



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Indian Education
1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
Washington, DC 20240

BIE Advisory Board for Exceptional Children

Board Minutes - Day 1

Thursday, April 30, 2026 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM (MDT)

Name of Committee: Bureau of Indian Education Advisory Board for Exceptional Children

Meeting Location: National Indian Programs Training Center, 1011 Indian School Rd., NW, Albuquerque, NM, 87104 and online using the Zoom.gov platform.

FACA Regulations: As an Advisory Board to a federal agency, the Board falls under the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA; 5 U.S.C., Appendix 2). FACA aims to ensure the advice of federal advisory committees is objective and available to the public, and that the committee complies with cost control and recordkeeping requirements. The BIE Advisory Board ensures all their Board meetings are open to the public, all meeting notices are published in advance, and all Board meetings are advertised using the Federal Register and posted on the BIE website at www.bie.edu. The BIE has provided a Designated Federal Officer (DFO) assigned to support the Advisory Board, and the BIE ensures each Board member avoids conflicts of interest and limits their membership terms.

ADVISORY BOARD ROSTER

1. Present Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson
2. Present Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson, Ed.D
3. Present Leon Reval, Secretary
4. Present Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member, Ed.D
5. Present Melanie Star, Board Member
6. Present Heather Church, Board Member
7. Present Season Goodpasture, Board Member
8. Present Dr. Paula Seanez, Board Member, Ph.D.
9. Present Joshua Shumak, Board Member
10. Present Amber Tyner, Board Member
11. Present Katinee Shawanokasic-Chavez, Board Member
12. Present Mariah Crow, Board Member



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Education
1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
Washington, DC 20240

13. Present Taryn Jim, Board Member

BIE Staff Members: Tony Dearman, Director of the Bureau of Indian Education
Margo DeLaune, Associate Deputy Director
Dr. Eugene Thompson, Supervisory Education Specialist
Jennifer Davis, Designated Federal Officer (DFO)
Ronald J. Worst, Education Specialist

TAESE Contractors: Dr. Brenda Smith, Alex Langevin, and Lindsey Brogdon

Presenters/Speakers: John Copenhaver, Desiree J. Sanchez, Jennifer Heindl, Klarissa Thomas, Dr. Eugene Thompson, and Ronald Worst

Others in Attendance

Brinley Jones
Casey Allen
DeLyssa Begay
Debra Bowers
Delphina Dayish
Eric Cultum
Gene Velasco
Gloria Yepa
Katherine Ford
Kim Garcia

Kim Summers
Loretta Hobbs
Marie Silverhatband
Martha Terry
Roberta Clarke
Roger Halwood
Scott Norton
Sherri Elbert
Teresa Ramone-Wilson

8:00 AM – 8:20 AM

Roll Call and Introductions of Board Members

Roll Call – Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic completed roll call. The following were present constituting a BIE quorum

- Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson
- Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson
- Leon Reval, Secretary
- Melanie Star
- Heather Church
- Season Goodpasture
- Taryn Jim
- Dr. Paula Seanez
- Joshua Shumak
- Amber Tyner
- Jeron Velasco
- Katinee Shawanokasic-Chavez
- Mariah Crow



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Education
1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
Washington, DC 20240

Excused: Dr. Janet Slowman

All Board members and Division of Performance and Accountability (DPA) staff introduced themselves.

8:20 AM – 11:00 AM Board Orientation

Presenter: John Copenhaver

John Copenhaver from the Center for Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education (TAESE) provided an orientation session including an overview of the Board’s mission, roles, responsibilities, and expectations, ensuring all members are well-informed and prepared to contribute effectively to the Board’s work.

9:00 AM – 9:15 AM Break

Following the break, John Copenhaver continued the Board orientation.

11:00 AM – 11:30 AM 2026 Ethics Training

Presenter: Desiree J. Sanchez

Desiree Sanchez provided an overview of key ethical rules, standards of conduct, and responsibilities to help ensure integrity, accountability, and compliance for all Board members.

11:30 AM – 12:00 PM Working Lunch

11:30 AM – 12:00 PM FACA Training

Presenter: Jennifer Heindl

Jennifer Heindl provided an orientation to the Board on the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA).

