

Improving Indian Education



I am a passionate advocate of this important law [No Child Left Behind Act], because I know it can save children's lives and I know it can help us meet a national objective, and that is every child getting a good education in every school throughout the country.

President George W. Bush, October 18, 2006

On January 8, 2007, President Bush marked the fifth anniversary of the No Child Left Behind Act by meeting with members of Congress to discuss reauthorization. The President underscored the need to achieve the goals established by NCLB by 2014, including:

- Every student must read and do math at grade level or above.
- Accountability for every student using annual assessments.
- Establishment of standards and tests.

As States across the Nation begin to make strides in improving student achievement under NCLB, the Bureau of Indian Education schools need to make similar gains for Indian children.

The Department of the Interior's 2008 budget request seeks an increase of \$15.0 million that will allow BIE to complete a set of comprehensive reforms of the educational programs and improve student achievement by 2014.

The 184 school Bureau of Indian Education system is one of only two elementary and secondary school systems operated by the Federal government. It should be a model for achievement in meeting the goals established by the No Child Left Behind Act. However, only 30 percent of the schools in the BIE system are meeting adequate yearly progress, or AYP goals, under the No Child Left Behind Act for student performance, teacher qualifications, attendance, and graduation rates.

WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED

The BIE system schools, located on 63 reservations in 23 States, educate approximately 46,000 students. This Administration has made significant improvements in BIE schools. The condition of school facilities is dramatically better than five years ago, and a program improvement and accountability plan has been developed and is being implemented.

The President's commitment to improve the condition of Indian school facilities has dramatically changed the environment in which Indian students learn. For example, in 2001, the facilities at two-thirds of BIE schools were in poor condition. During this Administration, funding has replaced 32 schools and supported major repair and improvement projects at 39 other schools. With completion of the work funded through 2008, 69 percent of schools will be in good or fair condition.

To provide a strategic guide for improving education services and outcomes, BIE worked with Tribes and



...forty-six thousand Indian children. I want to make sure we do all we can so those children can dream big dreams and that we help them with their education so that they accomplish those dreams.

Dirk Kempthorne, Secretary of the Interior, May 31, 2006

tribal school boards during 2005 to develop a Program Improvement and Accountability Plan. The PIAP identifies six key objectives for achieving NCLB goals:

- Achieve adequate yearly progress at all BIE-funded schools.
- Ensure safe and secure schools.
- Provide free appropriate public education for all eligible students.
- Improve administrative, organizational, and management capability.
- Improve program and financial accountability.
- Improve communication.



The PIAP lays out the tasks that must be accomplished to support each objective area. For example, the PIAP requires the design and implementation of scientifically researched plans to improve student performance; implementation of a continuous improvement monitoring process; incorporation of technology as a tool in the every day life of a school; and employ highly qualified and well trained teachers, principals, and para-professionals.

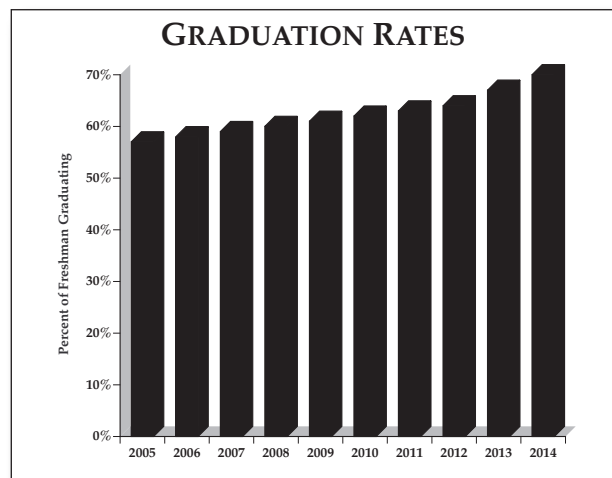
To address management and leadership objectives in the plan, BIE realigned the education line offices that supervise schools and is in the process of staffing its central office and the line offices with strong executive leadership and highly qualified managers and education specialists.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO

Building on the improvements already underway, the 2008 President's budget seeks:

- A \$5.3 million fund for education program enhancements targeted to lower performing BIE schools to improve student performance on standardized tests for math, reading, and language arts.
- An increase of \$3.6 million to add educational specialists in the BIE revamped education line offices and the central office to provide better oversight and guidance to BIE funded schools in meeting NCLB goals.
- An additional \$4.3 million for school transportation to address deferred maintenance needs and higher fuel costs.
- An increase of \$1.9 million to maintain a school and student statistics information system currently being established with start up funding from the Department of Education.

Funding these activities will produce tangible results in improved graduation rates and higher performing BIE schools.



PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS

One-third of students in BIE funded schools have demonstrated proficiency in mathematics and one-half are proficient in reading and language arts. Improving these results is key to meeting AYP goals and ensuring the success of the BIE's nearly 46,000 students in later life.

For 2008, the Department proposes a program enhancement fund of \$5.3 million. This fund would be separate from the formula funding that all BIE schools receive and would be targeted to schools that have not achieved AYP because of student performance on standardized tests for math, reading, and language arts. The fund would provide program enhancements and specialized tools to improve student achievement, such as education specialists to help with curriculum, tutoring, or other needs identified in a school based analysis of student achievement.

During 2005 and 2006, BIE contracted with Technology and Management Services, Inc. from Washington, D.C. to conduct a study of eight high-performing schools and eight low-performing schools. The study identified barriers to making AYP and provided targeted improvement strategies, and "pockets of success" guidance for schools to utilize to support their school improvement strategies. In 2007, the study will be expanded to include eight Bureau-operated schools in North Dakota and South Dakota, and those grant schools that agree to participate. This effort will lay the ground work for implementing program enhancements at targeted schools in 2008.



EDUCATION PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Until this year, a single Senior Executive Service Director responsible for supervising 23 line officers

spread across the country managed the BIE school system. The line officers were, for the most part, mid-level civil servants. Their workload varied from supervising a few schools to as many as 17. The Director and line officers were supported by only a handful of educational specialists with the training and expertise to guide and assist schools in meeting NCLB goals.

The BIE reorganization is putting in place a skilled national team, including education, financial, and administrative managers. Line officer positions have been upgraded to attract skilled education professionals; the workload across offices is more balanced; and line office staffing has been standardized and includes specialists in education program delivery, special education, residential programs, as well as other disciplines.

An increase of \$3.6 million will complete the BIE restructuring in 2008, providing full staffing for the new organization.

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION



The rural school service populations served by BIE schools are often widely dispersed. During the current school year, about 550 BIE-funded school buses will travel nearly 16 million miles, often over gravel or dirt roads.

The cost of transportation at BIE schools is high because of a number of factors. The condition of roads increases the wear and tear on vehicles, requiring more routine maintenance and more frequent replacement of vehicles by BIE compared to other school systems. The remote location of the schools also results in higher fuel costs relative to other locales.

In school year 2006-2007, BIE distributed an average of \$2.59 per mile for student transportation. The 2008 increase of \$4.3 million will fund transportation needs at \$2.87 per mile. In addition to providing resources to meet operating costs, the increase funds maintenance that improves the safety and reliability of the BIE funded bus fleet.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The BIE is currently implementing a Native American Student Information System that will better track and manage information on students and facilitate

reporting required by the No Child Left Behind Act. The system is designed to eliminate most of the manual data entry currently required of school administrators and teachers and will enable line offices and the BIE central office to better monitor school progress and analyze trends.

The Department of Education provided funding to implement NASIS during 2006 and 2007. Costs associated with the maintenance of the system will become the responsibility of BIE in 2008. An increase of \$1.9 million will enable BIE to cover these costs.