



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

Recommendation Letter

September 25, 2025

IN REPLY REFER TO:

The Honorable Doug Burgum

Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum:

This letter will outline the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Advisory Board for Exceptional Children concerns and recommendations as required by [34 CFR § 300.714](#) regarding the provision of special education and related services to students within BIE funded schools. Outlined in this report are our current priorities and related recommendations for 2025. The Board welcomes the opportunity to meet and discuss with you to address these priorities.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has determined that the BIE “needs intervention” to be compliant with regulations for implementing the requirements of Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Board has collaborated with stakeholders to include representatives of Tribally Controlled schools, Navajo region schools, Bureau Operated Schools, Early childhood and secondary transition providers, BIE behavioral health and wellness program providers, providers for students who are blind and visually impaired, the Division of Performance and Accountability (DPA) and the BIE central office, BIE Staff and comments from the public to develop our recommendations for the 2025 Annual Report.

The Advisory Board acknowledges the honor and responsibility of our respective roles and takes seriously the opportunity to advocate for students with disabilities. These priorities fulfill the role of the advisory board and cultivate a lasting impact on tribal children’s education, well-being, and cultural preservation for generations to come.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

Please inform the Designated Federal Officer, Jennifer Davis (Jennifer.davis@bie.edu) on behalf of the Advisory Board, if specific content in this letter needs further clarification.

Maec-waewaenen (Thank you),

Norman Shawanokasic, Chairperson

Elizabeth S. Younce, Ed.D., Vice-Chairperson

Leon K. Reval, Secretary

Janet Slowman, Ed.D., Board Member

Monica Cleveland, Board Member

Rachel Harrison, Board Member

Wendy Kroupa, Board Member

Melanie C. Star, Board Member

Brian Wagner, Board Member

cc: Doug Burgum, Secretary of the Interior
Linda E. McMahon, Secretary of Education
William Kirkland, Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs
Tony Dearman, Director, Bureau of Indian Education



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

BIE Advisory Board Priorities 2025

I. TIMELY, EFFECTIVE DATA COLLECTION AND SHARING, WITH CLEAR AND TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION OF PURPOSE.

JUSTIFICATION: Accurate, timely, and transparent data is the foundation for ensuring equitable services and improved outcomes for students across all BIE-funded schools. Currently, many schools and agencies face challenges with fragmented systems, inconsistent reporting, and limited feedback loops. These challenges make it harder to identify needs, allocate resources effectively, and avoid duplication of services. To address these barriers, the Board recommends a coordinated approach that strengthens the collection, sharing, and use of data across all levels of the system.

Specifically, the Board recommends the following:

- A. Create secure systems for sharing data across agencies to track developmental progress, avoid duplication of services, and make data tracking easier.
- B. Conduct a BIE wide needs assessment that will define and identify the needs of all BIE funded schools in a manner that is transparent to school boards and school administration.

II. QUALITY STAFF RECRUITMENT & RETENTION.

JUSTIFICATION: The success of BIE-funded schools depends on the ability to attract and retain highly qualified educators, related service providers and support staff, especially in the field of special education where shortages are most prevalent. Many schools face persistent challenges due to geographic isolation, limited housing, and competitive disparities in salaries and benefits compared to surrounding districts. These barriers directly impact student access to consistent, high-quality instruction and services.

Specifically, the Board recommends the following:



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

- A. Advocate for the creation of partnerships with tribal and state higher education institutions to recruit potential special educators, paraprofessionals and related service providers including the development of grow your own programs.
- B. Provide financial incentives with schools that struggle with staffing shortages, housing vouchers, etc. and provide scholarships, bonuses, salaries to those who work in/or are pursuing degrees in special education.
- C. Conduct a needs assessment, including review and updating existing documents to endorse and support the option to use virtual service providers. Add language about virtual services to the updated IEP manual.
- D. Create a pool/list of qualified service providers and contractors for schools to use for provision of services and technical assistance for corrective action plans, root cause analysis, etc.
- E. Require formalized agreements between health, education, and human service agencies both in and outside the BIE system to ensure a coordinated service delivery model.

