

EXAMINING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S MISMANAGEMENT OF NATIVE AMERICAN SCHOOLS

HEARING

BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND THE WORKFORCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION

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Thursday, May 14, 2015
U.S. House of Representatives,
Committee on Education and the Workforce,
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:30 a.m., in Room 2175, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. John Kline [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Kline, Foxx, Thompson, Walberg, Guthrie, Rokita, Heck, Brat, Carter, Bishop, Grothman, Russell, Curbelo, Stefanik, Allen, Scott, Grijalva, Polis, Bonamici, Pocan, Takano, Jeffries, Adams, and DeSaulnier.

Staff present: Lauren Aronson, Press Secretary; Janelle Belland, Coalitions and Members Services Coordinator; Kathlyn Ehl, Professional Staff Member; Matthew Frame, Legislative Assistant; Amy Raaf Jones, Director of Education and Human Resources Policy; Nancy Locke, Chief Clerk; Daniel Murner, Deputy Press Secretary; Krisann Pearce, General Counsel; Lauren Reddington, Deputy Press Secretary; James Redstone, Professional Staff Member; Mandy Schaumburg, Education Deputy Director and Senior Counsel; Alissa Strawcutter, Deputy Clerk; Leslie Tatum, Professional Staff Member; Brad Thomas, Senior Education Policy Advisor; Tylease Alli, Minority Clerk/Intern and Fellow Coordinator; Austin Barbera, Minority Staff Assistant; Kelly Broughan, Minority Education Policy Advisor; Jacque Chevalier, Minority Senior Education Policy Advisor; Denise Forte, Minority Staff Director; and Tina Hone, Minority Education Policy Director and Associate General Counsel.

Chairman KLINE. A quorum being present, the Committee on Education and the Workforce will come to order. Good morning.

Welcome, to our guests.

I would like to begin by thanking Dr. Roessel and Mr. Mendoza for participating in the hearing.

I must say, we are disappointed that Kevin Washburn, the assistant secretary of Indian affairs, declined an invitation to join us this morning. I think Mr. Washburn would bring an important perspective to this discussion, and it is unfortunate the public and members of the committee will not hear from him today.

However, we are pleased to have a distinguished panel of witnesses and look forward to your testimonies today.

Today's hearing is part of an effort to begin addressing the challenges facing Native American schools. In recent months the nation has learned a great deal about the deplorable, deplorable conditions affecting Native American schools. A crisis has been festering for decades and, thanks in large part to the investigative work of the Minneapolis Star Tribune and others, it is finally receiving the national attention it deserves.

The details we have learned are shocking: falling ceilings, broken water heaters, electrical hazards, rotten floors, and rodent-infested classrooms. At a school I visited earlier this year, blankets hang over the doors in a desperate attempt to keep out the cold air.

And I am talking cold air. In northern Minnesota, every winter those temperatures drop down to 20, 30, sometimes 40 below.

In fact, thin metal walls are all that separate students from harsh winters in states like Minnesota and South Dakota. Meanwhile, classrooms lack the most basic school supplies, such as desks, chairs, and textbooks.

At a recent oversight hearing we also learned that a bungling bureaucracy is undermining the health and safety of these Native American students as well as their education. The nonpartisan Government Accountability Office notes that a disorganized bureaucracy and poor communication make it difficult, if not impossible, for schools to receive the services and support they need, and GAO warns that if these issues are not addressed, quote: "it will be difficult for Indian Affairs to ensure the long-term success of a generation of students," close quote.

More than a century ago the federal government promised to provide Native American students a quality education in a manner that preserves their heritage, and we are failing to keep that promise. If these were our loved ones going to these schools, there is little doubt we would march down Pennsylvania Avenue to demand real change.

Jill Burcum, an editorial writer for the Star Tribune, said this at last month's hearing, quote: "As a mom, I thought many times that I would not be comfortable sending my children to school in these buildings. Unfortunately, mothers of BIE students don't have a choice, which is why action is required."

The purpose of today's hearing is not to assign blame. There is plenty of blame to go around.

Instead, the purpose of this hearing is to understand the root causes of these persistent challenges and to demand better results. That is why we are pleased to have representatives from the Departments of Interior and Education.

We are especially pleased to hear from you, Dr. Roessel, since you and your staff are on the front lines.

We understand the Department of Interior plans to implement a number of internal changes intended to fix the system. We welcome that effort and are interested to learn more about it.

Questions have been raised about whether this effort will address the fundamental problems facing the system or simply rearrange the chairs at the department. Questions have also been raised about whether this reorganization is taking place in a timely

manner or being delayed by the same bureaucratic wrangling that has plagued these schools for decades.

The administration has a responsibility to answer these and other important questions and to assure this committee, Congress, and the country that we are finally moving in a new direction. These vulnerable children and their families deserve no less.

In closing, I would note that there are tough challenges facing Native American students outside the jurisdiction of the Department of Interior—challenges that demand our attention as well. That is one reason why the Student Success Act provides greater flexibility to all public schools, so they can more effectively serve their unique student populations, including Native American students. Policies in place today assume every school faces the same set of challenges, but we know that is not the case, and the Student Success Act would ensure federal policies reflect that reality.

Replacing No Child Left Behind continues to be a top priority and one that I am hopeful we will finish before the end of the year. However, the challenges facing these particular Native American students have been neglected for far too long by members on both sides of the aisle.

I encourage my colleagues to avoid political distractions that would merely shift the focus away from these unique, vulnerable children. They have waited long enough for the Federal Government to live up to its promises.

Every child in every school should receive an excellent education. That is the goal we are all working toward, and today's hearing is an important part of that effort.

With that, I will now recognize Mr. Scott, the ranking member, for his opening remarks.

**Prepared Statement of Hon. John Kline, Chairman
Committee on Education and the Workforce**

Good morning, and welcome to our guests. I'd like to begin by thanking Dr. Roessel and Mr. Mendoza for participating in this hearing. We are disappointed that Kevin Washburn, Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, declined an invitation to join us this morning. Mr. Washburn would bring an important perspective to this discussion, and it is unfortunate the public and members of the committee will not hear from him today. However, we are pleased to have a distinguished panel of witnesses and look forward to your testimonies.

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The details we have learned are shocking: falling ceilings; broken water heaters; electrical hazards; rotten floors; and rodent-infested classrooms. At a school I visited earlier this year, blankets hang over the doors in a desperate attempt to keep out the cold air. In fact, thin metal walls are all that separate students from harsh winters in states like Minnesota and South Dakota. Meanwhile, classrooms lack the most basic school supplies, such as desks, chairs, and textbooks.