12:30 PM – 1:00 PM Roll Call, Old Business, and New Business

Start Time: 12:30 PM Mountain Daylight Time (MDT)

Welcome and Call to Order – Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson

Jennifer Davis, DFO, provided an overview of the meeting’s purpose, objectives, Board authorizations, public commenting sessions, and meeting reminders. Questions regarding the



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Education
1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
Washington, DC 20240

purpose of the Board can be directed to [Jennifer Davis](#). The meeting agenda was reviewed for the two-day meeting. Contact information was shared for the DPA Special Education team.

- **Roll Call** – Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic completed roll call. The following were present constituting a BIE quorum
- Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson
- Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson
- Leon Reval, Secretary
- Melanie Star
- Dr. Janet Slowman
- Heather Church
- Taryn Jim
- Season Goodpasture
- Dr. Paula Seanez
- Joshua Shumak
- Amber Tyner
- Jeron Velasco
- Katinee Shawanokasic-Chavez
- Mariah Crow

Chairperson Shawanokasic welcomed Tony Dearman, Director of the BIE to the Board meeting. Director Tony Dearman welcomed the Board to their meeting and expressed his disappointment at not being able to attend the meeting in person. He thanked the Board members for their work in supporting students with disabilities and the tribal communities. He spoke of the nationwide effects of the Board's work. He commended Jennifer Davis' work as the Board's DFO, and commended Dr. Thompson's work as Director of the BIE's special education programs.

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic offered a land acknowledgement for the tribes of New Mexico. Board Member Katinee Shawanokasic-Chavez offered a prayer in the Menominee language to begin the meeting.

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic explained the Board would draft the agenda for the July 2026 meeting during the Board business segment at the end of this meeting. He thanked the new members for volunteering to serve on the Board.

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

BIE Early Childhood Programs/Family and Child Education (FACE) Program

Presenter: Klarissa Thomas

Chairperson Shawanokasic welcomed the presenter to the Board meeting.

The presenter was asked to respond to the following items for this report and discussion.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Education
1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
Washington, DC 20240

- Have you seen any trends (an increase or a decrease) in the number of children identified over the last 5 years?
- What are the strengths and challenges for your work, specifically HHS's strategic plan regarding developmental disabilities?
- Is there anything you would like the Advisory Board to focus on in our recommendations?
- What does the future of HeadStart and FACE look like?

Following are the responses given by the presenter to the four requested items above.

Klarissa Thomas explained she oversees the FACE program. She noted identified child counts have remained fairly steady over the past five years with an increase in 2024. The FACE program is in the process of reporting their 2025 data, and it will show if the increase in 2024 is turning into a trend. FACE staff have been seeing a trend in children identified with a language impairment.

Klarissa Thomas explained they are trying to make connections between tribes and the FACE program and additional services. It can be challenging to match local early childhood providers with programs and funding for services. Another challenge is turnover in early childhood staff at the tribal level. Contacts regularly change without notification to the FACE program, which makes it difficult to gather data. There are challenges with setting up Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) to provide services.

Klarissa Thomas stated she would like the Board to focus on ensuring tribes have accurate counts for children with disabilities so they have appropriate data and services.

Klarissa Thomas noted the U.S. President's federal budget eliminated FACE. This makes the future of the program uncertain. She is hopeful Congress will add the funding into the budget they pass. FACE staff have been working on distributing information about their programs to their partners.

Question: Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson – Asked if they were able to assemble a strategy for the potential loss of funding.

Response: Klarissa Thomas – Explained no current plan exists for the FACE program if it were not funded. FACE is the only early childhood program in the BIE. They have been preparing



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Education
1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
Washington, DC 20240

information, showing the program is successful and viable, to share with partners and tribal representatives. She encouraged Board members to share the FACE flyer.

Question: Leon Reval, Secretary – Inquired how the BIE works with tribal leadership to make sure services meet local needs.

Response: Klarissa Thomas – Replied the BIE takes tribal listening sessions very seriously and works hard to match services to tribal needs. The BIE has been examining how FACE and HeadStart interact with all other educational programs. There is a heavier emphasis on early childhood identification and supports. They are also working to ensure local tribal language and culture is interwoven with all programs.

Comment: Leon Reval, Secretary – Thanked Klarissa Thomas for her response.