III. UPDATING POLICIES AND GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS SO THEY ARE TIMELY AND EFFECTIVE AND DISSEMINATED TO ALL RELEVANT PARTIES.

JUSTIFICATION: Clear, responsive, and up-to-date policies are essential for ensuring that BIE-funded schools can effectively meet the needs of students and families. When policies are outdated, overly complex, or inconsistently implemented, they create barriers that slow services, increase administrative burden, and limit access to support. To better serve students with disabilities and their families, BIE must prioritize policies that are practical, streamlined, and reflective of current best practices.

Specifically, the Board recommends the following:



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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

- A. Reduce the amount of paperwork associated with receiving funds to support our students.
- B. Make Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individualized Education Program (IEP) processes easier for families to understand and participate in.
- C. How will BIE keep IDEA policy and procedure current once it's approved?
- D. Realistic target setting for SPP/APR (e.g. reducing HS SWD R/LA Participation target to 95% instead of 100%).
- E. Create a pool/list of technical assistance providers who can provide guidance documents and policy information
- F. Clarify all guidance with its application to bureau operated vs. tribally controlled schools, and what is required for whom.

IV. CULTIVATING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICES.

JUSTIFICATION: When working with Tribally diverse families, culturally responsive practices are essential to ensuring that students feel valued, supported, and understood within their educational environment. Honoring Native languages, traditions, and cultural practices not only affirms student identity but also strengthens engagement, resilience, and long-term success. Recognizing the intersectionality of tribal, racial, religious, disability and economic cultures is essential for building relationships with students and families. At the same time, educators must be equipped with the skills and knowledge to respond to diverse needs through evidence-based strategies, trauma-informed approaches, and collaboration with mental health services. Consider the culture of poverty and cultures beyond tribal identity*

- A. Invest training and support for acquisition of traditional language/culture traditional practices.
- B. Offer ongoing training in evidence-based practices, trauma-informed care, and cultural competence for early interventionists and educators.
- C. Increase access to behavior & mental health services by providers knowledgeable in cultural practices.



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

Advisory Board Introduction and Background

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, P.L. 108-446) guarantees free and appropriate public education to all children with disabilities in the United States. To guide states and other agencies that deliver special education and related services to children with disabilities, IDEA requires states to establish advisory boards that represent stakeholders, such as educational and program administrators, teachers, individuals with disabilities, and parents of children with disabilities. These advisory boards offer input on priorities and unmet needs within special education.

The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), an agency within the Department of the Interior, oversees education for American Indian and Alaska Native students. Just as states must establish advisory boards to offer guidance on special education needs, the BIE is required to establish an advisory board for the same purpose. The BIE Advisory Board for Exceptional Children (Advisory Board), authorized by Part B, Section 611(h)(6) of the IDEA Reauthorization of 2004 (the Act, 200 U.S.C. 1400), represents the special education needs of all students with disabilities served by the BIE education system.

Currently, the BIE oversees a total of 183 elementary, secondary, residential, and peripheral dormitories across 23 states. There are 130 schools that are tribally controlled under P.L. 93-638 Indian Self Determination Contracts or P.L. 100-297 Tribally Controlled Grant Schools Act. The remaining 53 schools are directly administered by the BIE. Currently, the BIE education system serves approximately 49,000 elementary and secondary students; of these students, approximately 6,125 have disabilities as reported by the BIE to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) for school year 2024-2025.

BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

The Advisory Board's duties, which are solely advisory, are to:

- assist in the coordination of services within the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the BIE with other local, state, and federal agencies in the provision of education for infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities;
- advise and assist the Secretary in the performance of the Secretary's responsibilities as described in Section 611(h)(6) of the Act;



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

- develop and recommend policies concerning effective inter- and intra-agency collaboration, including modifications to regulations and the elimination of barriers to inter- and intra-agency programs and activities;
- provide assistance and disseminate information on best practices, effective program coordination strategies, and recommendations for improved early intervention services or educational programming for Indian infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities; and
- provide assistance in the preparation of information required to be submitted under Section 611(h)(6) of the Act.