At a recent oversight hearing, we also learned that a bungling bureaucracy is undermining the health and safety of these Native American students, as well as their education. The nonpartisan Government Accountability Office notes that a disorganized bureaucracy and poor communication make it difficult – if not impossible – for schools to receive the services and support they need, and GAO warns that if these issues are not addressed, “it will be difficult for Indian Affairs to ensure the long-term success of a generation of students.”

More than a century ago, the federal government promised to provide Native American students a quality education in a manner that preserves their heritage,

and we are failing to keep that promise. If these were our loved ones going to these schools, there is little doubt we would march down Pennsylvania Avenue to demand real change.

Jill Burcum, an editorial writer for the Star Tribune, said this at last month's hearing: "As a mom, I thought many times that I would not be comfortable sending my children to school in these buildings . . . unfortunately, mothers of BIE students don't have a choice, which is why action is required."

The purpose of today's hearing is not to assign blame. There is plenty of blame to go around. Instead, the purpose of this hearing is to understand the root causes of these persistent challenges and to demand better results. That is why we are pleased to have representatives from the Departments of Interior and Education. We are especially pleased to hear from you, Dr. Roessel, since you and your staff are on the front lines.

We understand the department plans to implement a number of internal changes intended to fix the system. We welcome that effort and are interested to learn more about it. Questions have been raised about whether this effort will address the fundamental problems facing the system or simply rearrange the chairs at the department. Questions have also been raised about whether this reorganization is taking place in a timely manner or being delayed by the same bureaucratic wrangling that has plagued these schools for decades.

The administration has a responsibility to answer these and other important questions, and to assure this committee, Congress, and the country that we are finally moving in a new direction. These vulnerable children and their families deserve no less.

In closing, I would note that there are tough challenges facing Native American students outside the jurisdiction of the Department of Interior, challenges that demand our attention as well. That is one reason why the Student Success Act provides greater flexibility to all public schools, so they can more effectively serve their unique student populations, including Native American students. Policies in place today assume every school faces the same set of challenges, but we know that's not the case, and the Student Success Act would ensure federal policies reflect that reality.

Replacing No Child Left Behind continues to be a top priority and one that I am hopeful we will finish before the end of the year. However, the challenges facing these particular Native American students have been neglected for far too long and by members on both sides of the aisle. I encourage my colleagues to avoid political distractions that would merely shift the focus away from these unique, vulnerable children – they have waited long enough for the federal government to live up to its promises.

Every child in every school should receive an excellent education. That is the goal we are all working toward, and today's hearing is an important part of that effort. With that, I will now recognize Ranking Member Scott for his opening remarks.

Mr. SCOTT. Good morning, and thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing. This is the second hearing in as many months on Indian education, but before that it had been 7 years since a hearing had taken place. So I am grateful that today we will be able to consider the full range of issues impacting American Indian and Alaska Native students.

Our prior hearing focused on the deplorable conditions of many schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Education. It was important, and I am pleased that the Bureau of Indian Education will be sharing their plans to address these conditions with us today.

And, Mr. Chairman, as this is not a partisan issue, none of us want to see any student going to a school in the conditions as you have described. Schools need to be fixed. They need to be fixed without delay.

The conditions of these school buildings not only affects the health and safety of students, it impacts their ability to learn and sends a disheartening message that these conditions are good enough.

We want to be clear: it isn't good enough. The students should not have to go to school in freezing classrooms, leaking roofs, exposed wires. These conditions should not persist.

I am eager to hear from the Bureau of Indian Education about its recent reforms and initiatives to improve these unacceptable conditions.

I am also eager to work with you, Mr. Chairman, and the committee to ensure that there is adequate federal funding to remedy these conditions. Appropriations for construction for BIE schools have fallen 64 percent from 2006 to 2015. This sharp reduction in funding has doubtlessly contributed to the deplorable conditions of many of the schools.

However, as important as it is to fix these school buildings, we must also acknowledge that fixing the buildings will only solve a small part of the problem. Only 7 percent of American Indian students attend BIE schools; the vast majority, about 93 percent, attend regular public schools. Addressing the challenges facing these students requires a comprehensive and coordinated commitment across agencies.

For that reason, I am particularly pleased that Bill Mendoza, the executive director of the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education, is here today. And I am particularly eager to learn about the important work of Generation Indigenious, an initiative focused on removing the barriers that stand between American Indian and Alaskan Native youth and their opportunity to succeed.

Look forward to hearing more about this comprehensive approach that includes work from the Department of Education, Health and Human Services, and the Department of Interior.

The Federal Government holds a special trust responsibility with tribal nations. Treaties, laws, and court decisions require the Federal Government to protect tribal lands and sovereignty.

We must also provide resources to ensure the success of tribal communities. The delivery of educational services is arguable the most important resource that we can provide, and sadly, it is an obligation that we have not met.

The reality is that American Indian and Alaskan Native children face some of the bleakest outcomes of any racial or ethnic subgroup in the United States. These students have the lowest school graduation rate, with an aggregate graduation rate of about 69 percent.

When we look at the graduation rate for students in the Bureau of Indian Education schools, the picture is even worse. Barely half of the students graduate in 4 years.

A 2011 study from the Alliance for Excellent Education spoke to the impact of the high dropout rate and pointed out that if many of the students were graduating, they would be earning a lot more than they are earning today. This kind of economic loss is a tragedy for individuals. This also impacts the economic future of our nation.

There are opportunities to change things. Many tribes are optimistic about the work at the Department of Interior and through the White House initiative. However, after centuries of neglect, there is also skepticism.

The long history of broken federal promises to tribes and their children requires Congress to be vigilant in our oversight, and it is important that our witnesses understand that we are watching and we are committed to make things right.

So thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank our witnesses for being here, and I look forward to their testimony.

I yield back.

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Robert C. “Bobby” Scott, Ranking Member,
Committee on Education and the Workforce**

Good morning and thank you, Chairman Kline, for holding this hearing. This is the second hearing in as many months on Indian education. Before that, it had been seven years since a hearing had taken place.

I am grateful that today we will be able to consider the full range of issues impacting American Indian and Alaska Native students. Our prior hearing focused on the deplorable conditions of many schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Education. That was important and I am pleased that the Bureau of Indian Education will be sharing with us its plans to address these conditions. You should know that there is no partisanship on this issue. None of us want to see any student going to school in conditions like the ones we learned about at the last hearing. The schools need to be fixed. And they need to be fixed without delay.

The condition of BIE school buildings not only affects the health and safety of students, it impacts their ability to learn and sends a disheartening message that these conditions are “good enough” for you. I want to be very clear: it isn’t. No student should go to school in freezing classrooms, with leaking roofs and exposed wires. These conditions cannot persist.

