

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, September 25, 2025 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM (EDT)

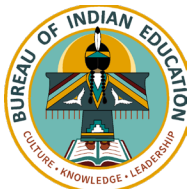
Name of Committee: Bureau of Indian Education Advisory Board for Exceptional Children

Meeting Location: U.S. Department of the Interior, South Penthouse, 7th Floor
1849 C Street, N.W. Washington DC, 20240 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 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 Brian Wagner, Board Member
5. Present Monica Cleveland, Board Member
6. Absent Wendy Kroupa, Board Member
7. Present Rachel Harrison, Board Member
8. Present Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member, Ed.D
9. Present Melanie Star, Board Member



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

TAESE Contractors: Alex Langevin, Casey Allen, and Lindsey Brogdon

Presenters/Speakers: Tony Dearman, Janelle Broderick, Dr. Eugene Thompson, Dr. LaRonda Lugo, Sharei Ricketts, Holly Traynor, Cesar D'Agord, and Nicole Garcia

Others in Attendance:

Angie Parton	Gloria Yepa	Michelle Thomas
Brenda Smith	Jacqueline Bisille	Reanna Albert
Brooke Ratliff	Jennifer Bell	Rena M. Yazzie
Casey Sovo	John Copenhaver	Scott Norton
Cheryl Johnson	Juanita Mendoza	Teresa Ramone-Wilson
Delphine Dayish	Kristen Perez-Rickels	Zonnie Sombrero
Detroit James	Matthew Kelly	
Eleanor Francis-Jones	Matthew Schneer	

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

Start Time: 8:00 AM Eastern Daylight Time (EDT)

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 regarding the purpose of the Board can be directed to [Jennifer Davis](#). The meeting agenda was reviewed for the two-day meeting.

Roll Call – Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic completed roll call. The following were present constituting a BIE quorum as well as other guests:

- Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson
- Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson
- Leon Reval, Secretary
- Brian Wagner
- Rachel Harrison
- Melanie Star



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- Dr. Janet Slowman
- Monica Cleveland

Absent: Wendy Kroupa

Chairperson Shawanokasic asked if any new business needed to be addressed. There was no new business.

Chairperson Shawanokasic asked if any old business was needing to be addressed. Jennifer Davis, DFO, stated approval was needed for the meeting minutes from April 2025. Brian Wagner, Board Member, moved to approve the April 2025 Board meeting minutes. Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson, seconded the approval.

Leon Reval, Secretary, noted a correction for the April 2025 minutes had been requested following the deadline for edits.

Brian Wagner, Board Member, corrected the motion to approve the minutes with the included edit.

All Board members voted in favor of approving the meeting minutes with the included edit.

Chairperson Shawanokasic noted the Board would need to complete their Annual Report during the current meeting.

8:30 AM – 9:20 AM Meet & Greet

Chairperson Shawanokasic introduced the first session of the meeting.

This first session is for the BIE Advisory Board members, the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs (AS-IA), the BIE-Central Office, and the Division of Performance & Accountability (DPA). This session provides opportunities to connect, meet key team members, and build relationships beyond the structured meeting setting. The DPA and Board members will provide a brief presentation about the Advisory Board's mission, current priorities, and collaborative efforts to support the education of Native students with disabilities.

1. Summarize the roles, responsibilities, and purpose of the BIE Advisory Board for Exceptional Children.
2. Summarizing FFY 2023 and FFY 2024 annual reports.
3. Do you have any questions for the Board?



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Following the participants' introductions in the meet and greet session, the Board provided a brief presentation.

Melanie Star, Board Member, reviewed the BIE Advisory board duties and objectives including the Annual Report.

Dr. Elizabeth Youce, Vice Chairperson, gave prepared remarks on the membership and designation of the Advisory Board. Nine categories comprise the board membership/designation. Dr. Younce also reviewed Advisory Board appointments/positions and geographic representations of Board members.

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic reviewed the two reported priorities in the [FFY 2023 Annual Report](#) and the corresponding 12 recommendations.

Comment: Brian Wager, Board Member – Explained the Trump administration recently announced anyone requesting H1 visas for their employees must pay \$100,000. If that requirement reaches full approval, it will have a negative impact on BIE schools. A majority of BIE schools have teachers with H1 or N1 visas. If this announcement is approved, tribally-controlled schools (TCS) or Bureauoperated schools (BOS) will need a waiver for their H1 visa employees.

Comment: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – Agreed with Brian Wagner's statement. She noted H1 visa teachers have the skills to work with children with disabilities.

Question: Jannelle Broderick, BIE Central Office – Asked for more information on the number of teachers and staff this executive order would impact.

Response: Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson – Stated the information could be provided by Jennifer Davis as the DFO for the Board.

Comment: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – Noted H1 teachers are established in local communities.

Comment: Brian Wager, Board Member – Explained there's a push for students to carry more academic credits for their eligibility for Pell grants. Special education students are nontraditional and would have difficulty with such credit increase requirements. He advocated for the BIE central office to request a waiver allowing special education students to still receive Pell grants (and other grants) for higher education opportunities without the increased credit requirement.



