



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

October 8, 2026

Dear Tribal Leader and Indian Education Stakeholder:

The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) is initiating a Tribal Consultation to seek your input and guidance on two proposed policies: the Personal Wireless Devices & Digital Wellness Policy and the K-12 Student Artificial Intelligence (AI) Acceptable Use Policy. BIE is committed to providing a safe, culturally enriching, and academically rigorous environment for all Native students, while recognizing the profound impact new tools and technologies have on education.

Personal Wireless Devices & Digital Wellness Policy

Recognizing that unrestricted access to personal wireless devices during the school day is linked to increased anxiety, cyberbullying, and reduced academic focus, the BIE is proposing a "Disconnected to Reconnect" framework.

- This policy requires student devices to be powered off and stored away during instructional hours, allowing students to engage deeply with their teachers, peers, and heritage without digital distractions.
- The framework includes robust, structured guidelines for residential dormitories to support healthy sleep and leisure.
- Strict exemptions are established for students with medical needs (such as glucose monitors) or Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

The BIE seeks your input on supporting Tribal School Boards in adapting the framework, ensuring practical residential life schedules, balancing accountability through a graduated "Three Strikes" disciplinary model, and protecting Tribal data sovereignty by prohibiting the upload of sacred ceremonies to public social media.

K-12 Student Artificial Intelligence (AI) Acceptable Use Policy

As AI tools rapidly transition into classrooms, the BIE seeks to integrate AI as an instructional tool that fosters critical thinking and career readiness, while maintaining an unwavering commitment to protecting Tribal sovereignty, cultural assets, and student data privacy. Because BIE staff and federal employees are strictly governed by Department of the Interior (DOI) AI policies, this consultation will focus exclusively on the proposed Student AI policy, classroom instruction frameworks, and academic integrity. Key components include:

- **The "Zero PII" Mandate:** Strict prohibitions against entering student Personally Identifiable Information (PII), special education or medical records, or sacred Tribal cultural knowledge into public or third-party AI models.
- **The Human-AI-Human Workflow:** A required educational cycle ensuring students initiate inquiry, critically evaluate AI outputs, and retain final accountability for their work.
- **The 5-Level Scaffolding Matrix:** A standardized pedagogical rubric clearly dictating when and how students are permitted to use AI for specific assignments, ranging from "Level 1: No AI" to "Level 5: AI Produced (Critical Evaluation)".
- **Parental Opt-Outs & COPPA Compliance:** Ensuring strict adherence to the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act for students under 13 and establishing a formal process for parents to opt their children out of generative AI tool usage.

Implementation and School Sovereignty

Both frameworks are proposed as mandatory for Bureau-Operated Schools (BOS). However, recognizing the diverse needs of our communities, they are explicitly designed as model policies for Tribally Controlled Schools (TCS). Tribal School Boards will retain full sovereignty to adopt, adapt, or reject the policies at their discretion to best fit local needs.

BIE will conduct this consultation virtually on November 9, 2026, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern Time. Tribal Leaders and their designees, as well as BIE interested parties, are invited to participate in the virtual consultation and provide oral comments.

If you would like to provide written input, please email your comments to: consultationcomments@bie.edu or via mail: Ms. Juanita Mendoza, 1849 C Street, NW, MS 3609, Washington, DC 20240. Comments will be accepted through December 9, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. EST. If you have questions regarding the Tribal consultation, please contact Ms. Juanita Mendoza at: (202) 208-3559 or via email: juanita.mendoza@bie.edu.

Consultation Period: November 9, 2026, to December 9, 2026.

Virtual Consultation Registration:

Date	Time	Registration Link
November 9, 2026	2 p.m. – 4 p.m. Eastern Time	Meeting Registration

Additional consultation materials, including the proposed policies and supporting documents, are available here: [View additional consultation materials, including the proposed policies and supporting documents.](#)

Consistent with the DOI's Tribal Consultation Policy and BIE-specific Tribal Consultation requirements found at 25 U.S.C. § 2011, BIE is committed to conducting meaningful and timely consultation with Tribal Nations and all interested parties before taking actions that may have Tribal implications. BIE will consider all comments received through the consultation process as it develops and finalizes these policies.

We appreciate your partnership and look forward to hearing from Tribal Leaders, Tribal communities, and all interested parties as we work together to ensure that BIE policies support the success, safety, wellness, and future readiness of Native students while respecting Tribal sovereignty and community priorities.

Sincerely,



Tony L. Dearman
Director