

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 24, 2025 8:00 AM - 3:00 PM (MDT)

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

Meeting Location: National Indian Programs Training Center (NIPTC)
1011 Indian School Road NW, Albuquerque, NM 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 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) who is 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 Monica Cleveland, Board Member
6. Present Rachel Harrison, Board Member
7. Present Wendy Kroupa, Board Member
8. Present Melanie Star, Board Member
9. Present Brian Wagner, Board Member



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

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

TAESE Contractors: Kristen Perez-Rickels, Alex Langevin, and Laura Lema

Presenters/Speakers: Tony Dearman, Ronald Worst, Dr. Cecelia Cometsevah, and
Dr. Garrison Tsinajinie

Others in Attendance:

Alison Keplin	Evangeline	Melissa Wassana
Ardell Concho	Bradley-Wilkinson	Melonna Plant
Arlene Davis	Gregory Anderson	Michelle Thomas
Beverly Payne	Gretchen Wendell	Migan Inez
Brooke Ratliff	Jacqueline Wade	Norman Brown Bull
Carmelia Becenti	Jennifer Bell	Pamela Speaks
Carmen Nez	Jennifer Eller	Reanna Albert
Carolyn Garcia	Joann Fields	Scott Norton
Casey Sovo	Joe Robledo III	Sharei Ricketts
Cecelia Cometsevah	John Copenhaver	Sharon Henderson
Charlene Lucero	Jonathan Pino	Shayla Williams
Crystal Becenti	Juanita Mendoza	Steve Byington
Dana Marshall	Julie Casey	Syreeta Arquero
David Nikolaus	Katharine Ford	Tamera Pulver
Detroit James	Kevin Johnson	Ted Ortiz
Doris Blasco	Leslie Finnearty	Teresa Ramone-Wilson
Dpino	Lisa Puente Siyuja	Valarie Jones
Eleanor Jones	Loren Hudson	Wendy Kroupa
Erin Trottier	M. Leno	Wynora Bekis
	Marsha Leno	Zonnie Sombrero

8:00 AM – 8:15 AM Meeting Logistics

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 agenda was reviewed for the two-day meeting.



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

Roll Call, Old Business, and New Business

Start Time: 8:24 AM Mountain Standard Time (MST)

Welcome and Call to Order – Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson

Roll Call: Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic completed roll call.

The following were present constituting a quorum:

- Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson
- Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson
- Leon Reval, Secretary
- Brian Wagner
- Rachel Harrison
- Melanie Star
- Wendy Kroupa
- Dr. Janet Slowman
- Monica Cleveland

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic opened the meeting. The meeting was opened with a prayer from a fourth grader, Okemahkesikok Shawanokasic, who is a student at Menominee Tribal School on the Menominee Indian Reservation (a BIE tribally controlled school). Okemahkesikok Shawanokasic is the elected princess for the Menominee Tribal School. She did a prayer of safe travels, good health, and safety for all the children in schools in Indian Country.

Chairperson Shawanokasic introduced the first session of the meeting.

8:15 AM – 9:40 AM

BIE Central Office – Administration Change Forecast

Presenters:

Tony Dearman, Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Director

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic welcomed the presenter to the Board meeting.

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

1. What are the current or pending education or Dept. of Interior changes?
2. Forecast the effect these changes will have on all BIE students and specifically services for students with disabilities.
3. Assuming a budget has been passed, can you predict how it will affect BIE-funded schools?
4. What is the status of the BIE's work on the President's Executive Order requiring the Secretary of the Interior to establish a voucher program for "all children" eligible to attend a BIE-funded school.
 - a. How will the plan affect the students who are IDEA eligible?



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

Tony Dearman thanked everyone for being involved in the transition and supporting the BIE. Tony Dearman then responded to the questions, as follows.

1. What are the current or pending education or Dept. of Interior changes?

Tribally-controlled schools were not impacted by the Reduction in Force (RIF), and the **agency** was able to restore all terminated probationary employees. Tribal leaders have stated no workforce efficiency changes should be made in the BIE without tribal consultation. This statement was heard by BIE leadership, it will be adhered to by the **agency**, and a [Dear Tribal Leader Letter](#) has recently been released publicly on the topic (4/17/25).

In consultation with stakeholders, the **agency** developed a school choice plan in adherence with the President's timelines. That plan is in the process for approval now. Once edits are given by the White House and/or Secretary, the BIE will work again on consultation to share the plan. Included within the plan are options for assisting tribes in strengthening their education departments and guidance for transitioning BIE-Operated Schools to Tribally-Controlled Schools.

The **agency** is under a hiring freeze and is submitting for waivers and exemptions. The BIE is pushing for a lift of the hiring freeze for the **agency**, because of the timing and importance of contract renewals and recruitment efforts for teachers.

Any contracts of \$50,000 or more must go through an approval process with the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). The BIE has completed this defense and justification process for some contracts and approval was successful.

2. Forecast the effect these changes will have on all BIE students and specifically services for students with disabilities.

Some talk is happening of programs from the Department of Education transferring to the BIE, but the BIE has received no communication about this. Discussions of funding being distributed directly to each state would not impact the BIE since the funds are already disbursed directly to the BIE.

3. Assuming a budget has been passed, can you predict how it will affect BIE-funded schools?



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

Director Dearman cannot make any predictions at this time. The federal budget is still on a continuing resolution (CR), meaning the BIE is funded on the prior year's budget enactment. More information will not be available until a final budget is approved from Congress.

School and local budgets are being impacted by the declining funding from the three-year rolling average of student attendance. This is attributed to the impacts from COVID enrollment numbers and the funding reduction is not related to workforce efficiency at the federal level.

4. What is the status of the BIE's work on the President's Executive Order requiring the Secretary of the Interior to establish a voucher program for "all children" eligible to attend a BIE-funded school.

In a meeting with the White House, it was noted Indian Country is not in favor of student vouchers. The BIE appreciates all the comments they received, and leadership took all the comments and submitted a package with performance data and a draft plan to the White House. The BIE is communicating to the federal administration that, for their community, BIE schools are their school of choice. The draft plan also noted the flexibility available in ESEA Sec. 1003A on funding for school support to expand educational opportunities for students in BIE schools.

- a. How will the plan affect the students who are IDEA eligible?

