing feedback on student learning during instruction. The data helps students understand their strengths and weaknesses and areas that need work, while also helping teachers and staff know where students are struggling so immediate help can be given. Other assessments are used to evaluate student learning at the end of a unit or against a specific standard or benchmark. The summative data are used to guide teaching and learning in subsequent courses, grades, or levels year to year. Both are needed to ensure students are getting the instruction and supports needed to successfully progress and graduate from high school.

○ Strategy 3.6: Personal Competencies

If the BIE provides services and supports on personal competencies, then principals, teachers, and staff will provide opportunities for students to learn and practice personal competencies in a variety of settings including, but not limited to, classrooms, communities, and residential living, and all

students will develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to progress successfully through school.

Strategy Explanation

Personal competencies are related sets of skills and knowledge that are fundamental to education and employment success. Personal competencies include prior knowledge, persistence in learning, the ability to set personal goals, make responsible decisions, and a sense of self-worth and respect for others. Teachers and staff help students develop personal competencies through positive relationships with students and families and using multiple instructional modes to scaffold learning. Students need to develop both academic knowledge and skills and personal competencies to be successful in post-secondary study and careers.

○ Strategy 3.7: Native Languages and Cultures

If the BIE partners with and supports tribes in their efforts to revitalize and maintain cultures and languages through curricula and instruction, then schools will support tribal efforts to teach and maintain cultures and languages, and all students will develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to progress successfully through school.

Strategy Explanation

It is critical that students embrace and learn their native languages and cultures. Native language builds cultural identity, respect and value of Indian history, beliefs, traditions, and social habits. Including native languages and cultures in everyday learning experiences builds knowledge and skills to support the future of our Tribal Nations.

Mission Area: Post-secondary and Career Readiness

- **Goal 4: All students will graduate high school ready to succeed in post-secondary study and careers.**

Goal explanation

Successful completion of high school opens doors to a variety of opportunities for each student including college, university, technical school, vocational certification, military service, and competitive employment. Students need to be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and tools to pursue their interests and aspirations, and meaningfully contribute to their communities. Students and their families also need support in career planning and navigating the transition from secondary to post-secondary learning and employment. Providing strong career planning and guidance, challenging learning opportunities that include advanced placement and vocational/industry certifications, and services that align graduation with post-secondary opportunities will result in students succeeding in the opportunities of tomorrow.

○ Strategy 4.1: Post-secondary Support and Transition

If the BIE, in collaboration with colleges and universities, aligns and supports high school graduation and post-secondary entry requirements and provides transition supports to students, then schools will implement a seamless system of support that bridges K-12 and post-secondary career planning and student self-advocacy, and all students will graduate from high school and succeed in post-secondary study and careers.

Strategy Explanation

Graduating from high school and moving on to post-secondary study is a big transition for students. Students need to be prepared for the transition by having the prerequisite skills needed to enter college, universities, or technical schools ready to learn. Far too many times students enter this next

phase of learning needing remediation or lacking personal competencies to pursue their goals. If we align our graduation requirements with post-secondary entry requirements, students will be more prepared. In addition, providing support for goal setting, developing financial skills, effective career planning, and developing self-advocacy can improve students' transition to post-secondary study.

○ Strategy 4.2: Career Readiness

If the BIE provides professional learning, expanded student learning opportunities, and responsive supports and interventions, then K-12 schools will provide more expansive rigorous learning opportunities that foster high school graduation and prepare students to become leaders in their communities and tribal governments, and all students will graduate from high school ready to succeed in post-secondary study and careers.

Strategy Explanation

Post-secondary study is not the only option for students once they graduate high school. Preparing students to enter the workforce with the skills needed for current and future jobs is also critical to student success. When students are engaged in work-based learning experiences, they develop and apply communication, problem-solving, collaboration, and other employability skills in a supportive rigorous learning environment. Work-based learning experiences also increase student engagement because the learning experiences align with student interests and aspirations. When students are prepared for careers, they are more likely to contribute positively to their communities and tribal governments.

○ Strategy 4.3: Engagement

If the BIE promotes student, family, and community engagement on education pathways based on student interests and aspirations, then schools will engage students, families, and communities in setting goals and tracking progress, and all students will graduate from high school and succeed in post-secondary study and careers.

Strategy Explanation

Families and tribal communities are critical to creating a support network for student engagement and success. Schools, families, and tribal communities can form a strong partnership to support a student succeeding along his or her education and career pathway. The BIE can promote such partnerships through communication, professional learning, and services that strengthen the relationships, knowledge, and skills of school staff, families, and tribal communities so students have the supports needed to successfully move along their pathway to graduation and post-secondary study or employment.

○ Strategy 4.4: Colleges and Universities

If the BIE leverages Haskell Indian Nations University and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute as options for post-secondary education and partners with Tribal Colleges and Universities, then students, families, and communities will have multiple pathways for post-secondary education, and all students will graduate from high school ready to succeed in post-secondary study and careers.