Annual Reporting

The Advisory Board is required by federal regulation (34 C.F.R.: 300.715) to submit an annual report describing its activities during the preceding year. The annual report identifies specific areas of need that the Advisory Board selected as priorities. The report advises BIE staff, the Secretary of the Interior, and Congress regarding programs, regulations, and policy development that will support and improve the education of American Indian and Alaska Native students with disabilities. This report is submitted in fulfillment of the annual reporting requirements.

BOARD MEMBERSHIP AND STAKEHOLDER GROUP REPRESENTATION

The Advisory Board currently has 14 out of 15 members. The Secretary of the Interior selects and appoints members who represent a wide range of stakeholders involved in or concerned with the education and provision of services to American Indian and Alaska Native children with disabilities. Stakeholder groups include:

- Native American persons with disabilities,
- Native American parents or guardians of children with disabilities,
- Teachers of children with disabilities,
- Service providers to children with disabilities,
- State and local education officials,
- Representatives of tribes or tribal organizations,



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

- Representatives from state interagency coordinating councils in states that contain reservations,
- Members representing entities of BIE or BIA.

Advisory Board members are appointed to terms of either 2 or 3 years, so that half of the membership terms expire after 2-years and the terms of the remaining members expire after 3-years. The Secretary of the Interior selects the Advisory Board chairperson. (Appendix 1: Advisory Board Members lists all members of the 2023 Advisory Board and indicates which stakeholder category each member represents).

FACA REGULATIONS

As an Advisory Board to a federal agency, the Advisory Board falls under the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA; 5 U.S.C., Appendix 2). FACA aims to ensure that the advice of federal advisory committees is objective and available to the public, and that the committees comply with cost control and recordkeeping requirements. The Advisory Board must comply with FACA regulations by:

- Making Advisory Board meetings open to the public,
- Publishing advance notice of upcoming meetings in the Federal Register,
- Recognizing a Designated Federal Officer (DFO) assigned by the BIE to support the Advisory Board,
- Ensuring that members avoid conflicts of interest, and
- Limiting membership terms.

The current Designated Federal Officer (DFO), Jennifer Davis has assisted the Advisory Board in maintaining compliance with these requirements.

Advisory Board Meetings

The Advisory Board met four times this year to complete its work for FY 2024-2025 (October 1, 2024 through September 30, 2025). There were no travel restrictions, which provided availability for a hybrid meeting for all four board meetings, allowing individuals to attend either in-person or online. The following is a summary about each Advisory Board meeting:



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

January 16-17, 2025 (Advisory Board meeting: Albuquerque, NM)

The BIE Advisory Board for Exceptional Children convened its first meeting of the 2024–2025 term on January 16–17, 2025, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The meeting focused on early childhood transition, secondary transition, behavioral challenges, student behavioral health and wellness, and Board priorities, with updates from BIE programs, school leaders, and subject matter experts.

The Board received updates on **IDEA Part C Early Childhood Transition** services from BIE and Cherokee Central Schools. Presenters highlighted BIE’s role in obligating funds to tribes and compiling Child Count data, while noting challenges related to funding delays, staff turnover, and communication. Emphasis was placed on early identification—particularly for speech and autism—and the value of the Family and Child Education (FACE) program. Cherokee Central Schools shared data on children served and outlined referral, evaluation, and IFSP processes, noting post-COVID challenges with family engagement, transition timelines, and childcare availability. Board members raised questions regarding funding formulas, data accuracy, reporting clarity, cultural and language integration, outreach to military families, and rural access barriers, while commending FACE and local program efforts.