Students with disabilities will receive the same opportunities as others, including tutoring and concurrent enrollment, that result from expanded educational opportunities funded by Sec. 1003A.

Director Tony Dearman opened his presentation for questions.

Question: Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson – You discussed reductions in force (RIFs) at the local level, but schools already experience teacher shortages. What challenges or risks might the stakeholders need to combat in the funding process?

Response: Tony Dearman, Director of BIE – It's hard to know what needs to be done until the budget comes out from Congress. We love to hear from anyone on the workforce efficiency consultations. We have been fortunate to avoid changes for K-12.

Comment: Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson – Thanked the speaker for responding to questions on the administrative changes in Washington, D.C. and noted the responses will inform the Board's approach to advising.



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

Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Requested a definition for the Sec. 1003A funds.

Response: Tony Dearman, Director of BIE – These are funds from the Department of Education to be used for school improvement activities. Other staff members from the BIE can go into more detail on this.

Comment: Brian Wagner, Board Member – ISET and IDEA funds cannot be touched. ESSA funds have a draft loophole.

Response: Tony Dearman, Director of Bureau of Indian Education – A lot of restrictions are in place on what we can do for the funds we receive. The 1003 funds are to expand opportunities to our existing schools, not to distribute those funds to parents to be used at different schools.

Comment: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – Thanked Director Dearman for being there for the schools and the children. Stated that as a consultant of direct support to schools, it seems that the community is not aware of the hardships and challenges at the federal level, which can be attributed to Director Dearman's leadership.

Comment: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Noted that Head Start funds under the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) are being threatened, but this would have an impact on IDEA supports for early childhood and asked for Director Dearman's support in advocating for Head Start to remain funded.

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic opened the floor for public comments from attendees.

Question: Dr. Cecelia Cometsevah, Director of Student Services at Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) – Regarding the Department of Education and potential closure, how does that impact student financial aid at SIPI and Haskell?

Response: Tony Dearman, Director of BIE – If we see anything that will have an impact, we will make sure we alert all our Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU).

Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Is FACE at risk, to your knowledge?

Response: Tony Dearman, Director of BIE – The BIE won't know until the President's budget request is released, likely sometime in June. BIE leadership have no evidence FACE is in danger. It is important to remember even though the President's request will be released, funding is decided by Congress.

Question: Sharei Ricketts, Superintendent of Little Wound School – Do you know when the BIE organizational plan is coming out?



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

Response: Tony Dearman, Director of BIE – BIE leadership have not put together a reorganization plan, but leadership will reach out to consultation teams for input from stakeholders.

Question: Kevin Johnson, audience member – Can you clarify what a CR is?

Response: Tony Dearman, Director of BIE – Continuing Resolution for the federal budget to extend prior enactments.

Comment: Kevin Johnson, audience member – Thanked Director Dearman and shared that Dearman and the BIE staff are in his prayers.

Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Is there anything we can do as a Board to support you, families, or students at this time?

Response: Tony Dearman, Director of BIE – We know strength comes in numbers. What we have been seeing in support of the BIE is stakeholders writing letters to congressional leaders and letters to the Secretary of the Interior. Once letters are sent to congressional members, the congressional leaders will reach out to BIE leadership to make any changes. As a Board, if you write a letter of support, or not support, for any area, we can forward it to our leadership.

Comment: Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson – Discussed the possibility of setting up a meeting in Washington, D.C. for the Board to introduce themselves to the new Secretary of the Dept. of the Interior and share information on what the Board members do in their role. Mr. Shawanokasic noted the current Board is great but it has vacancies, and he shared that a request for nominations is in the Federal Register.

Response: Tony Dearman, Director of BIE – Stated Jennifer Davis, DFO, does a great job supporting the Board. Dearman noted he has not yet met the Secretary himself, but any requests from the Board to meet with the Secretary could be made by Jennifer on their behalf.

Comment: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Brought attention to concerns of J1 and H1 visa use in the BIE system and the impact of increased Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity. He noted BIE school staff with these visas have substantial anxiety, particularly in the Great Plains area, and asked that Director Dearman do what he can to support these individuals. Mr. Wagner also noted BIE schools would struggle to function if these staffers were removed from the country.

Response: Tony Dearman, Director of BIE – Commented he is sitting down with leaders over this issue and is aware of its importance. He noted the BIE has worked in the past to reduce the



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

number of people in leadership who have to review and approve the J1 visa packet. This reduction was done in a bid to make the J1 visa approval process more efficient and reduce time spent waiting for final approval.

Comment: Sharei Ricketts, Superintendent of Little Wound School – Noted the time needed to complete the J1 visa process can be variable and dependent on the law firm each teacher is employing to complete the process. She provided examples of this by sharing for one teacher it took almost an entire year for her visa approval, and the teacher had to return to her home country before the J1 process was finalized; whereas for another teacher with a different law firm representing them, final approvals were given in two months.

Response: Tony Dearman, Director of BIE – Agreed that once the approval process goes back to the individual, it may take longer for others depending on the law firm they are working with. He noted the BIE needs to be transparent in sharing the visa approval process.

Question: Leon Reval, Secretary – Introduced himself and stated he is representing students and parents on the Board. He asked what the requirements are for new hires and whether there was a long-term plan in place to keep educator standards high to strengthen teachers and the workforce.

Response: Tony Dearman, Director of BIE – Stated the BIE has to be competitive with public schools in states where the BIE operates. Tribally-controlled schools have sovereignty and often follow state certification requirements. Bureau-operated schools had previously more stringent requirements, but the requirements backfired by reducing the pool of qualified teachers. The BIE has since reduced their requirements to match states' certifications, and BIE leaders are working on improving background check processes. Another change the BIE has implemented to strengthen their workforce is allowing bureau-operated schools to match teacher service years when they enter into the BIE system. However, the retirement systems are still a barrier to hiring, since a teacher can only bring into the BIE system five years of service that counts toward retirement. If the BIE provides pay raises, they will be given equitably to all staff, not just certified teaching staff.

Comment: Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson – Reminded the Board in years past they reviewed an organizational chart with a large number of vacancies. Prior to COVID, the workforce was being built back up and then saw a setback. "Well-qualified staff," when referencing educators within the BIE system, should also account whether the individual is Native American or knowledgeable of the culture, community, issues, history, and family values



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

of the area in which the educator works. Director Dearman was thanked for considering the needs of all school staff members, not just instructional staff.