Question: Dr. Paula Seanez, Board Member – Inquired about the delay in collecting data and how it affects tribal budgets.

Response: Klarissa Thomas – Explained fiscal allocations aren't made until June. The data deadline was January, and she is working with the final five tribes to gather their data ensuring they receive the funding they need as well.

Comment: Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson – Noted the Board may want to have updates from FACE during their September 2026 meeting.

Comment: Klarissa Thomas – Noted they are working on setting up a webpage where data is publicly available. She also noted all local FACE programs can share enrollment data at the local level through their dashboard.

Question: Melanie Star, Board Member – Asked how many FACE programs currently exist.

Response: Klarissa Thomas – Stated there are 54 programs.

Comment: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – Noted she attended the national FACE Conference the previous week (4/20/26 – 4/24/26) where she had the opportunity to hear from FACE personnel. She explained it is a very beneficial program providing needed resources. She noted FACE personnel are extremely skilled.

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic thanked the presenter for speaking to the Board.

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic noted the Board had time to work on their agendas for the next two meetings.

Jennifer Davis noted FACE programs are closed during the summer, so it would be difficult to have them as speakers for the July meeting. She also noted sometimes the Board has met online for one day during summer meetings.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Indian Education
1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
Washington, DC 20240

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic suggested changing future meetings to happen on Tuesdays and Wednesdays (instead of on Thursdays and Fridays) to avoid traveling on weekends. He noted it was already decided the next meeting would be in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He asked Board members to state what timeframe works best for them.

Dr. Elizabeth Younce noted how difficult it can be to find meeting dates convenient for everyone. She stated the July meeting dates may be difficult because of their proximity to the 4th of July. She suggested pivoting to a week later.

Board Member Joshua Shumak stated meeting later in July worked better for him.

Jennifer Davis noted meetings later in the month worked better for the timeline to post public meetings to the Federal Register Notice.

Many Board members stated their availability in July.

The Board decided to meet July 21-22 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. They began to consider potential speakers for that meeting.

Secretary Leon Reval gave an update on his attempts to schedule a congressional representative for the July Board meeting.

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic noted a priority could be the federal delays in support for the Board that lead to the cancellation of the January 2026 meeting.

Board Member Melanie Star suggested having the Associate Deputy Directors (ADDs) present the services they provide and what they hear from schools for the next meeting.

Board Member Dr. Janet Slowman explained the high cost of food and gas are impacting the ability of parents to attend school meetings and appointments. She suggested having a discussion with BIE Director Tony Dearman about concerns for families.

Board Member Dr. Paula Seanez suggested reviewing Annual Performance Report (APR) data and data from dispute resolution activities. She also stated it would be beneficial to hear from a panel of parents.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Education
1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
Washington, DC 20240

2:00 PM – 2:15 PM

Public Comments

Jennifer Davis, DFO, explained the guidelines for the public comment session.

Eric Cultum from Phoenix, Arizona stated he is a director of federal programs for Washington School District. He explained his district has over 1,000 Native American students from different tribes, and he does a lot of outreach to those tribes. He asked for additional information on areas of the country that also have high populations of Native American students for him to connect with.

DeLyssa Begay inquired how the Board addresses working with parents to meet their needs.

Gloria Yepa, who works with BIE Bureau Operated Schools (BOS), stated her appreciation for DeLyssa Begay's comments and noted increasing services to parents is important. She recommended the Board review how BOS can better connect with local school districts. She suggested having a panel of State Directors of Special Education speak to the Board about services provided in their states that BOS can direct parents to.

Pilar Peltier (chat comment), Education Technician, Vocational Rehabilitation Liaison, Chemawa Indian School. I want to share that when the Board meets again, high school students with disabilities, if the mental health issues and challenges can be addressed. And how many students are seeking treatment or are being treated, and how are the schools serving students with mental health issues, and how is it being addressed in their IEP meetings?

2:15 PM – 2:30 PM

Break

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Division of Performance and Accountability (DPA)/IDEA Special Education Program Updates

Presenters: Dr. Eugene Thompson, Supervisory Education Specialist and Ronald Worst, Educational Specialist

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic welcomed the presenters to the Board meeting.

The presenters were asked to respond to the following items for this report and discussion.