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Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic continued reviewing the priorities from the FFY 2023 Annual Report. He also outlined the FFY 2024 Annual Report, its three priorities, and the 14 corresponding recommendations.

Comment: Leon Reval, Secretary – Noted the importance of the Board’s mission under federal requirements. The Board has noted the same challenges in each of the years he has served as a Board member: social/emotional learning, teacher/staff recruitment and retention, and secondary transition. The Board does not get responses to their recommendations in the Annual Reports.

Comment: Brian Wager, Board Member – Explained he was speaking on behalf of the Great Plains Tribal Association. In the past they have deferred maintenance for staff to take care of their buildings when funding is not available. The minimum spending amount for schools to receive building maintenance reimbursements increased by 400% (from \$2,500 to \$10,000). He made an appeal for this change to be revoked, noting the lack of tribal council input on the change. This increase sets up BIE-funded schools to fail. The Great Plains Tribal Association advocates for the reimbursement change to be appropriately discussed.

Comment: Tony Dearman, BIE Director – Expressed his thanks for the Board’s recommendations and noted he would address several of them during his presentation.

Comment: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – Detailed the consequences COVID is still having on communities. We all need to continue supporting families to avoid detrimental effects on students’ academic performance.

9:45 AM – 10:30 AM BIE Central Office

Presenters: Tony Dearman and Janelle Broderick

Chairperson Shawanokasic welcomed the presenters to the Board meeting.

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

1. Is there anything pertinent that the Board should be aware of since the April 24-25, 2025

Advisory Board meeting? Some topics may include:

- Any current or pending education or DOI changes that may specifically affect students with disabilities.
- Language Immersion grants (general information, continuation resolution etc.).
- Expanding Educational Freedom and Opportunity for Families (Executive Order 14191).
- Indian School Equalization Program (ISEP) reauthorization.



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

Director Tony Dearman explained when executive order 14191 rolled out, the BIE had 90 days to create a plan with only a two-week period to receive consultations.

Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Asked why Part B & C funding was reduced for tribes.

Response: Ronald Worst, Educational Specialist – Replied the BIE received the same funding amount as the prior year, and the funding amount is distributed to tribes and schools based on the number of children with disabilities.

Comment: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Observed the number of kids must have increased greatly.

Response: Ronald Worst, Educational Specialist – Explained some schools did see an increase due to their Child Count.

Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Asked if there were similar concerns for other funding sources for students.

Response: Margo DeLaune, Associate Deputy Director – Noted a slight decrease happened in title funds as well. Schools have been working hard to get Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in place for eligible students, and Child Count numbers have increased while funding has remained the same.

Comment: Ronald Worst, Educational Specialist – Observed the number of eligible children on IEPs has increased since COVID while funding has plateaued.

Question: Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson – Inquired if schools can change their funding requests or amounts?

Response: Dr. Eugene Thompson, Supervisory Educational Specialist – Noted schools are encouraged to use their funding carryover amounts, and the Part C funding level also stayed the same as last year.

Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Noted the schools he works with have seen an increase in Child Count numbers. Is there an increase in general education enrollment as well as special education identification?

Response: Margo DeLaune, Associate Deputy Director – Replied the increase is only in students identified for special education. She could provide data to the Board illustrating the increase.



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Comment: Dr. Eugene Thompson, Supervisory Educational Specialist – Stated Child Count information for the year will be presented to schools next month (October), and schools are working on the timely set up of IEPs.

Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Inquired about the data verification process for Child Count.

Response: Dr. Eugene Thompson, Supervisory Educational Specialist – Explained they have several months to clean up the data.

Response: Margo DeLaune, Associate Deputy Director – Added they have several levels of data verification.

Comment: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Stated with high rates of teacher turnover, the last thing we want is kids to be miscounted.

Director Dearman stated his office is excited about the BIE strategic direction after their recent listening sessions. Their leadership team has been working on key performance indicators. They are also currently working on verifying that all schools are implementing the BIE's strategic direction, and they will present at the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) on their strategic direction.

Director Dearman explained increasing the maintenance deferment reimbursement minimum to \$10,000 was done to allow schools to complete maintenance work without jumping through as many hoops. They will continue to work with the Tribal Interior Budget Council to ensure the process works for schools.

Director Dearman observed the BIE relies on H1 teachers, and they're highly qualified in the classrooms he's observed. The impact would be devastating if the BIE lost support for H1 teachers. The BIE currently goes through International Affairs and the State Department to approve H1 applications.

Director Dearman explained they had 148 positions exempted from the federal hiring freeze. The BIE is forward funded, so they will function normally if the approaching government shutdown happens. The BIE office has to get creative with the budget to support BIE staff and support our schools.



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Comment: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Addressed the length of time required to process background checks for newly hired staff. He expressed the need to provide additional training on background checks and shorten the process.

Response: Tony Dearman, BIE Director – Agreed the timeliness of the background check process leads to the loss of potential school staff, and it's an area needing to be addressed.

Director Dearman stated the BIE continues to work on flat budget resolutions.

Margo DeLaune reviewed Executive Order 14191.