Response: Tony Dearman, Director of BIE – Noted the BIE provides funding to schools, like Title 1A, to support staff in their continued education and teacher certifications. The BIE will begin working with a pathways program to identify students interested in a career in education during their high school years, assist them in earning college degrees, and help them enter back into the BIE system.

Question: Monica Cleveland, Board Member – Stated in Arizona at a school board meeting, the high school principal noted there is a need for the use of supplemental online educational tools to support credit achievement. She asked if there is a backup plan to support the needs of students at BIE schools when they are short-staffed, and whether this is an issue discussed at the BIE leadership level. Ms. Cleveland also asked if there is a plan for any additional budget cuts or cuts to staffing.

Response: Tony Dearman, Director of BIE – Stated BIE leadership is doing everything they can to ensure any Reductions in Force (RIF) do not impact the BIE K-12 system. The RIFs occurring at the local level are the result of a drop in enrollment and the funding calculation based on a three-year rolling average of enrollment. If a shortage of staff does happen, the BIE needs to think through its systems and have tribes and tribal education systems involved in those discussions.

Chairperson Shawanokasic thanked Director Tony Dearman and asked for any final comments.

Director Tony Dearman stated the report produced by the BIE Advisory Board for Exceptional Children is reviewed, utilized, and discussed by BIE leadership. He noted if the Board would like to meet with BIE leadership in Washington, D.C., staff will work to try to make it happen.

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic thanked the presenter and excused the Board for a break.

9:40 AM – 9:50 AM

Break

9:50 AM – 11:00 AM

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

Presenter:

Ronald Worst, Education Specialist



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

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic called the meeting back to order and welcomed the next speaker to the Board meeting.

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

1. Strengthening the relationship between the BIE and the other State Education Agencies (SEAs).
2. 2025 BIE summer trainings.
3. Fiscal and programmatic monitoring findings.
4. Special Education Policy and Procedure updates.
5. FFY 2023 State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR).

The presenter introduced himself and presented updates on the DPA activities and performance report. Responses to questions presented by the Board are as follows.

1. Strengthening the relationship between the BIE and the other State Education Agencies (SEAs).

This is an area of focus for the BIE. BIE staff have reviewed some areas for improvement, including building a coordinated services plan; supporting staffing issues in shortages, certification, and training; and collaboration with vocational rehabilitation centers in states and tribal vocational rehabilitation systems.

2. 2025 BIE summer trainings.

For the past two years, the BIE has provided trainings to enhance school opportunities for teachers/staff to attend in person to hear more about DPA priorities and share strategies to improve outcomes. For the 2025 summer, two opportunities are available: the School Improvement Summer Training and the Tribal and School Leadership Summit.

The School Improvement Summer Training event will be on July 22-24, 2025 and will be a multi-office event. Due to travel restrictions, this event will be virtual only, which will also support increased attendance across the nation. Sessions at this event, provided by the DPA, include updates on Special Education Policy and Procedures with an emphasis on timely initial evaluations, discipline and behavior data, and FFY 2023 SPP/APR data and its connection to schools' annual determinations. The second summer opportunity is the Tribal and School Leadership Summit to be held in July in Rapid City, SD. More information on this opportunity will be forthcoming.

3. Fiscal and programmatic monitoring findings.



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

Six schools are to be monitored in SY 2024-25. Some disruptions happened throughout the process, so some schools received new dates for their monitoring. For corrections, it is important for the BIE to also review subsequent data to ensure schools are correctly implementing regulations by implementing the necessary systemic changes for sustained compliance. To support schools in making corrections and maintaining future compliance, the BIE provides a monitoring report and technical assistance plans after monitoring. To date, one monitoring visit has been completed for the 2024-2025 school year, and Mr. Worst shared current findings from this visit.

4. Special Education Policy and Procedure updates.

Since the last Board meeting, the DPA added information on surrogate parents to the Special Education Policy and Procedures. This information, from consultation with the solicitors, is one of the final components, and the policy and procedures will be completed soon.

DPA will be offering training and support to schools and revising model forms to align with the new policy and procedures. Trainings to be provided will include the summer training session, a pre-recorded webinar, and other universal supports such as quick guides and information in the DPA-IDEA Newsletter. It is expected that Associate Deputy Directors (ADDs), Education Resource Centers (ERCs), Educational Program Administrators (EPAs), and schools update local policies and procedures to align with the BIE and review the templates and procedural manuals provided by the DPA. The DPA has notified leaders of the forthcoming policies and procedures and has highlighted changes to policies, school responsibilities, and any flexibilities provided to schools through a Dear Schools Letter.

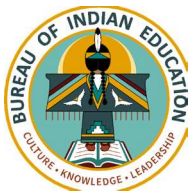
Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Can that letter be shared?

Response: Ronald Worst, Education Specialist – Yes, it has been sent to the ADDs for dissemination, but it can be made available to the Board as well.

5. FFY 2023 State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR).

The FFY 2023 SPP/APR was submitted timely to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) on April 15, 2025. Data will be publicly posted in June 2025, OSEP will issue state determinations in late June 2025, and school determinations will occur in June-July 2025. In January 2025, Dr. Thompson was not able to share Indicator 3 Assessment Data with the Board. That data is now available and shared as follows:

- Indicator 3a: Math Participation – Target of 95% was not met for 4th grade, 8th grade, or high school students.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – This data seems questionable to me since we are looking at the COVID years when school attendance was lower. Where does the data come from, especially from the COVID years?

Response: Ronald Worst, Education Specialist – In 2020-2021, we saw our lowest attendance numbers in 4th grade, but we did see a data increase there. With participation, OSEP set a minimum target of 90%. It is going to be a priority with schools to increase the participation piece of the assessments.

Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – How does the calculation occur? Are all students who attended school that year counted?

Response: Ronald Worst, Education Specialist – We only look at the assessment window and which students were on an IEP during that assessment window/time period. From what the speaker understands, the calculation includes all students on an IEP enrolled during the testing window.

Question: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – What are the test items for the test? Does it go all the way back to the beginning of school?

Response: Ronald Worst, Education Specialist – The BIE has a unified assessment available to all schools. Schools can submit a waiver and request to use the assessment from the state in which they are geographically located. The assessments are based on federal standards for the grade levels.

Question: Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson – Who sets the target? 100% for high school participation seems unrealistic.