I am eager to hear from the Bureau of Indian Education about its recent reforms and initiatives to improve these unacceptable conditions. I am also eager to work with Chairman Kline to ensure that there is adequate federal funding to remedy these conditions. Appropriations for construction of BIE schools have fallen 64%, from \$206.7 million in FY2006 to \$74.5 million in FY2015. This sharp reduction in funding has doubtlessly contributed to the deplorable conditions of many BIE schools.

However, as important as it is to fix BIE school buildings, we must also acknowledge that fixing these buildings will only solve a small part of the problem. Only 7% of American Indian students attend BIE schools. The vast majority – 93%—attend regular public schools. Addressing the challenges facing these students requires a comprehensive and coordinated commitment across agencies.

For that reason, I am especially pleased that Bill Mendoza, Executive Director of the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education is here today. I am particularly eager to learn about the important work of Generation Indigenus, an initiative focused on removing the barriers that stand between American Indian and Alaska Native youth and their opportunity to succeed. I look forward to hearing more about this comprehensive approach that includes work from the Department of Education, Health and Human Services, and the Department of Interior.

The federal government holds a special trust responsibility to tribal nations. Treaties, laws, and court decisions require the federal government to protect tribal lands and sovereignty. It must also provide resources to ensure the success of tribal communities. The delivery of educational services is arguably the most important resource we can provide. Sadly, it has not been an obligation that has been met well.

The reality is American Indian and Alaska Native children face some of the bleakest outcomes of any racial and ethnic subgroup in the United States. These students have the lowest high school graduation rates, with only 69% graduating in four years in aggregate. When we look at the graduation rate for students in Bureau of Indian Education schools, the picture is even worse. Only 53%—barely half—of students, graduate in four years.

A 2011 study from the Alliance for Excellent Education calculated the economic impact of this high dropout rate as follows:

“If just half of the 24,700 American Indian and Alaska Native students from the Class of 2010 who dropped out of high school had graduated, together these 12,350 new graduates would likely be earning an additional \$147 million each year compared to what they will earn without a high school diploma.”

This kind of economic loss is a tragedy for the individuals. It also impacts the economic future of our nation.

There are opportunities to change things. Many tribes are optimistic about the work at Interior and through the White House Initiative. However, after centuries of neglect, there is also skepticism. The long history of broken federal promises to tribes and their children requires Congress to be vigilant in our oversight. It is important that our witnesses understand that we watching and committed to making things right.

Thank you for being here today. I look forward to hearing your testimony. With that, I yield back.

Chairman KLINE. Thank the gentleman.

Pursuant to committee rule 7(c), all members will be permitted to submit written statements to be included in the permanent hearing record. And without objection, the hearing record will remain open for 14 days to allow such statements and other extraneous material referenced during the hearing to be submitted for the official hearing record.

I will now introduce our distinguished witnesses.

Dr. Monty Roessel is the director of the Bureau of Indian Education within the U.S. Department of the Interior and previously served as BIE's associate deputy director for Navajo schools. Prior to coming to BIE, he served the Rough Rock Community School, a BIE-funded, tribally operated, K-12 boarding school on the Navajo Nation Reservation as director of community services and then as executive director.

Welcome, sir.

Mr. Bill Mendoza is executive director for the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education. The initiative supports activities that expand educational opportunities and improve education outcomes for all American Indian and Alaska Native students. Prior to his appointment, he served as the deputy director and executive director for the White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges.

I will now ask our witnesses to stand and to raise your right hand.

Do you solemnly swear and affirm that the testimony you are about to give will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

Let the record reflect the witnesses answered in the affirmative, as they always do.

Please, be seated.

Before I recognize you to provide your testimony, let me briefly explain our lighting system, which I understand has been explained to both of you already, but now you are looking at the little high-tech machines in front of you.

You have 5 minutes to present your testimony. When you begin, the light in front of you will turn green; when 1 minute is left, the light will turn yellow; and when your time is expired, the light will turn red. At that point, I will ask you wrap up your remarks as best you are able.

I have never stopped a witness in mid-testimony, and I won't today. We want to hear from you. But please, as you see those lights change, try to wrap up, because then we want to get to questions and answers.

I will try to strictly enforce the 5-minute rule when we get into questions and comments from members of the committee, and we will be looking at lights there again, too, because I want to move it around and give everybody have a chance to be in the conversation.

Okay. We are ready to start.

Dr. Roessel, you are recognized.

STATEMENT OF DR. CHARLES ROESSEL, DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Mr. ROESSEL. Good morning, Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Scott, and members of the committee. My name is Monty Roessel and I am the director of the Bureau of Indian Education. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on the reform of BIE.

Prior to the development of the blueprint for reform, the American Indian Education Study Group examined BIE intensely. Many of the GAO findings were also reviewed and discovered by the group. Therefore, within the bureau's blueprint for reform and the proposed reorganization are recommendations that address issues of a lack of communication, a lack of adequate staff to oversee school spending, and a lack of clear accountability.

Some examples of changes that we have already implemented to address a lack of communication: BIE has developed an electronic newsletter, a monthly webinar series on issues ranging from operation and maintenance calculations for facilities, to preparing for the new school construction application. BIE also holds monthly staff calls and monthly stakeholder calls. A directory of BIE staff and facility staff is now on our Web site.

The blueprint for reform and the realignment needed to implement it is not a BIE plan or my plan, but it is a restructuring that embeds the voices of over 400 Indian stakeholders. Every new box on the org chart is based on the ideas and contributions of education and tribal leaders, parents and teachers, administrators, and students. These are not just boxes on an org chart, but ideas from the Mississippi Band of Choctaw, the Hopi, the Navajo, the Yankton Sioux, the Shoshone-Bannock, and many of the 64 tribes that have BIE schools.

I understand that the GAO has said that we do not have a strategic plan or a communication plan and have not implemented any of the recommendations. I disagree.

It must be noted that we are in the middle of tribal consultations. We have posted our strategic plan and accompanying communication plans for review. We are awaiting completion of tribal consultation before finalizing, but we are still using the outline of the plan and will post updates on the progress of our strategic plan this July.

However, BIE has also taken immediate steps to ensure the accountability of funds at our schools. In 2014, there were 23 overdue management decisions due to audit issues at schools. As of today and for the last 5 months, we have zero. We are finalizing a financial monitoring tool and process that will ensure fiscal responsibility and accountability.

The only focus of restructuring of BIE, from my perspective, is to improve the academic outcomes for our Indian students. Every decision must contribute to this goal. In other words, education must be the primary function of the instructional leader.