Comment: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Explained his organization has submitted a position paper on the Indian School Equalization Program (ISEP) to move it from a maternalistic program to an open-ended program. Funding should not be divided piecemeal but should be given in full to a school for themselves to decide how to use it. It would be nice to move away from a requirement-based funding system.

Response: Tony Dearman, BIE Director – Stated Brian Wagner's comments are helpful and what the BIE needs to hear, because those funding changes would allow for more flexibility.

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

10:30 AM – 10:45 AM Break

10:45 AM – 11:25 AM Division of Performance and Accountability (DPA)/BIE Special Education Program

Presenters: Dr. Eugene Thompson and Ronald Worst

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.

- 1.** Office will provide updates about the FFY 2023 State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) – Presentation to stakeholders on changing the targets for high school participation on the statewide assessment (Indicator 3).
- 2.** Provide updates about the BIE Special Education Policy and Procedures, including roll out (training, technical assistance, implementation).
- 3.** Provide a summary about the 2025 Online Summer Training.



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

1. Office will provide updates about the FFY 2023 State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) – Presentation to stakeholders on changing the targets for high school participation on the statewide assessment (Indicator 3).

Dr. Thompson explained the graduation and dropout data, including the indicator targets and recorded percentages for FFYs 2021, 2022, and 2023. He noted the data is specific to high schools.

Dr. Thompson explained input is needed from the Board, as stakeholders, on changing the target for participation of high school students with disabilities in statewide assessments for Language Arts and Math. The BIE's SPP sets up targets for six years and two years are remaining for the current plan. The current target for FFY 2025 was 100% participation of high school students with disabilities in statewide assessments. He asked the Board for input on moving the baseline and target percentage.

Ron Worst reported the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has set the minimum target for statewide assessment participation at 95%. He noted a 100% target is not attainable because of how students with disabilities are counted during the window of participation for statewide assessments in Language Arts and Math. He asked for input on resetting the target to 95% to assist the DPA in working with schools to meet the target.

Chairperson Shawanokasic opened the meeting to comments from Board members.

Comment: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Noted some school special education directors have received negative reactions to their school's low assessment participation rates when it isn't clear to schools that the reported data is a year old. Percentages are easily skewed due to low student populations at some schools. He recommend establishing an N factor, allowing schools with student populations below a minimum number (N) to not report any assessment participation data.

Comment: Ron Worst, Educational Specialist – Established the importance of having students with disabilities participate in statewide assessments and concurred some schools have small N sizes.



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Comment: Margo DeLaune, Associate Deputy Director – Observed some schools submit assessment waivers for students who take longer to process than the general assessment participation data.

Comment: Leon Reval, Secretary – Stated consideration needs to be given to ensuring all parents understand the targets and reported percentages.

Comment: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – Stated every student has a right to participate in assessments, and that's how schools measure student benchmarks. The IEP specifically states if a child participates in statewide assessments or not. This determination is based on the individual child, is a legal requirement in the IEP, and is a decision made by the IEP team.

Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Asked if the Board needs to make a statistical recommendation or provide comments to the DPA.

Response: Dr. Eugene Thompson, Supervisory Educational Specialist – Clarified the Board was providing comments on revising the target.

Comment: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Made a recommendation to decrease the target to 95%. He observed there are roadblocks to schools meeting the 100% target.

Question: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – Asked how the BIE will report a child not participating in assessments without negatively impacting their data.

Response: Ron Worst, Educational Specialist – If any student doesn't participate, it will negatively impact a school's data.

Comment: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – Stated statistics are erroneously impacting children.

Comment: Ron Worst, Educational Specialist – Stated a parent is the only one who can decide if their child takes an assessment. The reason we want them taking the assessment is to ensure each child has the supports they need.

Comment: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – Noted if a parent doesn't want their child participating in an assessment, we have to honor that.

Question: Leon Reval, Secretary – Asked if a student takes an assessment and fails, is that data added to a formula?

Response: Ron Worst, Educational Specialist – Explained the goal of assessments is to see if students are at grade level proficiency. In addition, collected assessments look at all student performance across the entire BIE as a state.

Comment: Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson – Noted students have an individual target as well, and it would be nice to know how special education students are comparing to general education students.



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Response: Ron Worst, Educational Specialist – Explained another indicator measures the gap between special education student assessment results and general education student assessment results.

Comment: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Observed with the use of the BIE assessment, supports for students with disabilities should be provided.

Comment: Margo DeLaune, Associate Deputy Director – Stated the BIE does have the flexibility to use certain supports for students, and the Chief Academic Officer oversees the unified academic assessment.

Comment: Monica Cleveland, Board Member – Reported incidents of students not knowing how to navigate the assessment on their computer, and supports should assist students with navigating the assessment.

Dr. Thompson observed he was out of time to finish his presentation to the Board.

Jennifer Davis, DFO, stated the Board could finish hearing from Dr. Thompson during their work session.

Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic thanked Dr. Thompson for presenting to the Board.