- BIE Special Education Handbook rollout update.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Education
1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
Washington, DC 20240

- The FFY 2024 State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) Update.
- Other Special Education Updates.

Following are the responses given by the presenters to each of the requested items above.

Dr. Thompson thanked the Board for their work and welcomed the new members. He reviewed the BIE's mission and vision statements. He explained Special Education Programs are located in the DPA. They collaborate with the Associate Deputy Directors (ADDs), Tribally Controlled Schools (TCS), and Bureau Operated Schools (BOS). Dr. Thompson is the Supervisory Education Specialist who oversees 10 Education Program Specialists. This team of specialists provides monitoring and technical assistance to schools. He provided examples of supports provided by the DPA. He encouraged the Board to register for the Interactive Special Education Data Academy (ISEDA) on June 16-17. The ISEDA will include school presentations, the Special Education Handbook, and Local School Performance Plan (LSPP).

Dr. Thompson reported the updated BIE Special Education Handbook was issued on January 7, 2026. He outlined the virtual sessions that accompanied the handbook rollout.

A DPA-IDEA theory of action and logic model have both been developed. This helps the DPA explain the work they do to improve results for students with disabilities. The theory of action includes strands on leadership, collaboration, technical assistance and professional development, and integrated monitoring. The logic model includes inputs, outputs, and short/medium/long outcomes. The theory of action and logic model both align with the BIE's strategic directions.

Ron Worst, Education Specialist, reviewed the BIE FFY 2024 APR. The APR was submitted on time to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), they have received comments from OSEP, and completed their resubmission after a clarification call with OSEP. The next step is to publicly post the data from the APR and issue school determinations.

Ron Worst highlighted the following APR progress:

- Graduation rates have increased 20% in the last four years.
- Dropout rates have decreased from 37% to 15% in the last four years.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Education
1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
Washington, DC 20240

- The number of children with disabilities in the regular classroom 80% or more of the day has remained high, while the number of children with disabilities in separate settings has remained low.
- Parent involvement data has increased to 97.45%, showing schools are involving parents more in their child's education.
- Schools' capacity to meet secondary transition requirements has increased from 46.75% to 85.02% in four years.
- Students enrolled in higher education after leaving secondary schools have continued to increase.

Ron Worst reviewed the data for each APR indicator. The gap for reading and math proficiency between students with disabilities and all students has increased across grade levels.

Ron Worst explained OSEP will issue determination letters during the summer based on the data in the BIE's APR. Based on the data LEAs submitted for the APR, the BIE will give each LEA a determination.

Dr. Eugene Thompson explained all state's APRs can be viewed on OSEP's website, and Board members can compare the BIE report to the state where they live.

Comment: Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson – Thanked the speakers for their report. She noted the differences in assessment scores between gifted/talented assessments and end of year assessments for the same child.

Question: Dr. Paula Seanez, Board Member – Asked if the Board participates in setting indicator targets.

Response: Ron Worst, Education Specialist – Noted the APR explains stakeholders are used to help set targets and the Board assists with the target setting process. Targets are set every six years or when a change in policy or procedure has happened that would spark a new target. When target setting is needed, it becomes an agenda item at a Board meeting.

Question: Dr. Paula Seanez, Board Member – Asked which indicators are related to compliance.

Response: Ron Worst, Education Specialist – Explained Indicators 11 and 13 are related to compliance.

Question: Amber Tyner, Board Member – Asked how many parents responded to the Indicator 8 parent involvement survey.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 Bureau of Indian Education
 1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
 Washington, DC 20240

Response: Ron Worst, Education Specialist – Noted about 4,000 parents responded to the survey, which is about a 60% response rate.

Question: Amber Tyner, Board Member – Inquired about responses to the Indicator 14 postsecondary outcomes survey.

Response: Ron Worst, Education Specialist – Clarified the postsecondary outcomes survey asks exited students if they were enrolled for at least one semester of higher education. The number reported in the APR is the percentage of students who responded to the survey by reporting they were enrolled in higher education. For the last round of survey data, a higher percentage of students who had dropped out of high school had responded to the survey.

Question: Amber Tyner, Board Member – Inquired what proficiency data looks like for a student throughout their school career.