Through our reorganization we have clarified roles and responsibilities based on school functions. We have streamlined communications. We have empowered instructional leaders to have the tools necessary to make decisions to improve education in the classroom and school.

Here is a snapshot of what the BIE reform will look like: In New Mexico's Isleta Elementary School, as a newly formed, tribally controlled school, they will receive specific tools to safeguard that internal controls are implemented to ensure clean audits, and also training for school board and effective governance.

In Minnesota's Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig School they will receive additional support to continue their immersion program. From our recently developed native language framework they will receive support in better utilizing their portion of BIE's 24 million dollars to teach native languages with an eye towards fluency.

When I was associate deputy director for Navajo schools I instituted a district model. I realigned functions and clarified roles, much like you would do with any school district in this country.

I sought to unify professional development for teachers. We developed processes and protocols for instructional rounds that focused on improvement, not punishment.

What were the results? For our Navajo BIE-operated schools, we went from making 29 percent of our schools making AYP to 54.8 percent of our BIE-operated making AYP. This is the design and philosophy we are implementing across BIE.

It is no secret that many of our school buildings are in much need of replacement and repair. Fifty-eight of our school buildings are in poor conditions.

With the '15 budget and our proposed '16 budget, we are able to finally complete the 2004 lists. As part of our reform efforts, we are developing a long-range school construction plan that is much needed and long overdue.

In the department's '16 request we are being more strategic when it comes to school construction. Some of our schools only need a building replaced and not an entire campus. Our request includes component replacement in addition to full school replacement.

The department is committed to improving the conditions of schools within BIE so all students have a safe place to learn. I am happy to answer any questions.

[The statement of Dr. Roessel follows:]

**Statement
of
Charles Roessel
Director – Bureau of Indian Education
Department of the Interior
Before the
Committee on Education and the Workforce
May 14, 2015**

Good morning Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Scott, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the invitation to appear today. My name is Charles “Monty” Roessel, and I am the Director of the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) at the Department of the Interior (Department). I appreciate the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Department on the challenges the Bureau of Indian Education faces in transforming educational opportunities for Indian Children.

I am here to provide some background on the agency and the BIE’s vision for American Indian education in BIE-funded schools. The BIE has recently initiated several actions to improve student outcomes, including building the capacity of tribal nations to operate their own schools, improving the quality of instruction in BIE-funded schools and restructuring Indian Affairs in the Department to streamline the BIE bureaucracy and improve day-to-day operations.

The Bureau of Indian Education

The BIE supports education programs and residential facilities for Indian students from federally recognized tribes at 183 elementary and secondary schools and dormitories. The BIE serves approximately eight percent of Native youth, with the majority of Native youth attending public schools. Currently, the BIE directly operates 57 schools and dormitories and 64 tribes operate the remaining 126 schools and dormitories through grants or contracts with BIE. During the 2013-2014 school year, BIE-funded schools served approximately 48,000 individual K-12 American Indian students and residential boarders. Approximately 3,800 teachers, professional staff, principals, and school administrators work within the 57 BIE-operated schools. In addition, approximately twice that number work within the 126 tribally-operated schools.

The BIE has the responsibilities of a state educational agency for purposes of administering Federal grant programs for education. BIE responsibilities include providing instruction that is aligned to the academic standards set forth in regulations; working with the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to administer the formula grant funds ED provides to BIE under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) and under Title VII, subtitle B, of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act for the schools operated and funded by BIE; and providing oversight and accountability for school and student success. BIE is also responsible for ensuring compliance with ESEA, currently referred to as the No Child Left Behind Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and other Federal civil rights laws for the schools operated and funded by BIE.

The BIE faces unique and urgent challenges in providing a high-quality education to Indian students attending the schools it funds. These challenges include difficulty in attracting effective teachers to BIE schools (which are most often in areas of concentrated poverty and located in remote locations where there is often insufficient housing and services); difficulty in adopting research-based reforms at all BIE schools; lack of access for BIE and BIE schools to certain programs that are designed to build SEA and LEA capacity;; the need for organizational and budgetary restructuring to meet the needs of the current school system; and a lack of consistent leadership – having had 33 directors since 1979.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) owns or provides funding for a broad variety of buildings and other facilities across the nation, including 183 BIE schools. Responsibility for oversight, policy, and funding distribution lies with the Division of Facilities Management and Construction within the Deputy Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs (Management) organization. The BIA Regional Facilities Programs implements the facilities program within their respective Regions to support the BIE schools.

To track and report the status of a facility, Indian Affairs uses the Facilities Condition Index (FCI) which is the ratio of the cost of repairing a building to the cost of replacing a building. A school is defined as being in “poor condition” if it has an FCI of over 0.10. Being in “poor condition” may, but does not necessarily, imply that critical health and safety issues are present. The number of schools in poor condition has been reduced from more than 120 of the 183 schools funded by Indian Affairs 15 years ago to 58 today (as of March 30, 2015), but tremendous challenges remain in this area. For example, a significant amount of work was funded with dollars provided in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Approximately \$278 million was made available in that Act for construction of Indian education facilities. In all, 141 separate projects at 58 Indian Affairs funded schools have been undertaken using ARRA funds, including three new schools as well as 14 major improvements and repair projects.

To ensure that the most critical situations are addressed immediately, the Indian Affairs facilities program addresses life safety deficiencies first and foremost. These deficiencies are work that needs to be completed in response to safety and facility inspection reports and daily facility deficiency assessments by on site personnel. Indian Affairs hires contractors to conduct workplace safety inspections annually and facility assessment inspections on every building every three years or as facility conditions require due to special events such as winter storms, seismic events or similar incidents. In addition, our facilities program is managed by on-site facility managers who have access to emergency funds and procedures to correct imminent danger situations. More routine work is prioritized through a risk assessment code process

which is directly related to safety. Funds from the Education Construction Facilities Improvement and Repair Program, commonly referred to as FI&R, are used for the abatement of identified critical deficiencies and other relevant line items such as Condition Assessment, Emergency Repair, and Environmental Projects. Education FI&R was funded at \$ 50.5 million in FY 2015.

While some progress has been made in the correction of education facility deficiencies, 58 schools are currently in poor condition and there is still work to be done to bring these remaining education facilities into acceptable condition.

The last replacement school priority list for Indian Affairs, identifying 14 schools, was published in the Federal Register in 2004. Indian Affairs received funding in FY 2015 for design and construction of the final three replacement schools on the 2004 list. These three school projects have completed the planning process and are ready to start design. The Beatrice Rafferty School in Maine received funding for construction in FY 2015; and the Cove Day School and Little Singer School, both in Arizona, received funding for design. Indian Affairs is currently developing a list of new replacement schools for future consideration. The new list will be developed using the process required by section 1125 of the Education Amendments of 1978 (25 U.S.C. § 2005), as amended by P.L. 107-110 in 2002 (commonly referred to as the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB)).