Response: Ronald Worst, Education Specialist – OSEP has said at minimum 90% across all grade levels. The targets beyond that are set by the BIE, and prior to COVID the data target was 100%. Targets are set based on stakeholder feedback, and the DPA would like to see increased input from stakeholders to set targets.

Question: Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson – Would BIE support a reduction in the target?

Comment: Brian Wagner, Board Member – I would recommend setting targets at the minimum required by OSEP and celebrating any success or exceeding of the minimum target.



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

Question: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – Are students held to the same standards as non-disabled peers?

Response: Ronald Worst, Education Specialist – Yes, students are held to the same assessment standards with any needed accommodations.

Question: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – For participation, children with disabilities are held to the same standard of participation as non-disabled peers?

Response: Ronald Worst, Education Specialist – Yes, the BIE would like to see 100%.

Question: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – What are the penalties for not meeting targets?

Response: Ronald Worst, Education Specialist – BIE-wide, the data supports OSEP’s determination findings. We will find out in June what the BIE’s determination is. Last year was “Needs Intervention,” and the BIE would like to move out of that determination.

Question: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – What about specific schools?

Response: Ronald Worst, Education Specialist – Just as OSEP makes determinations for the BIE, the BIE makes determinations for specific schools. However, the BIE does not use assessment data for specific school determinations.

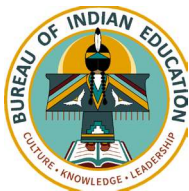
Comment: Brian Wagner, Board Member – It is important to understand funds cannot be withheld from BIE schools, and the Department of Education can’t withhold funds from BIE.

Question: Leon Reval, Secretary – How much weight does the letter from the Advisory Board have on setting targets and informing DPA?

Response: Ronald Worst, Education Specialist – The feedback from the Advisory Board helps drive and set some of the DPA priorities.

Mr. Worst continued to share Indicator 3 Assessment Data with the Board, as follows:

- Indicator 3b: Math Proficiency, Standard Assessment – Target of 3.73% was met for 4th grade; it was not met for 8th grade or high school.
- Indicator 3c: Math Proficiency, Alternate Assessment – Target of 41.55% was met for 4th grade; the 8th grade target of 56.00% was not met and high school target of 43.80% was not met.
- Indicator 3d: Math Proficiency, Gap between Students with Disabilities and All Students – Target of 0.84% for 4th grade was not met; target of 2.11% for 8th grade was not met; target of 3.10% for high school was not met.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

Ronald Worst further explained Indicator 3d is the measurement for the percentage point gap between the proficiency of students with disabilities and all students including those with disabilities.

Question: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – Would we get a more realistic picture if we were truly comparing students with disabilities versus students without disabilities?

Response: Ronald Worst, Education Specialist – This measurement and calculation comes directly from OSEP. Unfortunately, we can't differentiate between the two because of the expectation OSEP has set.

Comment: Wendy Kroupa, Board Member – In addition to that, it would be helpful to see the comparison for students with math services versus those without.

Response: Ronald Worst, Education Specialist – This is part of why the comparison group is all students, since we do not know the level of need for students within the IEP grouping.

Mr. Worst continued to share Indicator 3 Assessment Data with the Board, as follows:

- Indicator 3a: Reading Language Arts – Target of 95% was not met for 4th grade, 8th grade, or high school students.
- Indicator 3b: Reading Language Arts Proficiency, Standard Assessment – Target of 4.41% was met for 4th grade; was not met for 8th grade or high school.
- Indicator 3c: Reading Language Arts Proficiency, Alternate Assessment – Target of 48.25% was met for 4th grade; 8th grade target of 40.83% was met; high school target of 53.71% was not met.
- Indicator 3d: Reading Language Arts Proficiency, Gap between Students with Disabilities and All Students – Target of 2.19% for 4th grade was not met; target of 3.71% for 8th grade was not met; target of 11.40% for high school was not met.

Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Do we know how many kids are taking the alternate assessment?

Response: Ronald Worst, Education Specialist – This is another sub-element of the assessment. The alternate assessment is another piece of that, so that data is submitted and then we aggregate and analyze it. We could look into finding the number of students who were under the alternate assessment. All this data has to be publicly shared, but some has to be redacted because of a low cell size to avoid any potential identification of students.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

Question: Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson – Is guidance given to schools on alternate assessment in terms of consistency for who qualifies?

Response: Ronald Worst, Education Specialist – Yes, this is an area of concern in ensuring the students who take the alternate assessment are those most impacted by their disability. In the past, IEP teams had to complete a form for each student’s participation in the alternate assessment. Guidance is needed to improve the identification of students to take the alternate assessment.

Comment: Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson – Interpretation is varied within IEP teams especially for students in the gap.

Comment: Brian Wagner, Board Member – It is frustrating when students can’t use accommodations they have been taught to use all year, because you’re measuring listening comprehension and not reading comprehension. I fought the graduation rate calculation as well. Kids should not be punished for graduating outside of their cohort.

Response: Ronald Worst, Education Specialist – For the graduation perspective, our calculations are done on an annual exit basis rather than on the cohort.

Comment: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – I agree with Brian on the accommodations. Maybe the Board can send a very strong recommendation to whomever about the use of the tools students need.

Comment: Wendy Kroupa, Board Member – Students can use accommodations, but sometimes the accommodations don’t match with the assessments.

Response: Ronald Worst, Education Specialist – Students are allowed accommodations, but they can’t be ones that enhance their ability to meet proficiency in the skill.

Comment: Rachel Harrison, Board Member – Back to the alternate assessment team decision, is there a form in the works for the IEP team to follow in determining if a student qualifies for the alternate assessment?

Response: Ronald Worst, Education Specialist – This form is something we would have to work on as a DPA team to create. A prior one exists that may just need revisions.

Mr. Worst completed the sharing of Indicator 3 Assessment Data with the Board, as follows:

- Indicator 3d: Reading Language Arts Proficiency, Gap between Students with Disabilities and All Students – Target of 2.19% for 4th grade was not met; target of 3.71% for 8th grade was not met; target of 11.40% for high school was not met.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

Ronald Worst also shared information on BIE Transition Activities since transition is an area of BIE focus. Activities in accountability for compliance include written findings of noncompliance. Following these findings, schools are required to complete individual student level corrections and then system level corrections to verify the school is implementing regulatory requirements and maintaining systemic compliance. One-on-one technical assistance is offered to all high schools with noncompliance, and 12 of 26 schools have had meetings directly with the indicator lead. Mr. Worst highlighted that seven years ago, BIE-wide transition compliance was at 8.39% and has since increased to 77%. Despite the drastic increase, the target has still not been met as OSEP has set this as a 100% compliance target.