Response: Ron Worst, Education Specialist – Noted the BIE doesn't have the data currently available to gauge proficiency progress throughout a student's school career. It was noted there is a high percentage of students who move in and out of the BIE education system.

Question: Amber Tyner, Board Member – Asked about barriers to schools meeting the compliance indicators the Board could support.

Response: Ron Worst, Education Specialist – Explained the DPA is providing intensive support to schools who have low responses on the postsecondary compliance indicator. Timelines were changed for the Child Count compliance indicator because of the variability of situations across BIE schools.

3:30 PM – 4:00 PM

Board Work Time

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic introduced the Board's work session. The Board worked on their agenda for the July 2026 meeting.

Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member, reiterated an inquiry to BIE Director Tony Dearman on how families can be supported with the current economic concerns across the country would be beneficial.

Leon Reval, Secretary, spoke on the need to report data in a way it is understandable to parents.

Jeron Velasco, Board Member, spoke on needing to ask about advocacy for the Family and Childhood Education (FACE) program funding.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Indian Education
1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
Washington, DC 20240

Dr. Joshua Shumak, Board Member, talked about opportunities and processes schools can use to find additional funding.

4:00 PM

Recess

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic thanked everyone and recessed the Board until the following morning at 8:00 AM MDT.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Indian Education
1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
Washington, DC 20240

BIE Advisory Board for Exceptional Children

Board Minutes - Day 2

Friday, May 1, 2026 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM (MDT)

ADVISORY BOARD ROSTER

1. Present Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson
2. Present Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson, Ed.D
3. Present Leon Reval, Secretary
4. Present Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member, Ed.D
5. Present Melanie Star, Board Member
6. Present Heather Church, Board Member
7. Present Season Goodpasture, Board Member
8. Present Dr. Paula Seanez, Board Member, Ph.D.
9. Present Joshua Shumak, Board Member
10. Present Amber Tyner, Board Member
11. Present Katinee Shawanokasic-Chavez, Board Member
12. Present Mariah Crow, Board Member
13. Present Taryn Jim, Board Member

BIE Staff Members: Dr. Eugene Thompson, Supervisory Educational Specialist
Jennifer Davis, Designated Federal Officer (DFO)
Ronald J. Worst, Educational Specialist

TAESE Contractors: Dr. Brenda Smith, Alex Langevin, and Lindsey Brogdon

Others in Attendance

Amanda Williams

DeLyssa Begay

Delphina Dayish

Detroit James

Teresa Ramone-Wilson

Eleanor Jones

Eric Cultum

Roy Tracy

Scott Norton



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Education
1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
Washington, DC 20240

8:00 AM – 8:30 AM Roll Call, Old Business, and New Business

Start Time: 8:00 AM Mountain Daylight Time (MDT)

Welcome and Call to Order – Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson

Jennifer Davis, DFO, provided an overview of the meeting’s purpose and objectives, Board authorizations, public commenting sessions, and meeting reminders. Questions on the purpose of the Board can be directed to [Jennifer Davis](#). The meeting agenda was reviewed.

Roll Call – Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic completed roll call. The following were present constituting a quorum

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| ● Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson | ● Dr. Paula Seanez |
| ● Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson | ● Joshua Shumak |
| ● Leon Reval, Secretary | ● Amber Tyner |
| ● Melanie Star | ● Jeron Velasco |
| ● Dr. Janet Slowman | ● Katinee Shawanokasic-Chavez |
| ● Heather Church | ● Mariah Crow |
| ● Season Goodpasture | ● Taryn Jim |

New Business – Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic asked if any Board members had new business for the Board to review. There was no new business.

8:30 AM – 12:00 PM Advisory Board Work Session

Chairperson Shawanokasic introduced the Board’s work session. Topics for this work session included the Board’s annual priorities and logistics for the next meeting. This entire work session was open for public comments.

Jennifer Davis, DFO, informed the Board she would begin the business of getting the Board’s charter renewed in the fall. The charter is required for the Board to exist and continue meeting.

Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson, asked the Board to review dates for the September 2026 meeting.

Jennifer Davis, DFO, suggested having the September 2026 meeting before September 14th when several Board member terms expired. The Board then discussed their availability and decided to hold their meeting on September 10-11, 2026 in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Indian Education
1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
Washington, DC 20240

The Board then continued working on their agenda for the June meeting. The Board discussed hearing information about collaborations between the BIE and State Education Agencies (SEAs) where BIE schools are located. Amber Tyner, Board Member, discussed how SEAs conduct student counts and estimate budgets for special education services.