In accordance with NCLB, the Secretary of the Interior established a Facilities and Construction Negotiated Rule-Making Committee to formulate the methodology and factors to be considered in establishing the priority of schools in need of replacement, improvements and repairs. Indian Affairs has started the process developed by the Negotiated Rule Making Committee. Data on school facilities deficiencies have been updated as of April 30, 2015 and the Office of Facilities, Management and Construction is compiling the list of eligible schools.

In President Obama's FY 2016 request, Indian Affairs has requested funding for the School Component Replacement Program. Most school locations are campus type environments where many different buildings are used to carry out the mission of education students. Some of these locations may have one or two in poor condition and may not warrant replacing the entire school campus that is provided in the Replacement School Construction Program. The School Component Replacement Program provides a way to identify individual buildings in poor condition and replacement them where it may not be necessary to replace all campus buildings.

The OFMC and the BIE have initiated methods to enhance communications between BIE, schools, and the facilities program. OFMC conducts monthly briefings with BIE senior leadership to keep them abreast of important facilities issues including the NCLB priority process. BIE has hosted two webinars for schools on facilities topics with OFMC to include the

NCLB process and the Operation and Maintenance funding program. The webinar recordings and materials are posted on the BIE website for future reference and for people who may not have been able to attend during the live session. OFMC is also working with BIE to provide topics of interest on facilities and safety for the BIE bi-monthly newsletter that is distributed to all schools.

A New Vision for the BIE

The Administration is fully committed to providing a high-quality education to Indian students attending the schools BIE operates and funds to ensure that all BIE students are ready for college and careers. The Administration undertook a rigorous assessment of BIE and thereafter conducted extensive tribal consultations, consistent with the Department's tribal consultation policy, to develop the BIE Blueprint for Reform, which was released in 2014. The Blueprint focuses on the following five pillars of reform:

- Self-Determination for Tribal Nations -- Building the capacity of tribes to operate high-performing schools and shape what students are learning about their tribes, language, and culture in schools.
- Highly Effective Teachers and Principals -- Identifying, recruiting, retaining and empowering diverse, highly effective teachers and principals to maximize the highest achievement for every student in all BIE-funded schools.
- Agile Organizational Environment -- Developing a responsive organization that provides the resources, direction and services to tribes so tribes can help their students attain high-levels of student achievement.
- Budget that Supports Capacity Building Mission -- Developing a budget that is aligned with and supports BIE's new mission of tribal capacity building and scaling up best practices.
- Comprehensive Supports through Partnerships -- Fostering parental, community, and organizational partnerships to provide the emotional and social supports that BIE students need in order to be ready to learn.

The Blueprint sets out a vision for a 21st century education system for BIE operated and funded schools, grounded in both high academic standards and tribal values and traditions.

Implementation of BIE Blueprint for Reform Recommendations

The Department, BIE, and Congress have taken action on several of the Blueprint's key recommendations, including:

- *Secretarial Order 3334*. The order promotes tribal control of BIE-funded schools and ensures that tribally-controlled schools receive the resources and support they need in order to be successful. The goals of the Secretarial Order are to:

- Reduce reporting burdens on schools and make the reporting structure more efficient and effective;
 - Improve accountability of BIE;
 - Provide services more effectively to BIE-funded schools;
 - Address concerns raised by tribal leaders and other BIE stakeholders; and
 - Facilitate the transfer of best practices amongst schools.
- ***Sovereignty in Indian Education (SIE) Awards.*** These awards to tribes create tribally-managed school systems.
 - Six tribes with three or more BIE-funded schools each received awards of \$200,000 to research, assess and develop an implementation plan to establish a tribally-managed school system.
 - Tribes receiving an SIE award will conduct a comprehensive analysis in four functional areas: Finance, Academics, Governance, and Human Resources.
 - Tribes receiving SIE awards will work together and share best practices and challenges.
- ***Tribal Education Department (TED) grants.*** As authorized by section 1140 of the Education Amendments of 1978 (25 U.S.C. 2020), the BIE will award a total of \$2 million to support tribes in building capacity to plan and coordinate all educational programs of the tribe. These projects will cover areas such as the development of tribal educational codes or tribal administrative support. This funding will be used to help tribes to create tribally-managed school systems.
- ***FY2015 Enacted Budget.*** Congress has supported the recommendations of the Blueprint by providing additional funding:
 - Includes an additional \$19.2 million over FY2014 funding levels to complete the school replacement construction project started in FY2014 and cover design costs for the final two schools on the 2004 School Replacement Priority list.
 - Includes an increase of \$14.1 million for Tribal Grant Support Costs for tribally-controlled schools which increased the percentage administrative cost grants paid from 68 percent to 87 percent, and an increase of \$1.7 million for Science Post-Graduate Scholarships.
- ***FY2016 President's Budget Request.*** The President's budget proposes a \$1.0 billion investment in Indian education at BIE-funded schools grounded in high academic standards and tribal values and traditions, with increases totaling nearly \$140 million for BIE educational programs, operations, and facilities construction.
 - Includes increases of \$80 million for programs that improve opportunities and outcomes in the classroom:

- \$10 million to promote tribal control of BIE-funded school curriculum including native language and cultural programs;
 - \$20 million for school facilities operations and maintenance;
 - \$12 million to fund 100 percent of administrative costs for BIE-funded schools operated by tribes;
 - \$3 million to strengthen delivery of services to schools and enrich instructional services and teacher quality; and
 - \$34 million to bring broadband and digital access to all schools in the BIE system over three years.
 - Includes increases totaling \$59 million to repair and rebuild BIE-funded schools to improve the educational environment:
 - \$37 million for school replacement construction projects and planning;
 - \$4 million to repair and upgrade education employee housing;
 - \$12 million to replace individual buildings where the entire campus does not need to be replaced; and
 - \$18 million to fund major and minor facilities improvement and repair projects.
 - Includes an additional \$50 million dollars for the Native Youth Community Projects, an ED program that encourages community partnerships between tribes and either a BIE school or a local school district to improve college-and-career readiness for Native youth.
 - The Department is working collaboratively with tribes and other Federal agencies including the Departments of Education, Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Commerce, Labor, and Justice to implement education reforms and address issues facing Native American youth and families.
- **College Readiness for BIE Students.** BIE identified 20 tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) to create or expand bridge programs for BIE students. Each TCU will receive \$50K to help increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.
 - **Native Language Policy Framework.** BIE will provide guidance on the development of Native language curriculum to all BIE-funded schools.
 - **Department of Education Preschool Development Grants Competition.** The President's FY2016 Budget proposes \$750 million for Preschool Development Grants, including expanding eligibility to the BIE if sufficient additional funds are appropriated for another competition.