A **secondary transition panel** from Little Wound School highlighted comprehensive support for students with disabilities, including career exploration, job training, postsecondary planning, independent living skills, and strong partnerships with tribal vocational rehabilitation and community agencies. Presenters shared student success stories and discussed family support with guardianship and conservatorship processes. Board members praised the holistic, culturally grounded approach and the strong relationships between staff, students, and families.

During a **behavioral challenges panel**, schools from Cherokee Central, Little Wound, and Turtle Mountain Community High School discussed rising behavioral concerns following COVID-19 and shared effective strategies such as restorative practices, trauma-informed approaches, data-driven interventions, family communication, and daily student check-ins. Ongoing challenges included staffing shortages, service reductions, absenteeism, data accuracy, and recruitment and retention. Board members emphasized the importance of general education teacher engagement, aide support, staff retention, equitable pay and certification, and integration of tribal language and culture.



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

The Board also received an update on the **BIE Behavioral Health and Wellness Program** which provides culturally responsive, trauma-informed behavioral health services to all BIE schools at no cost. Services include a 24/7 call line, virtual counseling, crisis response, training, and technical assistance. Board members commended the program's impact while identifying challenges related to sustainable funding, workforce shortages, coordination with Indian Health Service (IHS), and role clarity. Recommendations included securing permanent funding, strengthening BIE-IHS coordination, expanding autism and tribal law training, and ensuring equitable access across schools.

During the **Advisory Board Work Session**, members reviewed Board priorities, upcoming term expirations, meeting schedules, vacancies, and preparations for electing a new vice chair. Discussions addressed school nursing services through IHS, distribution of the Annual Report, policy revisions, state-specific procedural challenges, and the need for increased federal participation at meetings. Planning concluded with priority development and preparation for the April in-person meeting.

The meeting included opportunities for **public comment** throughout, allowing stakeholders to share input and recommendations to strengthen special education and related services for students with disabilities served by BIE-funded schools.

APRIL 24-25, 2025 (Advisory Board meeting: Albuquerque, NM)

The BIE Advisory Board for Exceptional Children convened its second meeting and focused on federal and BIE administrative updates, IDEA implementation and accountability, post-secondary transition supports, services for students with low-incidence disabilities, and Board planning priorities.

The Board received a **BIE Central Office Administrative Change Forecast** from Director Tony Dearman. He provided updates on Department of the Interior and federal developments affecting BIE schools, noting that recent workforce reductions did not impact tribally controlled schools, probationary employees were reinstated, and no efficiency changes will occur without tribal consultation. Director Dearman discussed ongoing challenges related to a hiring freeze, stricter contract approvals, budget uncertainty under a continuing resolution, and post-COVID enrollment declines. He addressed questions regarding staffing shortages, visa barriers, and educator quality, highlighting recruitment and professional development efforts and reaffirming the importance of Board input in informing engagement with federal leadership.



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

Dr. Eugene Thompson of the **Division of Performance and Accountability (DPA)/BIE Special Education Program** provided updates on IDEA oversight activities and the FFY 2023 State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR). He highlighted strengthened collaboration with State Education Agencies, upcoming 2025 summer trainings, fiscal and programmatic monitoring, and special education policy updates, including surrogate parent procedures. Assessment and transition data were reviewed, showing progress in transition compliance over time but continued challenges meeting participation and proficiency targets. Board members raised questions about data accuracy, alternate assessments, accommodation, and staffing shortages, with public comments emphasizing training access and registration logistics.

The Board received an overview from **Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI)** on programs and supports for Native students with disabilities. Presenters highlighted academic offerings, accessibility services, transition supports, and scholarship and incentive programs designed to encourage Native graduates to return to serve in BIE-funded schools. Board members discussed transition pathways for students with significant disabilities, workforce shortages, and “grow-your-own” initiatives, while commending SIPI’s role in supporting student success.

The Board heard an **overview of blindness and visual impairment** from Dr. Garrison Tsinajinie of the University of Arizona. The presentation emphasized national data trends, available resources, and the importance of the expanded core curriculum for students with visual impairments. Discussion focused on professional development needs, teacher recruitment, transition outcomes, and the importance of investing in low-incidence disability services, even when student numbers are small.