Jeron Velasco, Board Member, mentioned funding non-BIE students who attend BIE schools and qualify for special education services (because their parents are staff at BIE schools).

The parent panel was moved to the September meeting agenda to allow more time to extend invitations to people for joining the panel, and a FACE panel was suggested for the June meeting.

Joshua Shumak, Board Member, suggested hearing from the Native training program and options for grant funding.

The Board developed questions for a presentation in June from the Associate Deputy Directors (ADDs) and Education Program Administrators (EPA). The Board discussed the role of ADDs and Education Resource Centers (ERCs).

Public Comment: DeLyssa Begay, parent of a child with a disability from the Navajo Nation, stated parents are challenged with fulfilling the needs of their children. Parents need more help and more of a support system.

Dr. Paula Seanez, Board Member, asked the Board to consider looking for trends in presentations and public comments. She suggested developing a tracker showing the presenters and the questions they receive for each meeting.

Jennifer Davis, DFO, explained the federal FACA website has a tracker for all federal Board priorities.

Leon Reval, Secretary, noted the value in re-asking questions to presenters allowing them to show growth and changes.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Education
1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
Washington, DC 20240

The Board discussed ensuring all instruction for students with disabilities is culturally relevant and ensuring schools are using trauma informed practices. The Board developed questions for a speaker from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and for a panel on the FACE program.

9:50 AM – 10:00 AM

Break

Chairperson Shawanokasic welcomed the Board back from break and pivoted the Board to begin working on priority setting. The Board then reviewed the purpose for setting priorities and reviewed the priorities from the 2025 Annual Report. Board members completed individual, small group, and full group brainstorming for potential priorities for the 2026 Annual Report.

Potential priorities the Board developed included:

- Accountability
- Whole Child Support
- Whole Child Partnerships
- Transition
- Culturally Responsive

Board members spent time in small groups further defining the potential priorities.

12:00 PM – 1:30 PM

Lunch

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic welcomed the Board back from lunch. The Board returned to working on their agenda for the July meeting. The Board decided to move the FACE panel and DHHS speakers to the September meeting agenda to allow more time for the Board to work on the Annual Report during the July meeting. Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic requested the Board continue developing priorities for the Annual Report before working on the September meeting agenda.

The Board wrote the following definitions for the potential priorities they developed.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 Bureau of Indian Education
 1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
 Washington, DC 20240

Accountability – With the leadership of BIE and inter-related agencies, services to students, parents, guardians, teachers, and staff will be provided with quality, free, and culturally relevant services in strict compliance with technological protocol.

Whole Child Support – Ensure whole child supports that remove barriers to learning and ensure equitable access and success for all students.

Whole Child Partnerships – Ecological framework for the success and readiness of our children.

- Building relationships and trust
- Outgoing trainings and technical assistance (TA) to address barriers
- Accessibility and transportation support for students with disabilities and guardians

Transition – Continuity of support from childhood to adulthood. Aligning student centered planning and programming. Enhance pathways into higher education, vocational training, and employment.

Culturally Responsive – Increase awareness and resources to support the development of IEP and education plans to include issues of language, culture, and ceremony to align with the BIE strategic direction.

The Board decided to focus on whole child support, whole child partnerships, and culturally responsive as the 2026 Annual Report priorities.

Amber Tyner, Board Member, noted whole child supports should include providing sustainable mental health services that are accessible in practice, and not just in theory, by expanding school-based services where necessary and eliminating barriers to outside services where needed.

Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson, requested rural access be included in whole child supports.

Mariah Crow, Board Member, shared her school's experience with mental health service providers who won't accept their students with disabilities, and case managers writing goals that are outside their scope of practice that don't translate to accurate services.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 Bureau of Indian Education
 1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
 Washington, DC 20240

The Board further discussed access to mental health services for students with disabilities and timelines for evaluations.

Dr. Eugene Thompson, Supervisory Education Specialist, noted the BIE has some flexibility within their Child Count rules to allow schools to follow the evaluation timelines within their geographic location.