Proposed BIE Reorganization

To implement meaningful reform in the BIE that will lead to improved student outcomes, the bureau is proposing to restructure its organization and expand direct line responsibilities. The proposed restructuring is in line with recommendations of the Blueprint and addresses concerns raised by recent Government Accountability Office reports. The proposed changes have two primary objectives: (1) strengthened BIE capability to address school operating needs; and (2) improved oversight of BIE-operated and tribally-controlled schools.

An example of how the restructuring responds to Blueprint recommendations is the proposal to re-designate Education Line Offices as Education Resources Centers (ERC) and relocate several to more effectively serve schools in its jurisdiction. The ERCs will be staffed with mobile School Solutions Teams to provide customized technical assistance to meet the unique needs of each school.

An example of how the restructuring responds to GAO recommendations is the proposal to stand up the School Operations Division (SOD) within the BIE with additional administrative services functions with line authority through the Deputy Director - Operations. This action will strengthen financial stewardship of BIE schools and provide direct line expertise in teacher and principal recruitment, acquisition and grants for schools, school facilities management, educational technology, and communications.

Conclusion

This forward looking vision for BIE – a vision rooted in the belief that all children can learn and that all tribes can operate high-achieving schools – allows the BIE to achieve improved results in the form of higher student scores, improved school operations, and increased tribal control over schools.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I'm happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.

Chairman KLINE. Thank you very much, Dr. Roessel.
Mr. Mendoza, you are recognized.

STATEMENT OF MR. WILLIAM MENDOZA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WHITE HOUSE INITIATIVE ON AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE EDUCATION, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Mr. MENDOZA. Good morning, Chairman Kline, and Ranking Member Scott, and the members of the committee. My name is William Mendoza and I am the executive director for the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education at the U.S. Department of Education.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today about the Initiative's work to expand educational opportunities and to improve outcomes for American Indian and Alaska Native students, including those attending tribal colleges and universities.

Coincidentally, yesterday Secretary Duncan participated in a Native youth roundtable in Denver as a part of the President's Generation Indigenous Initiative. The plight of Native youth is an important issue for the nation and for this administration. Secretary Duncan has visited Indian country 11 times, and much of what I will outline today is informed by the conversations he and our staff have had throughout Indian country.

Throughout this administration, we have worked to implement a policy of self-determination and to strengthen the government-to-government relationship with tribal nations. ED understands that the best solutions for American Indian and Alaska Native students come from those who know these students best: the tribes. Since 2010, ED has held over 35 national consultations with tribes and tribal leaders around the country to seek their ideas about the education challenges they face and the needs of their communities.

In December of 2014, during the White House Tribal Nations Conference, the President announced his Gen-I Initiative, a comprehensive effort designed to address the educational needs, physical health, mental health, and social service needs of Native youth. Through Gen-I, the administration is working hard to bolster efforts focused on Native Americans, including Native youth, by launching a targeted youth engagement program, a new demonstration grant priority through the Department of Education, and a continuation of the Bureau of Indian Education reform efforts.

While about 8 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native students attend bureau-funded schools, the vast majority attend public schools operated by local school districts on and off reservations and tribal lands.

We are encouraged by the positive progress among American Indian and Alaska Native students, and this is thanks to the hard work of teachers, parents, and students. The graduation rate for American Indian students has increased by more than 4 percentage points over 2 years, the largest increase of any group of students.

Unfortunately, it is still much lower than the national rate. The 2014 White House Native Youth Report highlights that there is still much more work to be done.

The current outcomes for American Indian and Alaska Native students are unacceptable for this nation and the administration. We can and must fix this.

The Department of Education provides support to improve outcomes for Native students in a variety of ways. There are large-dollar programs, such as Title I, for high-poverty schools, and Impact Aid for school districts for children residing on Indian lands. In addition, the department administers several formula grants as well as competitive grants designed to support the unique cultural and academic needs of Native students.

Some of ED's efforts to address the needs of these students include a specific priority for these students in ED's new supplemental priorities, which are available for use in all ED discretionary grants.

We also published a notice inviting applications for the Native Youth Community Projects, for which the administration is also requesting a \$50 million increase in the President's 2016 budget. The Native Youth Community Projects will fund culturally relevant strategies to improve college and career readiness for children and youth in tribal communities.

Additionally, the White House Initiative and ED's Office for Civil Rights conducted a series of listening sessions around the country and heard testimony from Native youth on bullying, disproportionate discipline, stereotypes, and the harmful effects of imagery and symbolism.

Moreover, the administration's Promise Zones Initiative is partnering closely with hard-hit urban, rural, and tribal communities to create jobs, increase economic activity, improve educational opportunities, and reduce violent crime. These Promise Zones currently include the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota and the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

ED's Office of Indian Education currently allocates nearly \$2 million a year to 5 of ED's comprehensive centers, including one content center, to provide technical assistance to state educational agencies and other support targeted to improve outcomes for Native students.

And interagency cooperation is vital to the success of these initiatives. Secretary Duncan and Secretary Jewell have worked together to strengthen the relationship between their agencies, especially regarding the Bureau of Indian Education.

They have held several events to highlight the importance of Indian education, and in 2013, the secretaries convened the Bureau of Indian Education Study Group that Director Roessel mentioned to identify and take action on the systemic challenges facing the BIE to ensure that all students attending BIE-funded schools have access to a world-class education.

The two agencies are also working together through various initiatives to strengthen technical assistance between these agencies for Bureau-funded schools. In response to the request from tribes, ED collaborated with DOI to provide guidance to tribally controlled schools on how they may use annual funds.

I would be happy to answer any questions and there are expansions in my testimony.

[The statement of Mr. Mendoza follows:]

Testimony of
William Mendoza, Director
White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education
U.S. Department of Education
May 14, 2015

Good morning Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Scott, and Members of the Committee. My name is William Mendoza, and I am the Director of the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education at the U.S. Department of Education (ED). I appreciate the opportunity to testify today to provide an overview of the work of the Initiative.

Coincidentally, yesterday Secretary Duncan participated in a Native youth roundtable at the Denver Indian Center and the Denver Indian Family Resource Center as part of the Administration's Generation Indigenous (Gen-I) Initiative. Secretary Duncan has visited Indian Country 11 times, and much of the work I will outline is informed by what he and our staff have heard through conversations and consultations.