Chairperson Norman opened the floor for public comments from attendees.

Comment: Dr. Pamela Speaks, BIE Education Program Specialist – Many of our schools do not have certified special education teachers. Some sites were able to hire and contract with special education teachers, and they were able to cycle through school sites to provide services.

Response: Ronald Worst, Education Specialist – The DPA is always looking at other opportunities for schools to look into. The hope is the DPA can look deeper into options for schools with low staff to provide services.

Question: Gretchen Wendell, Flandreau Indian School, Teacher – When will registration for the School Improvement Summer Training and the Tribal and School Leadership Summit be made available? Many school employees do not have access to their BIE emails during school breaks, because our technology stays at school when off contract.

Response: Ronald Worst, Education Specialist – Unsure when it will be made available, but information will go out in BIE communications.

11:00 AM – 12:10 PM

Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI)

Presenter:

Dr. Cecelia Cometsevah, Vice President of SIPI Student Affairs

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic welcomed the presenter to the Board meeting.

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

1. Options for scholarships and incentives for Native graduates to come back and serve in BIE-funded schools.
2. What curriculums are currently available and what programs are available for students with disabilities?



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

3. What transition and Section 504 services does SIPI offer currently?

Dr. Cometsevah shared some background on SIPI and their history as well as the specific postsecondary challenges students face before providing responses to the Board's questions. Responses to the questions are provided below.

1. Options for scholarships and incentives for Native graduates to come back and serve in BIE-funded schools.

Often, SIPI will refer to the American Indian College Fund which provides undergraduate and graduate scholarships and fellowships. Native Forward Scholarships are also available such as the Cobell Scholarships. Students should also look at university/college specific scholarships. Incentives to enter back into the BIE system as professionals were provided by Anthony Scheler at the BIE. These incentives include staffing differentials or retention incentives from certain BIE schools and government living quarters for employees.

2. What curriculums are currently available and what programs are available for students with disabilities?

All programs are open to students with disabilities with equal access. SIPI can provide High School Equivalency under the state of New Mexico as well as Adult Basic Education and Adult Developmental Education programs. Students at SIPI will often complete associate degrees before transferring into other 4-year undergraduate degrees. Students with disabilities can participate in any of SIPI's programs, but they must self-disclose their disability to the College Accessibility Coordinator to access the necessary accommodations.

3. What transition and Section 504 services does SIPI offer currently?

Transition planning begins with student self-disclosure. SIPI staff then review prior documentation such as IEPs and diagnostic evaluation reports. Staff also conduct student interviews, design an accommodations plan, and provide an accommodations letter for each trimester of each student. Section 504 services, the provision of reasonable accommodations, include classroom accommodations for students and instructors, online learning modules for hybrid courses, coaching/tutoring, assistive technology tools, residential accommodations, and extended services such as partnerships with outside organizations to provide evaluation services and partnerships with Indian Health.

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic thanked the speaker for sharing.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Expressed appreciation for the presentation. He has friends with children who have college experiences as part of their transition. He asked if SIPI would be able to research those college experience possibilities and potentially provide this service.

Response: Dr. Cecelia Cometsevah, Vice President of SIPI Student Affairs – Stated students must be 18 within a certain timeline before they can be enrolled at SIPI. For students with significant disabilities, they are not likely to be able to live in SIPI dorms, because the campus does not allow personal assistants. For students with more significant disabilities who just want the experience, the possibility will be introduced to leadership.

Question: Leon Reval, Secretary – A recurring theme of teacher and staff shortages is within the school system. Is this something SIPI is seeing? Does SIPI see opportunities for grow-your-own programming?

Response: Dr. Cecelia Cometsevah, Vice President of SIPI Student Affairs – SIPI is seeing a shortage, particularly of Native instructors. A particular desire of SIPI is to see more educational diagnosticians in BIE schools. Dr. Cometsevah has discussed with the SIPI provost the potential for increased technical programs so students can take those skills back into their communities.

Comment: Jennifer Davis, DFO – Shared three resources with the Board:

- <https://www.sipi.edu/>
- <https://haskell.edu/>
- <https://collegefund.org/tribal-colleges-and-universities/>

Comment: Monica Cleveland, Board Member – Commended Dr. Cometsevah for the work SIPI does to support students. Noted her son completed his High School Equivalency and associate program through SIPI, and the education and accommodations provided to him were effective for him with his disability.

Response: Dr. Cecelia Cometsevah, Vice President of SIPI Student Affairs – SIPI's efforts to support students moving into higher education is ongoing, including extending dual credit schools and programs, implementing a "summer bridge" program for both residential and commuter students, and providing online virtual tours of SIPI.

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic opened the floor for public comment and questions for all morning presentations.



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

Question: Anonymously Provided by Audience – In the data being reported, what is the total student count? Out of the student count, how many students have IEPs under each grade level? I agree this will provide a better understanding of how many students aren't meeting standards. It would also help determine where the focus needs to be to help improve their score. Thank you.

Response: Ronald Worst, Education Specialist – We do have the numbers, and they are available in public information online. The reason percentages are used for the data is because of reporting requirements to OSEP.

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic excused the Board for lunch.

12:10 PM – 1:30 PM

Lunch

1:30 PM – 2:00 PM

Overview of Blindness and Visual Impairment—POSTPONED

Presenter:

Dr. Garrison Tsinajinie, University of Arizona, Assistant Professor of Practice, Disability and Psychoeducational Studies

Due to a widespread power outage, the BIE Board asked Dr. Tsinajinie to speak on April 25, 2025 at 8:15 AM MDT. The Board moved into their work session using minimal technology to not lose work time. The DFO made a public announcement the Board would recess at 3:00 PM MDT.

2:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Advisory Board Work Session

With the support of the contracted partner, Alex Langevin, the Board worked on the agenda for the next Board meeting to be held June 12 & 13, 2025 from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM Mountain Time each day in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The Board reviewed prior ideas for presenters and discussed the importance of each idea to the Board's advisory functions. Prior suggestions included Project 619 coordinators to speak about early childhood services for ages 3—5 and Part D discretionary grant recipients, particularly those with personnel preparation grants. Additional suggestion includes another update from Director Dearman's office due to ongoing changes and the critical nature of BIE's work. The Board agreed on one hour for the BIE Director's office to discuss specific updates from today's discussion. Jennifer Davis, DFO, discussed approaching Director Dearman's office and clarifying the approach to public comment for his presentation. The Board also considered a presentation



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

from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for an update on Head Start with a focus on special education. Board member Brian Wagner offered to reach out to his HHS contact and include DFO Jennifer Davis in the inquiry.

Chairperson Norman suggested having 75% of this meeting's second day time dedicated to Board work. Leon Reval, Secretary, suggested having a member of Congress share their projection of future congressional action related to education and the BIE.

3:00 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, April 25, 2025 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 Monica Cleveland, Board Member
6. Present Rachel Harrison, Board Member
7. Present Wendy Kroupa, Board Member
8. Present Melanie Star, Board Member
9. Present Brian Wagner, Board Member

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

TAESE Contractors: Kristen Perez-Rickels, Alex Langevin, and Laura Lema

Presenters/Speakers: Dr. Garrison Tsinajinie

Others in Attendance:

Alison Keplin	Jennifer Eller	Loren Hudson
Amanda Bryant	Evangeline	Mary Junne Largo
Arlene Davis	Bradley-Wilkinson	Melonna Plant
Carol Veit	John Copenhaver	Pamela Speaks
Cheryl Johnson	Jonathan Pino	Seatha Pacheco
Detroit James	Julie Casey	Shayla Williams
Eleanor Jones	Kevin Johnson	Tamera Pulver
Erin Trottier	Leslie Finnearty	Ted Ortiz



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

Zonnie Sombrero

8:00 AM – 8:10 AM Meeting Logistics

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](#). Everyone reviewed the meeting agenda.

Roll Call, Old Business, and New Business

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

Welcome and Call to Order – Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson

Roll Call: Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic completed roll call.

The following were present constituting a quorum:

- Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson
- Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson
- Leon Reval, Secretary
- Brian Wagner
- Rachel Harrison
- Melanie Star
- Wendy Kroupa
- Dr. Janet Slowman
- Monica Cleveland

New Business: Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic invited the contractor to begin facilitating the Advisory Board's work session.

8:10 AM – 8:20 AM Advisory Board Work Session

The Board continued their work on the June 2025 meeting agenda. It was proposed all future requests for speakers include general language to prompt discussion around speakers' work without limiting them to the scope of predetermined questions. The contractor reminded the Board they will have opportunities to ask additional questions following each speaker's presentation, and pre-formed questions should focus on data or items requiring additional preparation from the speaker. The Board agreed to these new norms for requests.

The Board finalized their speaker request language to read:

"We are looking for a presentation which includes a basic overview of your work including challenges, achievements and recommendations. We would like you to focus on how your work aligns with the needs of native students with disabilities."



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

The Board reviewed the list of proposed speakers and considered specific questions the presenters should come prepared to respond to at the Board meeting.

8:20 AM – 10:00 AM

Overview of Blindness and Visual Impairment

Presenter:

Dr. Garrison Tsinajinie, University of Arizona, Assistant Professor
of Practice, Disability and Psychoeducational Studies

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic welcomed the speaker to the Board meeting and thanked them for rescheduling following the technical difficulties of the prior day.

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

1. Overview of blindness and visual impairment (incidence rates, etc.).
2. Where to find national resources for children with visual impairment.
3. Information about virtual resources (direct service provision & resources to support staff).
4. Expanded core curriculum.
5. Support/resources for parents.
6. What would you like to see the Board address in their annual report?

The following are the responses given by the presenter to each of the requested items above.

1. Overview of blindness and visual impairment (incidence rates, etc.).

Dr. Tsinajinie provided population rates from 2023 of people who were eligible and registered with the American Printing House for the Blind (54,962 students). Of those eligible, the primary reading mediums were as follows:

- Visual Readers (33.78%).
- Symbolic/Non-Readers (29.46%).
- Pre-Readers (18.47%).
- Auditory Readers (10.39%).
- Braille Readers (7.90%).

2. Where to find national resources for children with visual impairment.
3. Information about virtual resources (direct service provision & resources to support staff).

Dr. Tsinajinie provided a PDF copy of the resources shared during the presentation. Virtual resources for direct service provision, support staff, and parents were also provided.

Highlighted within these resources was the American Printing House's "Hive" which includes



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

professional development freely available and resources from the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired supporting improved practice for teachers and paraprofessionals.

4. Expanded core curriculum.

Dr. Tsinajinie explained the expanded core curriculum considers not just the four core subject areas of math, English language arts, science, and social studies. Instead, the expanded core curriculum addresses these subjects along with learning that might otherwise occur incidentally through visual learning for students who are not blind or visually impaired. These incidental learning opportunities through visual observation are not available in the same way for students who are blind or visually impaired, so the expanded core curriculum intentionally considers these opportunities and supplements them for blind or visually impaired students. Examples of areas this expanded learning might address are:

- Assistive Technology
- Career Education
- Independent Living Skills
- Orientation and Mobility (O&M)
- Recreation and Leisure
- Self-Determination
- Sensory Efficiency
- Social Interaction Skills

5. Support/resources for parents.

Dr. Tsinajinie provided a PDF copy of the resources for parents shared during the presentation. Highlighted resources include the American Printing House for the Blind's FamilyConnect website and Lighthouse Guild's tele-support for parents.

6. What would you like to see the Board address in their annual report?

Dr. Tsinajinie stated reflection on prior work and expenditures related to investments in professional development on low-incidence disabilities, including other disabilities co-occurring with blindness and visual impairment, is important. He also stated review of resources and learning provided to families in the area of low-incidence disabilities is needed.

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic thanked Dr. Tsinajinie for being flexible and adjusting his schedule to present to the Board today following the prior day's technical difficulties.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic then opened the floor for questions and comments from the Board.

Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Is there any qualitative data on the success of students who are blind coming home and back into their communities (specifically tribal communities)?