11:30 AM – 1:00 PM Lunch

1:00 PM – 1:45 PM Panel Discussion

Presenter: Holly Traynor, Joseph K. Lumsden Bahweting School

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. Describe how your school builds trust between general and special education teachers for positive student outcomes.
2. How is student progress being measured and reported in a way that reflects both academic and functional growth for students?
3. How is that data shared with stakeholders (teachers, parents, etc.)?
4. How is the school implementing their approaches to recruitment and retention for educators? Describe what is working and your ideas for improvement.



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5. How can the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), the Division of Performance and Accountability (DPA), and the Education Resource Centers (ERCs) support your school in special education?
6. How is professional development being addressed for all educators within the school? What additional support is provided for the school staff? How can the BIE, DPA, and ERCs support your school in special education?

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

1. Describe how your school builds trust between general and special education teachers for positive student outcomes.

Holly Traynor explained building trust has been an ongoing priority with their administration. They have set up a special education lead teacher and have been inviting general education teachers to their behavior and autism team meetings. This has helped general education teachers work better with special education students.

2. How is student progress being measured and reported in a way that reflects both academic and functional growth for students.

Holly Traynor noted they are reporting on many different measurements and stress differentiated output. They collect data from observations, student work, and school-wide assessments. Their staff have participated in professional development on analyzing student data. They try to utilize multiple sources of data to assess academic and functional growth for students.

3. How is that data shared with stakeholders (teachers, parents, etc.)?

Holly Traynor explained quarterly progress reports are sent home with students. They also provide presentations and reports to the school board.

4. How is the school implementing their approaches to recruitment and retention for educators? Describe what is working and your ideas for improvement.

Holly Traynor noted educator recruitment and retention has been an issue for their school. For recruitment, they do an internal job posting for two days. If they don't have an internal



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candidate with a successful interview, then an external posting is made. They post externally using Indeed.com and two local tribal newspapers. Their HR manager also tries to use different job posting outlets. Retention tactics work best, such as offering good benefits. They also try to pair special education staff with general educators to build mentoring.

5. How can the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), the Division of Performance and Accountability (DPA), and the Education Resource Centers (ERCs) support your school in special education?

Holly Traynor stated many general education teachers don't understand different disabilities and how they manifest into specific behaviors. Parents also need additional resources. Discipline for students with disabilities is also a hot topic at her school. They have been promoting alternative solutions to keep students with disabilities at school without disciplinary suspensions. Many kindergartners are not kindergarten ready (academically or socially/emotionally). They are looking at starting a transition program for students going to 9th grade for next year.

6. How is professional development being addressed for all educators within the school? What additional support is provided for the school staff? How can the BIE, DPA, and ERCs support your school in special education?

Holly Traynor stated their school has many professional development opportunities. The week before school begins is reserved for training on crisis prevention and deescalation. Each month they have a half day for professional development. Professional development is organized by the curriculum director. They would like more training for their paraprofessionals.

Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Inquired what the ratio of staff to special education students is.

Response: Holly Traynor – Responded they have a maximum case load of 18 students for each special education teacher, but she tries to keep the case load number lower. They also have paraprofessionals assisting in different classrooms.

Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Asked if her school was fully staffed.

Response: Holly Traynor – Explained they currently have seven qualified teachers and one staff member on their special education team. All of their teacher positions are filled, and they have



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three openings for paraeducators. They currently have one social worker on staff and are approved to hire a second. Their speech language pathologist position is also open.

Chairperson Shawanokasic thanked Holly Traynor for presenting to the Board.

The Board returned to the presentation from Dr. Thompson. He returned to the second question the Board had requested a response for.

2. Provide updates about the BIE Special Education Policy and Procedures including roll out (training, technical assistance, implementation).

Dr. Thompson noted the special education handbook is close to completion. The handbook will be included in the Indian Affairs Manual (IAM) in part 33 titled Education. Schools will have an optional template to guide their implementation of the handbook. Soon they will send out a "Dear school leadership," letter indicating the finalized handbook will be forthcoming and outlining the rollout training process. They are finalizing pre-recorded resources addressing each section of the special education handbook. Schools can develop or revise their own procedures based on the handbook and a provided template. The current school year will have selected schools implementing the handbook, and next school year (2026-27) the DPA will monitor each school's implementation of the handbook.

3. Provide a summary about the 2025 Online Summer Training.

Dr. Thompson stated they have 43 available training sessions. Sessions topics include:

- Preparing for initial evaluations and Child Find obligations.
- Keeping students with disabilities at the center during discipline issues.
- Improving IDEA data and outcomes for students with disabilities.
- What school administrators and teachers need to know about allowable use of IDEA Part B funding.
- Leveraging local school performance plans to improve results.

407 people registered for these sessions with an average attendance of 58 people per session. The maximum number of participants was 175 in one session.

4. Monitoring activity results.



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Dr. Thompson noted the three schools selected for monitoring last year have been rescheduled for this current year. Six additional schools will be identified by the Chief Performance Officer. Plans to correct findings of noncompliance include making corrections at the time of the visit and writing monitoring reports to document corrective action plans (CAPs) and corresponding timelines. They're also providing technical assistance plans for schools needing more than monitoring reports to learn about available supports or technical assistance.

Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Inquired about the flexibility under the new handbook for schools to set up their own procedures.

Response: Dr. Eugene Thompson, Supervisory Educational Specialist – Replied schools would have flexibility to follow state guidelines based on their location. Legal counsel will be available to assist schools with questions.

Question: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – Asked if that flexibility is included in the handbook.

Response: Dr. Eugene Thompson, Supervisory Educational Specialist – Clarified the flexibility will be stated in the handbook, but schools would still need to remain in compliance with IDEA and their state's guidelines.

Question: Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson – Inquired how schools could maintain compliance with Indicator 11 with support from DPA.

Response: Ron Worst, Educational Specialist – Explained an ad-hoc report is available for all schools to access to assist with Indicator 11. Schools would do their own verification of Indicator 11, submit the results to the DPA, who, in turn, would complete a review to determine if the evaluation is compliant.

Chairperson Shawanokasic thanked Dr. Thompson for his presentation and excused the Board for a break.

1:55 PM – 2:10 PM Break

Chairperson Shawanokasic welcomed the Board back from break and introduced the next topic.

2:10 PM – 2:45 PM

**U.S. Department of Education/Office of Special Education
 Programs funded Technical Assistance Centers (Part D) –
 National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI)**



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Presenters: Cesar D'Agord and Nicole Garcia

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.

1. Focus on how your work aligns with the needs of Native students with disabilities. Provide an overview of your work, current challenges, recent achievements, and recommendations regarding students with disabilities.
2. What major changes have occurred that affect the work and partnerships?

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

1. Focus on how your work aligns with the needs of Native students with disabilities. Provide an overview of your work, current challenges, recent achievements, and recommendations regarding students with disabilities.

Nicole Garcia explained NCSI is funded by Part D of IDEA to assist with implementing strong supervision systems in states and school districts. They work to build capacity for SEAs.

Cesar D'Agord outlined the following three activities NCSI has completed with the BIE.

1. IDEA/BIE DPA team planning meetings.
2. U.S. Department of Education specific conditions.
3. Annual summarizing of BIE performances on state determinations. (Need Intervention status, how do we get beyond that?)

Cesar D'Agord expounded NCSI assists the BIE with weekly planning meetings helping staff manage issues to tackle each week. NCSI facilitates the meetings and provides support.

Cesar D'Agord outlined improvements made in secondary transition and the assistance the new handbook will provide in this area.

Cesar D'Agord noted the BIE has had a Needs Intervention determination/status for several years. The current data has shown some improvements, but the BIE is still several years away from reaching a higher determination. NCSI is anticipating the BIE will receive improved scores in 2026 for improved graduation and dropout rates. Cesar D'Agord clarified NCSI isn't doing the actual work but is assisting the BIE leadership team to do their work and achieve a refined focus and consistent collaborations.



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Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Explained he lives in an area with one of the highest unemployment rates in the U.S and asked if unemployment is taken into consideration in NCSI's work.

Response: Cesar D'Agord – Explained NCSI assisted in surveying postsecondary outcomes for students, and they understand the challenges with unemployment. They are trying to implement eight components for students and focusing on the best IEP for each student.

Question: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – Queried why the BIE has had a Needs Intervention determination for so long.

Response: Cesar D'Agord – Noted the APR reflects a lot of data points, and the BIE has made a lot of progress in data areas that aren't necessarily reflected in the APR data.

Question: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – Asked what factors should be considered for school improvement given the BIE schools are different than other schools in the country.

Response: Cesar D'Agord – Stated a clear solution isn't always apparent for how the BIE measures on the APR because the APR was designed for state systems.

Comment: Margo DeLaune, Associate Deputy Director – Stated her agreement with Dr. Slowman that certain federal requirements will never be fulfilled because BIE schools are so unique.

Comment: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – Observed that better recommendations are needed to move the BIE out of Needs Intervention status. The BIE is being measured against a matrix that does not fit their system.

Cesar D'Agord explained NCSI's recommendations for the BIE include:

1. Improve alignment across BIE/DPA initiatives to include student outcome data in accountability activities.
2. Continue to collaborate.
3. Improve secondary transition.
4. Continue compliance.

Cesar D'Agord noted the BIE strategic direction for 2024-2030 includes being student-centered, eliminating silos, and identifying fewer simplified markers. To improve alignment across DPA initiatives, revising the school determination process to include other student outcome indicators (like graduation and drop out rates) was suggested. Collaborating better includes seeing improvements in student outcomes (like graduation and drop out rates), addressing common challenges, and using resources effectively. Leveraging connections between



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graduation, drop out, transition, and post-school outcomes to improve postsecondary transition was suggested. He stated the BIE has made major improvements in the last few years, and data reports will start reflecting the improvements.

Comment: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Explained that several decades ago, the U.S. Department of Education withheld funds from the BIE because of noncompliance. He stated his anxiety that the current presidential administration will do this again to the detriment of BIE students with disabilities.

Chairperson Shawanokasic thanked each of the NCSI speakers for presenting to the Board.