Mariah Crow, Board Member, asked if cultural barriers and/or resistance to mental health services need to be addressed or considered.

Joshua Shumak, Board Member, noted building community trust and relationships should be included.

2:50 PM – 3:00 PM

Break

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic welcomed the Board back from break. The Board continued working on their Annual Report priorities. They finished drafting the whole child supports priority including parameters for mental health services. Then the Board began drafting action items for the culturally responsive priority.

Joshua Shumak, Board Member, suggested compiling current available resources for increasing cultural awareness and resources to support the development of IEPs to include language, culture, and ceremony to align with the BIE's strategic direction.

Amber Tyner, Board Member, suggested "access to culturally relevant education" be added to the priority.

Dr. Paula Seanez, Board Member, discussed alignment with the BIE strategic direction.

The Board edited the second priority to read: *In alignment with the BIE strategic plan, language, culture, and ceremony should be centered in the development of IEPs and curriculums to increase cultural identity, student success, and wellness.*

Jeron Velsaco, Board Member, recommended adding "developing community-based resources" as an action item for this priority.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Indian Education
1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
Washington, DC 20240

Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson, requested “alignment with the BIE strategic plan” be addressed in the Annual Report letter to clarify all the priorities fit within the BIE strategic plan.

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic thanked the Board members for bringing their unique perspectives to the conversation and work of the Board. He noted the importance of supporting educators across the country. He encouraged Board members to attend Board meetings for the entirety of their scheduled agenda.

Dr. Eugene Thompson, Supervisory Education Specialist, thanked the Board for their work. He encouraged Board members to review the BIE theory of action and logic model. They both tie into the BIE strategic direction. He noted Board members would receive the BIE newsletter, and he encouraged them to review it.

Jennifer Davis, DFO, reminded the Board their attendance is important to ensure the Board has an official quorum to finish their work. She thanked all members for their work and input.

4:00 PM

Adjourn

Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson, called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson, made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Dr. Paula Seanez, Board Member, seconded the motion.

All Board members voted in favor of adjourning the meeting.

Minutes were chair certified for accuracy on June 1, 2026.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 Bureau of Indian Education
 1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
 Washington, DC 20240

Following the completion of the meeting, Secretary Leon Reval submitted the following written comments and asked they be included with the meeting minutes.

PARENT AND GUARDIAN PERSPECTIVE

Hello, these comments were constantly rolling around in my head as Dom and I traveled home and I wanted to get them to paper while they were still fresh.

The thoughts below are shared from my perspective as a parent and guardian and respectfully as a voice on the Board. I am intentionally detailed because this reflects how I speak and present and in my lived experience, how families themselves may experience the system in real time.

My goal as an Advisory Board member is to respect the letter and spirit of the bylaws and stay within my advisory role lane, while contributing to the broader discussion on priorities, ensuring what I share remains grounded in what students, families and staff are navigating day to day.

1. Opening – Alignment and Role

In alignment with the BIE Strategic Plan, these priorities reflect both agency direction and lived experience. As an advisory board, our role is to advise, advocate, and support by identifying needs based on stakeholder experience.

From a parent perspective, many of these concerns continue year over year. That consistency reflects real conditions that have not yet fully changed and, at times, may feel like gaps, misunderstandings, or even misalignment in how issues are experienced versus how they are presented. At the same time, there is an understanding that the system is working as designed and that some level of repetition can be useful in maintaining consistency, clarity, and continued focus on areas that still affect students and families.

Even at a general level, understanding how the Board's recommendations are considered over time, with some level of continued awareness and feedback, may help ensure the Board's work remains supported, relevant and connected in fulfilling its duty through the annual report and, ultimately, student outcomes.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Indian Education
1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
Washington, DC 20240

2. Stakeholder Connection and Data

From a parent perspective, this is often where confusion starts. Data is presented but not always received or interpreted in a way that connects to what it means for schools and students.

It may help to include simple explanations alongside data, such as what the data shows, why it matters and how it breaks down at the school and student level. In practice, this could include short summaries during meetings, IEP discussions, or regular school communication.

Connecting this information to spaces families already participate in, such as IEP meetings or student updates, may help move understanding from informational to practical. This may also help parents feel less like observers of the system and more like participants in understanding their child's progress.