Response: Dr. Garrison Tsinajinie, Assistant Professor – In my work, that is a question that comes about often: Is there enough of a need in the community to invest in the blindness/visual impairment resources in our communities? For me, even if there is one student, it is worthwhile to have those resources and supports. No research exists on this specific population transitioning from a specialized school back into their mainstream communities. But research and evidence does exist on practices to support this transition more broadly. Some practices include short-term placement in specialized schools to learn specific skills.

Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Because this is such a small population, what drew you to this field?

Response: Dr. Garrison Tsinajinie, Assistant Professor – I gave an interview and story on this topic from the CEC, but it comes down to two experiences. One, I worked at a residential facility for children with multiple disabilities and worked with a student with blindness/visual impairment, but no one knew how to work with the student. Two, I participated in a class on instructional methods for students with blindness/visual impairment that further spurred my interest.

Question: Leon Reval, Secretary – You brought up a great point about the lack of resources for becoming a community member, and there are opportunities for long-term change and support. Other than the obvious criteria of blindness, what is the criteria/standard that defines visual impairment? Mr. Reval also noted that in his community, parents care for their children rather than relying on, or using, external resources.

Response: Dr. Garrison Tsinajinie, Assistant Professor – Looking at the American Medical Association's definition of legal blindness, it considers visual acuity and visual field with an acuity requirement of 2200 or worse even with glasses. The second prong of the definition is visual field. Someone can have 20/20 vision but have a limited field of vision (20 degrees or less of a visual field). It is a matter of having one or the other to qualify for services requiring legal blindness, but that does not translate well to school services. For instance, there are



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

considerations for students with Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI) where visual acuity and visual field are not a concern but visual processing is.

Question: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – In all the resources you shared, what are the avenues or processes to acquire those services for the parents and children in need? How do we get this information of services out to schools so students can receive these supports?

Response: Dr. Garrison Tsinajinie, Assistant Professor – Connecting families to resources is difficult, and I am hoping the slides I shared will help connect people initially. Look for your university training programs that are available to train teachers of students with visual impairments. Oftentimes we have the funding available, but not the interest or the awareness this career even exists. The Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired has a list of accredited programs.

Question: Tamera Pulver, Special Education Director, Northwest Passage High School – Are Visual Impairment (VI) services available through Indian Health Services? How many VI teachers are utilized across BIE districts? Is there a plan to build capacity or “Grow Your Own” programs in the community to provide special education services for all students with disabilities?

Response: Dr. Garrison Tsinajinie, Assistant Professor – Each site and clinic is very unique in terms of what needs they can fulfill. Connect with Indian Health Service providers specifically to ask if they have capacity to conduct clinical low vision evaluations. For “Grow Your Own” programs, grant options might be possible.

Comment: Tamera Pulver, Special Education Director, Northwest Passage High School – I would like to see more information and resources for Deafness and Hard of Hearing for our indigenous students. 72% of the student population at North Dakota School for the Deaf are Native American.

Response: Dr. Garrison Tsinajinie, Assistant Professor – Absolutely! Your local university teacher preparation programs would be great for initial conversations.

Comment: Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson – This is a large number, and tribal Vocational Rehabilitation would be a great resource.

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic thanked the speaker and released the Board for a break.

10:00 AM – 10:15 AM

Break



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic welcomed the Board back from break and said the rest of the day would be devoted to Board work including finalizing the June agenda and moving forward on the letter and priorities.

10:15 AM – 4:00 PM Advisory Board Work Session

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic reminded the Board the June agenda should include items they feel are truly necessary, and the Board does not need to identify topics and speakers to simply “fill the time.” The Board continued to review existing suggestions for agenda items and the specific requests for information from speakers.

The next proposed June agenda item for review was the ADD Education Specialists, and the Board was asked what specific questions they might have for this group or if they would like them removed from the agenda. Board members Wendy Kroupa, Melanie Star, and Dr. Elizabeth Younce stated they liked the general request language, and no additional questions were needed.

Board member Brian Wagner clarified the general request language is what would be used moving forward, and then more specific questions, when warranted, will be provided. Brian Wagner asked if it would be beneficial to have a breakdown of open position numbers, broken down by direct service providers, from the ADD Education Specialists.

The Board discussed the need to understand the impact of the new administration on the work of field-based providers. Board member Dr. Janet Slowman stated we need to respect the BIE’s chain of command and said these questions are best asked of leadership. Board member Wendy Kroupa stated the hiring freeze is a current concern, and questions should be asked of BIE leadership or of the BIE Central Office on steps being taken to improve hiring practices.

Board member Leon Reval suggested a data-based question of, “How is student progress being measured and reported in a way that reflects both academic progress and functional performance for students?” with the opportunity to ask follow-up questions on how stakeholder groups can engage with that information. Mr. Reval suggested this question be used as a stock question on all future requests for presenters. Mr. Reval emphasized, again, the need for clarity in language on agendas, and all acronyms should be completely spelled out to support broader understanding, particularly of parents. He suggested a “glossary” or list of terms to be added to the agendas. Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic stated a list of terms was

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

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

previously available but may need to be updated. Brian Wagner stated a link to the acronym list/list of terms could be added to the agenda for ease of access.

Board member Monica Cleveland noted a lot of staffing changes have happened in her area, particularly as people are being moved internally or leaving the BIE system. She also expressed concern around talk of the Phoenix office no longer being available. Ms. Cleveland further stated these changes concern parents, particularly as schools do not have contingency plans or proposed solutions and are already struggling to provide services to students served under IDEA.

Brian Wagner stated the information from Director Dearman yesterday included a note that BIE schools may lose staff because of the loss of COVID funds. Dr. Slowman stated those issues are being discussed in schools now, and she provided support for addressing these concerns with the BIE Central Office and Director Dearman, rather than with field employees who may not have the same level of insight.

Brian Wagner shared information about the Executive Order (EO) directing the Secretary of the Interior to develop a plan for a parent voucher program for eligible students, including those who are eligible to attend BIE schools but who are not enrolled. Dr. Janet Slowman stated this Board/group needs to be in a strong advocacy position and at the forefront with questions and research on what is really happening and how schools respond. Dr. Slowman also stated the questions for the ADDs and Central Office need to address the criticalness of the current situation. Dr. Elizabeth Younce suggested a panel of school superintendents and leaders could functionally direct the work of the Board. Brian stated having that panel as a standing agenda item with newly selected individuals for each meeting would be beneficial. Dr. Slowman expressed concerns that the Board and BIE have not conducted a needs assessment, so the direction of the agenda and Board priorities are not as data-based as they could be.