2:55 PM – 4:00 PM Advisory Board Work Session

The Board began their work on their Annual Report. Public comments were accepted at any time during this work session.

Chairperson Shawanokasic introduced the work session for the Board's annual report.

Comment: Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson – Stated several priorities in the Annual Report could be combined.

The Board reviewed the letter accompanying the Annual Report and approved the signature page.

Question: Leon Reval, Secretary – Asked how the Board could ensure a timely response to the letter and Annual Report.

The Board reviewed priority two on quality staff recruitment and retention and made edits to the justifications for the priority.

Comment: Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson – Stated the continued importance of keeping staff recruitment and retention as a priority.

Comment: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – Outlined the importance of partnerships with tribal and state higher education institutions for recruiting and training qualified special education staff.

4:00 PM Recess

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



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BIE Advisory Board for Exceptional Children

Board Minutes - Day 2

Friday, September 26, 2025 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM (EDT)

ADVISORY BOARD ROSTER

1. Present Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson
2. Present Dr. Elizabeth Younce, Vice Chairperson, Ed.D
3. Present Leon Reval, Secretary
4. Present Brian Wagner, Board Member
5. Present Monica Cleveland, Board Member
6. Absent Wendy Kroupa, Board Member
7. Present Rachel Harrison, Board Member
8. Present Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member, Ed.D
9. Present Melanie Star, Board Member

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

TAESE Contractors: Alex Langevin, Casey Allen, and Lindsey Brogdon

Presenters/Speakers: Gloria Yepa, Katharine Ford, Teresa Ramone-Wilson, and Erin Trottier

Others in Attendance:

Brenda Smith	Detroit James	Reanna Albert
Brooke Ratliff	Eleanor Francis-Jones	Rena M. Yazzie
Carol Veit	John Copenhaver	Scott Norton
Cesar D'Agord	Kristen Perez-Rickels	Travis Lane
Delilah Anselmo	Mary Star	Zonnie Sombrero
Delphina Dayish	Nicole Garcia	



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8:00 AM – 8:15 AM **Roll Call, Old Business, and New Business**

Start Time: 8:00 AM Eastern Daylight Time (EDT)

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. She noted six board positions are currently vacant.

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

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

Excused: Wendy Kroupa

New Business – Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic explained the Board needed to complete the Annual Report.

8:15 AM – 10:00 AM **Advisory Board Work Session**

Chairperson Shawanokasic introduced the Board’s work session and need to complete their Annual Report. The Board reviewed their work from the previous day.

Question: Leon Reval, Secretary – Asked if the Board recommends the BIE draft a guidance document, could they advise on what should be contained in the document?

Comment: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Suggested recommending the BIE encourage schools to utilize the issued guidance from the BIE office. He also suggested the Board’s recommendations be flexible due to the limited time in Board meetings.

Comment: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – Stated it would be good to complete a needs assessment.

Comment: Delilah Anselmo (chat) – Please keep in mind the Tohono O’odham Nation is the size of Connecticut, all our schools are in opposite directions of the nation, and not everyone knows everyone else. We also have a radio station distributing information for our school board to the



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public/parents across the nation. We also report to our legislatures/local districts with all this information, so I like the pool list. Thank you.

Comment: Nicole Garcia (chat) – Language included in IEP manual: “When working with Tribally diverse families, it is important for the IEP team to incorporate cultural responsiveness into the IEP process. For families whose primary language is not English, cultural responsiveness in the IEP process ensures families' voices are considered and their needs understood so their child's education is genuinely customized.”

The Board decide to not recommend guidance development but instead include a statement regarding, “encouraging the use of existing guidance and conducting a needs assessment.”

Comment: Dr. Eugene Thompson, Supervisory Educational Specialist – Explained the BIE is working on gathering data from schools and guidance for IEPs.

Comment: Ron Worst, Educational Specialist – Observed BIE staff try to build relationships with schools undergoing corrective action plans (CAPs) so the approach is collaborative.

Comment: Delilah Anselmo (chat) – On the Tohono O'odham Nation, no involuntary commitment law is in place, so by the time they are adults, they can say they don't have an issue with mental health. So the cycle of brokenness still continues with traumas along the journey for an individual's life. We have been stressing to our legislatures to push and move on this issue. Thank you.

Chairperson Shawanokasic excused the Board for a break.

10:00 AM – 1:45 PM Break

Chairperson Shawanokasic welcomed the Board back from break and introduced the speakers.

10:15 AM – 11:10 AM **Associate Deputy Director (ADD) Regions Special Education Programs: Bureau Operated Schools (BOS), Tribally Controlled Schools (TCS), and Navajo (BOS and TCS)**

Presenters: Gloria Yepa, Teresa Ramone-Wilson, and Erin Trottier

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

1. How is student progress measured and reported in a way that reflects both academic and functional growth for students?
2. How is that data shared with stakeholders (teachers, parents etc.)?



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10:15 AM – 11:00 AM ADD BOS Presentation

Following are the responses given by the ADD BOS presenters to the two requested items above.