3. Whole Child Supports and Transition

From a parent perspective, supporting the whole child includes preparing students for life beyond the school system. This involves coordination between schools, families, tribal leadership and community supports so students are not leaving one system without connection to the next.

It may be helpful to ensure that transition information, resources and expectations are clearly shared in a way family and even staff can understand and use. BIE may also help support coordination by ensuring that transition information is clearly shared with families, schools and, where appropriate, tribal and community partners, so expectations and available supports are better understood.

From a parent perspective, transition planning often focuses on graduation but there may be less clarity around students over 18 who are still receiving services. Clear, plain language information explaining what services look like during this stage, how long support may continue and what options exist may help reduce confusion and support smoother transitions, along with reducing worry or doubt for parents, guardians, and staff.

4. Family Engagement

From a parent perspective, lack of engagement is often discussed as little to no parental participation but the reality can be different. Families may want to engage but face barriers



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 Bureau of Indian Education
 1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
 Washington, DC 20240

such as work schedules, transportation, and time constraints.

It may be more effective to share key information through channels families already use, such as local newspapers, newsletters, postings in schools or administrative buildings or even student-delivered handouts. This approach may improve access without adding additional burden on staff or creating negative perceptions of parents.

5. Language and Culture

Language and culture are important components of the BIE Strategic Plan. From a parent perspective, it would be helpful to understand how these are applied for students with complex needs, including nonverbal students. Are these students truly benefiting in a meaningful way, or are they being included in concept more than in practice?

There may be value in exploring how these approaches can be adapted so that all students, regardless of ability level, are part of the whole and supported in a way that is meaningful to them.

6. Staff Retention and Leadership Support

Recruitment is important but retention is also critical. From a practical standpoint, retention may be influenced by continued leadership support, training and overall working conditions. It may be helpful to consider a more unified approach to training that includes administrators, staff and teachers, focusing on communication, expectations, and real-world application. This may help create more stable and supportive environments for students while also supporting strong staff and reducing inconsistency across schools.

7. Funding Clarity

From a parent and staff perspective, funding is not always well understood. This can create confusion around expectations related to staffing, services, and decision-making. Providing simple explanations of where funding comes from and how it is used may help align understanding and reduce frustration.

For example, helping families understand that school funding operates as a whole system, with special education as an important component within that system, may help clarify how decisions are made. Breaking this down in a simple, understandable way, even at a basic level,



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 Bureau of Indian Education
 1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
 Washington, DC 20240

may help reduce the perception that resources are unclear or inconsistent. Without this understanding, the system can feel unresponsive even when effort is being made.

8. Understanding Key Terms

From a parent perspective, some terms are understood differently at the system level. For example, an IEP is not only an Individualized Education Plan but also connects to broader program requirements and accountability. It may be helpful to provide simple explanations of key terms and how they apply in practice.

While these programs are individualized, they are also part of a broader system supporting many students. Understanding both perspectives may help families and staff better understand how their child is supported, while also recognizing how the system works as a whole.

9. Roles and Participation

Clear roles support effective participation. As outlined under the Federal Advisory Committee Act and supporting regulations such as 41 CFR Part 102-3, the Designated Federal Officer is responsible for ensuring compliance, structure, and proper conduct of meetings, while the Chair facilitates discussion and supports member engagement.

From my perspective, Board members are diverse and bring professional experience to the table. From that perspective, guidance does help keep meetings on track. When guidance extends beyond structure into direction or overly extended opinion, it can influence how input is shared and received. Anything beyond that can affect the mutual respect of experience and time at the table and may limit participation or create unnecessary tension.

In closing, from a parent perspective, aligning with the BIE Strategic Plan and required Annual Reports to DOI is both valuable and important. There is a continued need for mutual understanding of how those strategies are experienced in practice by students, families, and staff. Keeping that connection in mind helps ensure the Board's input from those in the field remains grounded and relevant.

Maybe I am incorrect in my understanding but the role of this Advisory Board is not only to support agency direction but also to ensure stakeholder voices are reflected in a meaningful way. From a parent and guardian perspective, maintaining that connection between strategy



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Indian Education
1849 C Street NW, MIB-3610
Washington, DC 20240

and lived experience helps ensure the work continues to empower voices that need to be heard.

Thank you.