The Board reviewed the current suggested roster and considered what agenda items are most needed and what may need to be removed on account of available time. The Board was directed to select no more than five session topics for the two days. Dr. Younce suggested starting with the “Word from the Field” as the most granular topic and then moving outward in breadth.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

The Board considered the early childhood topic and discussed prior presenters and conversations. The Board determined the early childhood topic would be moved to the fall meeting. Brian Wagner stated the proposed early childhood speakers primarily collect and report data and distribute funds, and he questioned whether these people would be able to address the Board's proposed questions. The Board determined Brian's question, and the early childhood agenda item, be revisited in June to determine if it is needed for the fall meeting. Brian Wagner asked whether the congress member meeting with the Board would occur. Leon Reval confirmed he had Board approval to reach out to congress contacts. It was determined Mr. Reval would begin initial inquiries into his network to gauge interest and then pass the contact information onto the DFO, Jennifer Davis, to provide the more formal request with specific questions. This agenda item would occur at the fall meeting at the earliest.

For the review and proposed changes of SPP/APR targets, Brian Wagner clarified the discussion would need to occur in June. Ronald Worst, Education Specialist at the BIE, stated the proposed changes do not require a resolution or a motion, but they do require stakeholder input. Dr. Slowman suggested the DPA updates exist as a standing agenda item for all future Board meetings. Mr. Wagner followed up with a suggestion that the superintendent presentation occur at least two times per year.

Comment: Tamera Pulver, Special Education Director, Northwest Passage High School – I highly recommend having somebody from the LA Neurofeedback Pilot present to the BIE. I sent you the transcript from the Trauma Research Foundation.

Response: BIE Advisory Board for Exceptional Children – This can be considered for the fall meeting.

Comment: Jennifer Davis, DFO – This agenda needs to be finalized no later than April 29, 2025.

Response: The Board confirmed the June agenda would be finalized by today.

On the session of current superintendents and administrators, Brian Wagner and Norman Shawanokasic noted many questions have been previously developed for prior sessions. The Board decided to use the newly-developed standard request language and would review questions used in prior meetings following lunch.

The Board reviewed the questions for the BIE Central Office presentation. Dr. Janet Slowman noted one of the questions addressing the hiring process and background checks may not be



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

relevant because of the hiring freeze. Brian Wagner stated it may be helpful to reference a recent Executive Order (EO) requiring an improvement in the process/timeline of hiring.

Leon Reval asked for clarification on the voucher programs. Brian Wagner explained the voucher information comes from an Executive Order (EO) directing various federal agencies to develop a plan on how funds could be redirected to families/parents to place their child, or children, in educational settings of their choice. Monica Cleveland noted a lot of charter or private schools will not accept students with IEPs which many parents are not aware of.

The Board agreed public comment throughout the meeting has been effective and lunch times have been sufficient. The contractor will clean up the proposed June agenda for Board approval immediately following lunch.

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic excused the Board for lunch.

11:30 AM – 1:15 PM Lunch

1:15 PM – 2:13 PM Advisory Board Work Session

Chairperson Shawanokasic called the Board back to order when a quorum was formed. The Board reviewed questions for school leaders for use at the June Board meeting. Questions were approved.

Brian Wagner stated during today's lunch break he received a response from HHS on a Head Start presentation, and the information for this presentation was added to the proposed agenda for September. Mr. Wagner also received communication from a senator and requested an agreement from the Board to inquire about the senator speaking with the Board at the September meeting. Agreement from the Board was given.

The Board reviewed the full agenda draft for June and approved it.

Jennifer Davis asked if the Board had a preference on speaker order. No Board members had concerns with organizing speakers based on their availability.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

The Board reviewed calendars to identify days for the September Board Meeting. Chairperson Shawanokasic asked if Thursday and Friday meetings still worked for the Board. Rachel Harrison requested Wednesday and Thursday meetings, but other Board members shared the difficulty of Wednesday and Thursday in missing an additional day of work. Melanie Star asked was it possible for the Board to end early enough on Friday for Board members to fly home Friday evening. The Board agreed on the dates of September 18 and 19, 2025 with a working lunch on both dates so the Board could end at 2:00 PM MDT on Friday, September 19.

Jennifer Davis, DFO, stated the BIE would like to keep meetings in Albuquerque because of the cost of hotel conference rooms elsewhere. Dr. Elizabeth Younce stated SIPI offered to host the Board on a future visit. The Board agreed to meet in Albuquerque at the National Indian Programs Training Center (NIPTC) for the September meeting.

The Board began working on the structure, form, and content of their letter. In composing the letter, the Board reviewed structure and language from 2024 and 2023. The Board made edits to the letter and determined to finalize edits corresponding to the priorities during the June Board meeting.

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic excused the Board for a break.

2:13 PM – 2:30 PM

Break

2:30 PM – 4:00 PM

Advisory Board Work Session

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic welcomed the Board back from break. The Board began drafting the agenda for the September meeting. In working through questions for the congressional representative, the Board decided to table the discussion until an individual is confirmed.

The Board considered the role of the people from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) who agreed to speak on disability and Head Start updates. Brian Wagner proposed requesting a representative from the National Indian Head Start Association as well. The Board discussed the September agenda has two proposed early childhood sessions already, so the Board determined the Part C discussion would be reduced to 30 minutes. The Board



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

continued discussing potential questions on Head Start particularly those centered around the American Indian and Alaskan Native Programs.

Question: Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson – Why is there a distinction between Alaskan Native and American Indian rather than Alaskan Natives being considered under the umbrella of American Indian?

Response: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Funding differences and historical differences exist with the Alaskan Natives choosing to be served under the state.

Response: Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson – The Alaskan Natives did not have reservations, so there were differences in legislation because the words matter.

The Board determined the September Board meeting will leave a half day for Board work given the progress made thus far this year.

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic reviewed the work completed and previewed the work to be done in June and September. He thanked the DFO and contractors for their support of the Board and thanked the Board members for their efforts.

Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson, thanked Chairperson Shawanokasic for his work with the Board.

4:00 PM

Adjourn

Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member, made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson, seconded the motion. All Board members voted in favor of adjourning the meeting.

Minutes were chair certified for accuracy on May 28, 2025.