Gloria Yepa explained the BOS has ten team members, works with four ERCs, and has seven residential dormitories. Students complete progress monitoring to meet IEP goals. Progress reports are shared with parents and reviewed during IEP meetings. Each school's special education program is reviewed by school improvement specialists. Site visits allow school teams to interact with their school improvement team.

Gloria Yepa shared the number of schools that received determinations in the past two school years and progress of those schools between the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years. Data from schools is often not shared on time. Only one school met all their indicator goals in 2022-23. In 2023-24, six schools met all their indicator goals. She explained most of the reported data is lag data (i.e., data from the 2025-26 school year will be used to make determinations in 2027). Each school received recommendations from their staff to help improve meeting their indicator targets. Gloria reviewed three recommendation examples from three different schools.

Gloria Yepa explained special education specialists on their staff work in eight major areas:

1. Ensuring compliance.
2. Maintaining the region's services.
3. Managing special education programs/services.
4. Developing related goals and recommending policies.
5. Working with ERC staff in evaluating programs/services.
6. Acting as liaisons between other district/regional staff.
7. Serving as a resource of information on programs/services.
8. Ensuring procedures are appropriate for state policies and federal regulations.

Gloria Yepa highlighted the following activities as successful outcomes from their team:

- Developed and introduced a digital tracker to monitor missed services policy.
- Provided technical assistance and presentations throughout the summer to schools on the top five areas of compliance.
- Helped schools develop scopes of work for special education contracts.
- Ensured IDEA allowable costs through school financial reviews.



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- Assisted with DPA data collections (school performance plans, Indicator 8 parent surveys, evaluation timelines, Child Count, and post-school outcomes).
- Monitored special education programs and provided recommendations based on school determinations.

Gloria Yepa shared how their team has worked with other BIE entities:

- Helped ERCs with ISEP reviews and provided guidance.
- Started a Section 504 process for dormitory programs.
- Helped two schools with state complaints.
- Helped develop related services.
- Worked with members of a BOS wellness committee.
- Helped ERCs and schools with compensatory services.

Gloria Yepa explained they work with their schools on IEPs including goals, placements, transfer students, low-incidence disabilities, students who need 24-7 kinds of services, and technical assistance for positive behavior supports, discipline, and Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs) and Behavior Improvement Plans (BIPs). They help with parent engagement during the IEP process. They also provide school presentations on Child Find, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), IEPs, and de-escalation/conflict resolution.

Gloria Yepa described staffing shortages as a big challenge due to the increased number of students qualifying for special education services and the decline in certified teachers. She outlined the benefits of residential programs including increased school attendance, reduced commute time/costs, and coordination of services including mental health services.

Gloria Yepa outlined the following recommendations:

- Establishing secondary transition specialists at each high school.
- Promoting general education collaborations for self determination.
- Connecting with postsecondary education programs.

Gloria Yepa noted the achievement gap between general and special education students continues to widen. She recommended focusing on core instruction, engaged classroom teachers, being flexible with IEP services, and increasing parent engagement.



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Comment: Delilah Anselmo (chat) – Tohono O'odham Nation Bureau of Indian Education Schools (four schools) has only two SPED teachers now before last month it was only one that served 66 students. Mrs. Platero, "every week," jumps from school to school, with limited time for each child to receive services. She is very good with parent engagement. This is an issue of our items of concern at every meeting because of the hiring freeze. We should be exempted of this because of this highly important issue. Thank you.

11:10 AM – 11:55 AM Navajo Presentation

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

Teresa Ramon-Wilson explained the Navajo reservation has 57 schools across three states along with five ERCs and six residential schools. They use a team approach for supporting their schools. They have seven program specialist positions who support schools.

Teresa Ramon-Wilson also spoke about the shortage of qualified special education staff. TCS are fully staffed and have related services due to their shorter turnaround time for job announcements made through state procedures.

Teresa Ramon-Wilson pointed out their graduation rate has increased to 79%, and they got 100% approval on their Part B indicators in 2025. She reviewed the overall state of IEP compliances in their schools. She then outlined the following professional development recommendations:

- Inclusion and a universal design for learning.
- Native American Student Information System (NASIS).
- Behavior intervention strategies.

Teresa Ramon-Wilson stated they measure student progress through classroom visits, assessments, and accreditation surveys. Their progress reports connect to each student's IEP. Their academic curriculum goes through district assessments as well as each school's level of determination. They also have dialogues at parent teacher conferences and use communities of practice to share student data. She shared their progress report template and the report they utilize from NASIS. They also use the BIE performance report to see where supports are needed across all schools. Their success relies on accurate reporting in Infinite Campus and NASIS. She explained how they use Infinite Campus to record behavior management.



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Chairperson Shawanokasic asked if there were any questions for these presenters before the Board was released for lunch.

Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Asked if the schools had been affected by any of the actions of the federal government’s executive branch.

Response: Teresa Ramon-Wilson – Replied they have been affected by the federal hiring freeze and their ability to offer positions to qualified candidates. They also had some contracts they had awarded to consultants that were halted or canceled.