Framework and Challenges: Strengthening Native Youth Opportunity and Outcomes

Throughout this Administration, we have worked to implement a policy of self-determination and strengthen and honor the government-to-government relationship with Tribal Nations. ED understands that the best solutions for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students come from working with those who know these students best, the Tribes. In fulfillment of this goal, ED has taken unprecedented steps to increase collaboration with tribal governments. Since 2010, ED has held over 35 national consultations with Tribes and tribal communities around the country. During these consultations Tribal officials have shared their ideas about their education challenges and needs.

In 2013, President Obama signed Executive Order 13647, establishing the White House Council on Native American Affairs (Council) and designating the Secretary of the Interior as Chair. In 2014, under Secretary Sally Jewell's leadership, the Council created four interagency subgroups in the following areas: economic development and infrastructure; education; energy; and environment and climate change. The work of the Council serves as a foundation for informing the annual White House Tribal Nations Conference. The Council's subgroups hold regular meetings to discuss current initiatives and to support interagency solutions to tribal issues. The White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education, located within the Department of Education, also works to expand education opportunities and improve educational outcomes for all AI/AN students.

In June 2014, the President and the First Lady traveled to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Nation in Cannon Ball, North Dakota. On their return to Washington, the President challenged his Cabinet and senior advisors to make improving the lives and opportunities of Native youth a top priority.

In December 2014, during the White House Tribal Nations Conference, the President announced the Gen-I Initiative, a comprehensive initiative designed to address the education, physical and mental health, and social service needs of Native youth. Through Gen-I, the Administration is working hard to address issues of importance to Native Americans, including Native youth. For example, it has launched a targeted Native youth engagement program, announced new demonstration grant priority for Native

Youth Community Projects through ED, and continued Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) reform efforts. This initiative complements the President's "My Brother's Keeper" initiative, which works to ensure that all young people can reach their full potential.

State of Indian Education

It is important to note that only about eight percent of Indian students attend schools operated by the BIE or by Indian Tribes or tribal organizations. The vast majority of Indian students – more than 90 percent – attend public schools operated by their local school districts, on and off reservations and tribal lands, and served by programs funded by ED.

We are encouraged that there has been some positive progress among Indian students. For example, the graduation rate for American Indian students has increased by more than four percentage points over two years, the largest increase for any group of students. Specifically, the graduation rate for American Indian students increased from 65 percent in 2010-11 to 69.7 percent in 2012-13. Unfortunately, it is much lower than the national rate of 81 percent. Clearly, there is still much work to be done and much more progress that needs to be made.

As highlighted in the 2014 White House Native Youth Report, we have learned that in early learning Native kindergarten students are held back at nearly twice the rate of white kindergarten students. Twenty-two percent of American Indian and Alaska Natives aged 25 and older have not finished high school. And at the highest levels of education, only 39 percent of Native students who enrolled in a four-year institution in the fall of 2004 completed a bachelor's degree by 2010, as compared to 62 percent of white students. Suicide is the second leading cause of death—2.5 times the national rate—for Native youth in the 15 to 24 year old age group. These are not acceptable outcomes for the Nation.

ED Programs and Initiatives that Support AI/AN Students

Within the programs that benefit all students in the Nation that the Congress has provided through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), and the formula and competitive programs specifically focused on Native American students in that Act, ED has taken meaningful steps to elevate Native American education within ED-administered grant programs. Some examples include:

- ED recently finalized its supplemental priorities, which can be used with all of ED's competitive grants to target or incentivize certain types of activities or projects. The Secretary included a specific priority for projects that intend to serve students from federally-recognized Tribes.
- ED published a notice inviting applications for the Native Youth Community Projects (NYCP) initiative. The NYCP will fund culturally-relevant strategies designed to improve college-and-career readiness for children and youth in tribal communities. These grants allow Tribes to play a meaningful role in identifying barriers and opportunities, and designing effective, culturally-relevant strategies to improve outcomes for all students. In addition, the partnerships in the program will help Tribes build stronger relationships with both public and BIE schools.
- ED published a notice inviting applications for the State Tribal Education Partnership (STEP) program designed to further collaboration between tribal education agencies (TEAs), state educational agencies (SEAs), and local educational agencies (LEAs). The STEP program is

intended to build the capacity of Tribes as they develop and enhance their roles, responsibilities and accountability in the education of their youth. As a result of cooperative agreements between TEAs and SEAs, current grantees are having a meaningful impact in priority areas such as data sharing, professional development at the SEA and LEA levels, culturally appropriate resource development, parent engagement, and integration of Native culture into state standards and local curriculum. In addition to engaging in meaningful consultation with Tribes, ED worked closely with the BIE in the development of the STEP grant opportunity.

- In response to student climate concerns raised by tribal leaders, educators and Native youth in consultation and listening sessions, the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education and the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) have conducted a series of listening sessions at which schools and communities identified ways to improve school climate, discussed recent research, and highlighted communities that are proactively supporting Native American students. The listening sessions included hearing from Native youth on bullying, disproportionate discipline, stereotypes, and harmful imagery and symbolism, among other topics. The Listening Tour included sessions in Milwaukee, WI; Anchorage, AK; Lacrosse, WI; Troy, NY; Seattle, WA; Los Angeles, CA; Oklahoma City, OK; East Lansing, MI; and Tulsa, OK.
- The ConnectED Initiative, under President Obama's "Plan for Connecting All Schools to the Digital Age," will connect 99 percent of America's students, including AI/AN students, to the digital age through next-generation broadband and high-speed wireless in their schools/libraries within the next five years. As part of the ConnectED Initiative, ED will work with States and school districts to encourage better use of existing funding through the ESEA to strategically invest in professional development to help teachers use technology effectively. Most importantly, this initiative will level the playing field for rural students by expanding on the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program's current efforts to attract broadband investment in rural communities. This expansion will help to connect underserved communities and create more anchor institutions.
- In November of 2012, the Department of Health and Human Service's Administration for Native Americans, the BIE and the White House Initiative for American Indian and Alaska Native Education signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to collaborate on programming, resource development and policy across our agencies. The MOA encourages programs and projects supported by any of the MOA partners to include instruction in and preservation of Native American languages. Through the Native Languages Work Group, the agencies conduct, annually, an interagency Native American Languages Summit to: provide updates from Federal offices on current efforts; provide support to Native American communities seeking to revitalize Native American languages; share successes from the field in two areas identified as challenges (integrating Native language immersion in schools and developing assessments); and discover through small group discussions ways to further support Native American communities teaching their Native languages in an effort to improve accountability for educational progress.
- The emerging "collective impact" movement is demonstrating that with public and private support and technical assistance, schools, communities, cities, and regions can take more comprehensive, outcome-focused approaches to improving the lives of young people. These

strategies can help improve outcomes for all disadvantaged youth and help to remove barriers to opportunity. For example, through the Promise Zones Initiative, the Administration is partnering closely with hard-hit urban, rural, and tribal communities to create jobs, increase economic activity, improve educational opportunities, and reduce violent crime. Each Promise Zone has developed evidence-based plans for revitalization, grounded in partnerships between local government, business, and community leaders. On April 28, 2015, the Administration announced the next round of urban, rural, and tribal communities that have received a Promise Zone designation. The Second Round Promise Zones competition included the designation of the Pine Ridge Promise Zone on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, SD. In 2012, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma also received designation.