During the **Advisory Board Work Session**, members finalized planning for the June 12–13, 2025, meeting, refined the speaker request process, and identified priority topics for future agendas. Key concerns included staffing shortages, hiring freezes, loss of COVID-related funding, and potential policy changes affecting school choice. The Board emphasized dedicating more time to Board business, improving agenda clarity, and maintaining consistent updates on IDEA accountability and DPA activities. The session concluded with plans to finalize the June agenda and continue focused advocacy on behalf of students with disabilities served by BIE-funded schools.



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

June 26-27, 2025 (Advisory Board meeting: Albuquerque, NM)

The June 2025 Advisory Board meeting was canceled due to extenuating circumstances. All agenda items originally scheduled for the June meeting were deferred and will be addressed during the September 25–26, 2025 Advisory Board meeting.

SEPTEMBER 25-26, 2025 (Advisory Board meeting: Washington, DC)

The Advisory Board meeting opened with a **Meet & Greet session** designed to strengthen collaboration among the BIE Advisory Board for Exceptional Children, the Assistant Secretary–Indian Affairs, BIE Central Office leadership, and the Division of Performance and Accountability (DPA). Chairperson Norman Shawanokasic introduced the session, emphasizing relationship-building and shared understanding of the Board’s mission, priorities, and statutory role in advising on the education of Native students with disabilities.

During the opening presentation, Board leadership summarized the **purpose, roles, and responsibilities** of the Advisory Board, including its advisory authority, development of Annual Reports, and focus on improving IDEA implementation in BIE-funded schools. Board members reviewed highlights from the **FFY 2023 and FFY 2024 Annual Reports**, including reported priorities and recommendations related to social-emotional learning, staff recruitment and retention, and secondary transition. Discussion underscored recurring challenges and the need for stronger agency responses to Board recommendations.

Board members raised concerns about emerging federal policy impacts, including potential **H-1 visa restrictions**, which could significantly affect staffing in BIE schools, and changes to Pell Grant eligibility requirements, which may disproportionately affect students with disabilities. Additional comments addressed deferred maintenance reimbursement changes, the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on students and families, and the importance of continued federal engagement with tribal education leaders.

In the **BIE Central Office update**, Director Tony Dearman and senior staff responded to Board questions regarding recent developments since the April 2025 meeting. Topics included Executive Order 14191, funding constraints under continuing resolutions, Child Count increases without corresponding funding growth, staffing shortages, background check delays, and the reliance on H-1 visa educators. Leadership reaffirmed the importance of Board input,



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

highlighted progress on BIE’s strategic direction, and discussed efforts to maintain operational stability despite fiscal and workforce challenges.

The **DPA/BIE Special Education Program session** focused on IDEA accountability and system improvement. Updates were provided on the FFY 2023 State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR), including assessment participation targets and the feasibility of revising the high school participation target from 100 percent to align with the federal minimum of 95 percent. Board members provided stakeholder input, raising issues related to small school populations, parental decision-making, data interpretation, and the impact of assessment reporting on schools.

DPA also provided updates on the **BIE Special Education Policy and Procedures Handbook**, outlining its upcoming rollout, training and technical assistance supports, and phased implementation and monitoring. The Board received a summary of the **2025 Online Summer Training**, noting strong participation and broad coverage of IDEA compliance, discipline, data quality, and allowable use of Part B funds. Monitoring activities and corrective action planning were also reviewed.

A **school-based panel presentation** highlighted effective practices in collaboration between general and special education staff, data-driven decision-making, educator recruitment and retention, and professional development. The discussion emphasized trust-building, differentiated data collection, stakeholder communication, and the need for additional support for paraprofessionals, parents, and students with disabilities.