Response: Gloria Yepa – Noted they have faced the same issues Teresa Ramon-Wilson mentioned. This has kept some students from receiving the services required in their IEPs. They have filled some positions by contracting work for teachers, and it has been difficult.

Comment: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – Suggested completing Child Find activities multiple times throughout the year to ensure all eligible children are receiving services.

Comment: Delilah Anselmo – We’re working hard to get teachers. We hired five teachers for our high school. Within half a month of approving these teachers to work with us, the rug was pulled out from under us. What are we doing if we can’t get the teachers to help our kids? Those five approved candidates moved on to other opportunities. We don’t know the right strategy to fill those teaching positions. This was my concern at the last Board meeting;. She works at a BOS.

Chairperson Shawanokasic excused the Board for lunch.

12:05 PM – 1:00 PM Lunch

1:00 PM – 1:45 PM ADD TCS Presentation

Following are the responses given by the ADD TCS presenter to both of the requested items.

Erin Trottier stated they work with their tribes, schools, and leaders to strive for success for their students. They are hoping they can start filling job positions soon when the hiring freeze ends. Each TCS has its own unique challenges and priorities. All 96 TCS have the autonomy to choose what they do in their schools.

Erin Trottier explained they formally monitor progress through state assessments, benchmark assessments, and progress monitoring software. Some schools use teacher-created benchmarks and local assessments. They hope to start providing professional development on organizing



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and interpreting student data. Many TCS are starting to create their own tribally-based standards while also maintaining the established state standards. They informally monitor progress through student work/portfolios, teacher-created assessments, observations, checklists, and anecdotal notes. They've been focusing on fidelity for data collection.

Erin Trottier noted many schools lack a special education coordinator or director which makes data gathering less streamlined. Some schools conduct grade level meetings to collect data. Most schools do weekly monitoring with quarterly/semester reporting. Most schools submit progress reports quarterly. Some schools don't track data at all, so they don't know where their students are or how their students are progressing. Many teachers and staff don't know how to collect data at all. Data collection is considered a compliance step for schools and is not used as a meaningful tool. She checks on how schools' monitoring practices change from one year to the next.

Erin Trottier stated she encourages schools to celebrate student progress. When a student meets an IEP goal, some schools write new goals immediately for the student, but other schools wait until the next scheduled IEP meeting to adjust the student's goals. A frequent challenge is the amount of time needed to track each goal. IEP teams need to grow with the student and develop as time passes. Some staff still handwrite their logs tracking student progress. For missed services, some schools have clearly written notes while others don't track missed services for students at all.

Erin Trottier explained families receive IEP progress reports with their student's report cards, during parent teacher conferences, and during IEP meetings. Some schools translate IEP progress reports into their student's home language and have translators present for IEP meetings. Some schools have identified making reports understandable for families and parents as a challenge.

Erin Trottier noted the main challenges for ADD TCS are staffing shortages (78% of their staff and service providers are contractors) and being consistent in implementing policies. They have been trying to help schools be more self-sufficient.

Erin Trottier stated the following recommendations:

- Expanding recruitment and retention supports.
- Standardizing missed services policies.



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Comment: Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson – Noted staff shortages have been a priority for the Board for the past 15 years.

Question: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Asked for clarification on the ISEP services, funding, and compliance.

Response: Erin Trottier – Stated if a school is noncompliant with ISEP services, the school still receives their funding.

1:45 PM – 2:00 PM

Break

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Advisory Board Work Session

The Board resolved to finalize the FFY 2025 Annual Report and finalize the next Board meeting logistics, agenda, and identified presenters with questions. Public comments were accepted any time during this work session.

Chairperson Shawanokasic requested the Board finalize the logistics for the January 2026 Board meeting before they worked on the Annual Report. He noted the next meeting will be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico on January 15-16, 2026 and would include an orientation for Board members.

Question: Jennifer Davis, DFO – Asked Board members to clarify if they were available for the January meeting dates.

The Board determined they could meet on January 15-16, 2026.

The Board reviewed proposed agenda items for the January meeting.

Comment: Dr. Eugene Thompson, Supervisory Educational Specialist – Requested that reviewing and providing input on the APR be included on the January agenda.

Comment: Dr. Janet Slowman, Board Member – Requested an agenda item addressing early childhood special education services.

Question: Leon Reval, Secretary – Asked about meeting with a New Mexico legislative delegation.

Response: Jennifer Davis, DFO – Noted she has not received a response from her request for the Board to meet with a legislative member.

Comment: Leon Reval, Secretary – Stated hearing from the legislative delegation should be considered for the April 2026 meeting.



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The Board considered topics they could ask a legislative delegation member including New Mexico's free childcare program, voucher programs, language immersion, and budgetary concerns.

For the January 2026 meeting, the Board decided to request presentations on the APR and DPA updates, early childhood services, and health and human services and Headstart updates.

The Board continued working on their annual report.

Comment: Brian Wagner, Board Member – Requested a recommendation about supporting the H1 visa process.

The Board agreed to individually review the Annual Report and provided edits by the end of the following week to finalize it by their deadline.

4:00 PM

Adjourn

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

Brian Wagner, 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 Insert Date.