Strategy explanation

Pathways from K-12 schools to TCUs may include transition services, financial services, and recruitment/retention strategies. When TCUs build bridges to K-12 schools, students will increase their awareness of opportunities that exist beyond high school, and families and communities will be empowered with knowledge to help students make decisions about their future.

Mission Area: Self-Determination

- **Goal 5: All students will develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviors needed to lead their sovereign nations to a thriving future through self-determination.**

Goal explanation: Tribal self-determination is a process where leaders and members of each tribe choose their future direction based on their individual needs influenced by their unique culture and identity. Self-determination is a critical part of student education because it builds the capacity of each tribe to address the educational needs of their students and builds future leaders and members to advocate for and sustain self-determining independence. Collaborative partnerships between the BIE and tribes creates the conditions and capacity needed to build culturally-relevant and rigorous learning experiences to support students in developing the knowledge, skills, and behaviors needed to lead their sovereign nations.

- **Strategy 5.1. Educational Self-Determination**

If the BIE, in partnership with tribes, identifies resources and supports needed to implement effective educational programs, then tribes will have resources and supports to oversee and implement successful educational programs which contribute to the future of their sovereign nations.

Strategy Explanation

Building the capacity of tribes to oversee an effective education program for each student is critical to student success. Matching the capacity building supports and resources to specific identified needs will ensure that the supports are relevant and meaningful within the context of each tribe and its students. The BIE will work with tribes to identify needs, provide resources and supports matched to needs, and determine if the resources and supports are effective in addressing needs. Having processes in place to continually define and refine resources and supports will sustain tribal self-determination in overseeing school improvement and student learning.

- **Strategy 5.2: Support Tribal Education Capacity-Building**

If the BIE implements an effective system of support aligned to the education needs of tribally controlled schools, then tribes will have the capacity to effectively oversee and support their BIE funded schools in providing high quality education to their students.

Strategy Explanation

Aligning budgets to effectively support tribal capacity-building and matching the capacity building supports and resources to specific identified needs will ensure that the supports are relevant and meaningful within the context of each tribe and its students. The BIE will work with tribes to identify needs, provide supports matched to needs, and determine if the supports are effective in addressing needs.

Mission Area: Performance Management

- **Goal 6: All students will benefit from an education system that is effective, efficient, transparent, and accountable.**

Goal explanation: In order to realize its vision and accomplish its mission, the BIE must transform itself into an agile, responsive organization that provides resources, direction, and services to Indian students. To this end, BIE needs to effectively implement policies and procedures, advocate for needed resources, build strong collaborative relationships, and maintain effective communication. Accountability, data-informed decision-making, progress monitoring, and making timely adjustments are just a few of the

practices that need to be systematically implemented to build and sustain an effective responsive education system.

○ Strategy 6.1: Employee System of Support

If the BIE develops and implements an employee system of support that includes policies, best practices, and data, then all staff will have the capacity to proactively provide services to students, schools, and tribes, and all students will benefit from an education system that is effective, efficient, transparent, and accountable.

Strategy Explanation

An organization is only as good as its employees. The BIE needs to not only provide a relevant and supportive orientation process, but it also need to provide continuous professional learning so employees have the most up-to-date knowledge and skills. A system of support with consistent relevant policies, procedures, and supports builds the capacity of the BIE to carry out its mission.

○ Strategy 6.2: Data-driven Decision Making

If the BIE develops a comprehensive data management system, then accurate data will be used to improve education services and supports, and all students will benefit from an education system that is effective, efficient, transparent, and accountable.

Strategy Explanation

Sound decision-making requires reliable, valid, and timely data that is easily accessible across the educational system. Accurate data are not only needed to meet reporting requirements, but are also used to determine needs, select effective practices, and determine if practices are getting the desired results. How will we know if we are implementing our strategic direction and having a positive impact on students, families, schools, and tribes if we do not have accurate data? A strong data system with a decision making process utilizing the data needs to be in place so the BIE, schools, and tribes can make informed decisions to improve the quality of education for students.

○ Strategy 6.3: Communication

If the BIE establishes clear, consistent communication processes that model and facilitate two-way communication, then all stakeholders will have up-to-date reliable information and an avenue for timely input to assist BIE in providing effective leadership and supports to improve education, and all students will benefit from an education system that is effective, efficient, transparent, and accountable.

Strategy Explanation

Effective communication is critical to any organization and impacts every facet of its work. Effective communication sets clear expectations and builds strong relationships both within and across organizations. The BIE is committed to put a strong communication process in place, one that encourages and facilitates two-way communication with all employees and stakeholders. Opening effective channels of communication in a systemic way can improve performance, lead to new ways of thinking, and encourage innovative problem solving to improve student learning.