The Board also received a presentation from the **National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI)**, a U.S. Department of Education-funded Part D technical assistance center. NCSI outlined its role in supporting BIE’s IDEA supervision system, improving alignment across initiatives, and addressing long-standing “Needs Intervention” determinations. Recommendations focused on strengthening secondary transition, improving data use, enhancing collaboration, and refining accountability measures to better reflect the unique structure of the BIE system.

The meeting concluded with a **Board Work Session**, during which members began drafting and refining the Annual Report. The Board reviewed and approved the accompanying letter and signature page, discussed combining overlapping priorities, and reaffirmed the continued importance of staff recruitment and retention. Members emphasized partnerships with tribal



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

and state higher education institutions as a key strategy for building a sustainable special education workforce.

The Chairperson thanked participants and recessed the meeting.

On September 26, 2026, Day 2 the **work session focused on completing the FFY 2025 Annual Report**. The Chairperson reviewed progress from the previous day and guided discussion on remaining policy recommendations. The Board considered whether to recommend development of additional BIE guidance documents and agreed instead to encourage the use of existing guidance while recommending completion of a needs assessment. Discussion emphasized cultural responsiveness in the IEP process, effective communication across large and geographically dispersed tribal nations, and the importance of collaborative approaches when schools are under corrective action plans.

Following the work session, the Board received updates from **Associate Deputy Director (ADD) Regional Special Education Programs**, representing Bureau Operated Schools (BOS), Navajo (BOS and TCS), and Tribally Controlled Schools (TCS). Presenters described how student progress is measured and reported using IEP-aligned progress monitoring, assessments, site visits, and data systems, and how results are shared with families and stakeholders through reports, IEP meetings, conferences, and community engagement.

The **BOS presentation** highlighted improvements in compliance outcomes, increased numbers of schools meeting indicator targets, and successful technical assistance efforts, while noting continued challenges with staffing shortages, delayed data reporting, and widening achievement gaps between general and special education students. Recommendations focused on strengthening secondary transition, increasing collaboration with general education, and expanding postsecondary connections. The **Navajo presentation** reported gains in graduation rates and Part B compliance, effective use of data systems, and targeted professional development needs, while identifying federal hiring freezes and contract disruptions as barriers to service delivery. The **TCS presentation** emphasized local autonomy, varied data practices, challenges in data collection capacity, and staffing shortages driven by reliance on contracted providers. Recommendations included expanding recruitment, and retention supports and standardizing missed services policies.

Throughout these discussions, Board members and public commenters underscored the impact of federal hiring freezes on schools' ability to meet IEP requirements, persistent shortages of



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

qualified special education personnel, and the need for flexible, culturally responsive solutions tailored to tribal communities.

The Board reconvened for a final **work session** to complete the FFY 2025 Annual Report and plan future meetings. The Board confirmed its next meeting will be held **January 15–16, 2026, in Albuquerque, New Mexico**, and identified priority agenda items, including review of the Annual Performance Report (APR), updates from DPA, early childhood special education, and health and human services/Head Start coordination. Members also discussed potential engagement with legislative delegations at a future meeting.

The Board agreed to complete final edits to the Annual Report individually to meet submission deadlines and reaffirmed key priorities, including workforce recruitment and retention and support for H-1 visa processes affecting BIE schools. The meeting concluded with a formal motion and unanimous vote to adjourn.

BIE Advisory Board FY2024-2025 Expenses

1. **Payments to Non-Federal Board members:** Zero cost. The BIE does not pay (i.e. stipend) non-federal board members to attend any advisory board meetings nor pay any non-federal employee to work on tasks for the advisory board).
2. **Payments to Federal Board members:** \$3,406.66. The BIE does not pay stipends to federal board members for attending advisory board meetings, nor does it provide additional compensation to federal employees for performing advisory board–related tasks. Any associated cost reflects the regular salary and benefits of federal employees (board members) for the time spent attending Advisory Board meetings or completing Board-related work. An approximate hourly pay rate was used solely to estimate the salary cost for the federal employee (board member) time required to attend the meeting and prepare reporting materials for Advisory Board members.
3. **Payments to Federal Staff:** \$10,878.36 Costs to federal staff (who are not advisory board members) such as the Designated Federal Officer and other federal employees, required or requested to provide reporting materials to the Advisory Board members. Usually, this will be salary (including benefits) for days a federal employee attends Advisory Board meetings or completed Board work. An approximate hourly pay figure was used to calculate the total hourly pay for federal employees required or were



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

requested to attend this board meeting to provide reporting materials to the Advisory Board members.

4. **Payments to Consultants:** \$298,094.54 The BIE used a contractor (Center for Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education (TAESE), Utah State University) to support meeting planning and set up, board member travel assistance, and preparation of meeting minutes and the annual report. Contractor payments cover management, training, and technical assistance for the Advisory Board. The contractor is not an appointed board member or a federal employee, and costs do not include travel reimbursements.
5. **Travel Reimbursement for Non-Federal Board Members:** \$31,605.36
6. **Travel Reimbursement for Federal Board Members:** \$4,284.00
7. **Travel Reimbursement for Federal Staff:** \$6,084.00 Costs represent payments by the federal government to any Federal employee required to travel to attend board meetings to provide board oversight or materials to the board members.
8. **Travel Reimbursement for Consultants:** \$46,207.81 Costs are for the contractors who traveled to the meetings to set up and prepare for each board meeting.
9. **Other Costs:** \$5,282.88 The BIE used the required Federal Register Notice (FRN) to advertise all meetings. Other costs are for conference room rental costs. One site was conducted on federal property; therefore, conference room costs did not apply.
10. **Federal Staff Support (Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)):** 0.05 FTE. Federal staff provide administrative and programmatic support to the federal advisory board as part of their regular full-time (FTE) duties, with costs limited to existing salary and benefits and no additional compensation.



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 Current 2025-2026 Membership Roster

NORMAN SHAWANOKASIC, CHAIRPERSON | TERM: 7/10/2023 TO 7/10/2026 | STATE: WISCONSIN
REPRESENTING CATEGORY: TRIBAL REPRESENTATIVES OR TRIBAL ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES

LEON K. REVAL, SECRETARY | TERM: 9/14/2023 TO 9/14/2026 | STATE: NEW MEXICO
REPRESENTING CATEGORY: INDIAN PARENTS OR GUARDIANS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

DR. JANET SLOWMAN, BOARD MEMBER | TERM: 9/14/2023 TO 9/14/2026 | STATE: ARIZONA
REPRESENTING CATEGORY: INDIAN PARENTS OR GUARDIANS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

MONICA CLEVELAND, BOARD MEMBER | TERM: 3/15/2023 TO 3/15/2026 | STATE: ARIZONA
REPRESENTING CATEGORY: INDIAN PARENTS OR GUARDIANS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

RACHEL HARRISON, BOARD MEMBER | TERM: 4/18/2023 TO 4/18/2026 | STATE: OKLAHOMA
REPRESENTING CATEGORY: TEACHERS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

WENDY KROUPA, BOARD MEMBER | TERM: 4/18/2023 TO 4/18/2026 | STATE: SOUTH DAKOTA
REPRESENTING CATEGORY: LOCAL EDUCATION OFFICIALS

MELANIE C. STAR, BOARD MEMBER | TERM: 5/20/2024 TO 5/20/2027 | STATE: ARIZONA
REPRESENTING CATEGORY: BIA EMPLOYEES CONCERNED WITH THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

BRIAN WAGNER, BOARD MEMBER | TERM: TERM: 11/4/2022 TO 11/4/2025 | STATE: SOUTH DAKOTA
REPRESENTING CATEGORY: TRIBAL REPRESENTATIVES OR TRIBAL ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES

DR. ELIZABETH YOUNCE, BOARD MEMBER | TERM: 9/14/2023 TO 9/14/2026 | STATE: NORTH CAROLINA
REPRESENTING CATEGORY: LOCAL EDUCATION OFFICIALS