- As part of our efforts to involve Tribes in the education of their students, ED recently issued a letter designating tribal education agencies and other tribal organizations as eligible to receive Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Filing Status Information from State Education Agencies in certain circumstances. (<http://ifap.ed.gov/dpclletters/GEN1412.html>)
- Tribal Colleges are included in the President's College Value and Affordability agenda and previous Budget proposals, including America's College Promise. This proposed grant program is for States to make community college free for responsible students, enabling them to earn a certificate, an associate's degree, or up to two years' worth of credits towards a bachelor's degree without paying any tuition and fees. President Obama's America's College Promise proposal is a historic and exciting opportunity for our nation that will benefit nearly nine million students by making higher education more affordable and improving the quality of education across America's 1,100 plus community colleges. Our budget invests \$60 billion in mandatory funding over ten years into this bold, new partnership with states to help them end tuition for responsible students in high-quality community college programs.
- ED recognizes the importance of technical assistance to all entities who educate AI/AN students. As a response to tribal consultation, ED's Office of Indian Education allocated approximately \$993,000 in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 to four of ED's Regional Comprehensive Centers and to one Content Comprehensive Center to provide technical assistance and other support that can help improve outcomes for AI/AN students. Over the course of the Centers' five-year grant cycle, this support will amount to nearly \$5 million for technical assistance services, including working with States and school districts to help them gain a better understanding of the issues and challenges facing AI/AN students; building cultural competency of their staff; and improving the delivery of instruction and support that are culturally appropriate for AI/AN students.

The five Comprehensive Centers that receive this technical assistance funding (Northwest Comprehensive Center, South Central Comprehensive Center, North Central Comprehensive Center, West Comprehensive Center, and the Center on Standards and Assessment implementation) are engaging in many meaningful activities that will help outcomes for AI/AN students. They bring together a diverse array of stakeholders including Tribes, tribal communities, tribal education department staff, school administrators, Indian education program staff, and parents to address the unique academic and culturally related needs of AI/AN students. These Comprehensive Centers are helping ensure that States have the capacity to lead and support their districts and schools in improving outcomes for AI/AN students.

- The President's FY16 Early Education proposal supports a birth through age five continuum of learning. This includes a \$75 billion investment in Preschool for All to provide high-quality preschool to all four-year-olds from low and moderate income families with a ½ percent set-aside for the BIE; and \$750 million for Preschool Development Grants, a \$500 million increase, that would also expand eligibility to include BIE, tribal educational agencies, territories, and the Outlying Areas to strengthen their capacity to provide high-quality preschool to four-year-old children from families at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.

Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Request

The President's FY 2016 Budget request reflects the Administration's commitment under the Gen-I Initiative and continued efforts by Federal agencies to work collaboratively with Tribes to implement education reforms and focus on Native youth engagement. The 2016 Budget will support this work through over \$1 billion in new and increased investments, including: (1) \$34.2 million at DOI to extend broadband internet and computer access to all BIE-funded schools and dormitories; (2) \$10 million at HUD and \$8 million at DOI to address teacher housing needs; (3) \$50 million at HHS to provide youth-focused behavioral, mental health, and substance abuse services, with an additional \$3.5 million for a community Native language coordination initiative to help ensure high quality language instruction, appropriate and culturally responsive curricula, professional development, and additional services; and (4) \$53 million for Native Youth Community Projects at ED to support community-driven, comprehensive strategies to improve college and career-readiness of Native youth.

The ED request includes new and continued funding, including:

- \$100.4 million for Title VII formula grants to school districts and Indian Tribes to address the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of Indian students through activities such as after-school programs, tutoring, and dropout prevention. These funds support enrichment programs that benefit more than 475,000 Indian students nationwide. Under the Administration's proposal to reauthorize the ESEA, more Tribes would be able to access these funds and grantees would have greater flexibility to carry out Native language restoration and Native language immersion programs.
- \$68 million for competitive grants to improve the quality of education for Indian students and prepare and train individuals to serve as teachers and school administrators in schools that serve Indian students. These funds support a significant expansion of Native Youth Community Projects (NYCP) to support community-driven strategies to improve college- and career-readiness of Native youth. This initiative was funded for the first time in FY 2015.
- \$5.7 million for national activities to support Native American schools, including research into effective practices for improving outcomes of Indian students, data collection on the educational status of Indian students, technical assistance on implementing successful programs, logistical support for ED's tribal consultations to ensure that Tribes continue to have a voice in the development of policies that impact Native Americans, and grants to tribal educational agencies. The Administration's national activities request includes \$2 million to continue awards made in FY 2015 to strengthen the role of tribal educational agencies through the STEP grants.

- \$35 million and \$34 million, respectively, for Native Hawaiian and Alaska Native student education programs, which support projects that will help improve the educational achievement of Native Hawaiian and Alaska Native students.
- \$1.2 billion for the Impact Aid program, which provides assistance to school districts impacted by Federal activities, including school districts serving students living on tribal lands. This program gives districts flexibility in the use of these funds, while requiring them to consult with parents of Indian students and Tribes about the education of their children.
- \$25.7 million for tribally controlled colleges and universities, \$12.8 million for Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-serving institutions, and \$3.1 million for Native American-serving non-tribal institutions to help these institutions improve and build their capacity to serve students. With these and other investments, the Administration hopes to improve the college access and college completion rates of all young people, including Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students.
- \$7.7 million for tribally controlled postsecondary career and technical institutions to provide high-quality career and technical education to Native Americans, including by training teachers, purchasing equipment, and providing services to students.
- \$41.2 million for Indian Tribes to provide vocational rehabilitation services for Native Americans with disabilities that live on or near reservations. The request would enable ED to provide support for about 83 tribal vocational rehabilitation projects, including 12 new awards and 71 continuation awards. These funds help Tribes build their capacity to provide culturally relevant services that help Native Americans with disabilities prepare for and engage in gainful employment, particularly those with the most significant disabilities.

Strengthening the Relationship between DOI and ED

Secretary Duncan and Secretary Jewell have worked together to strengthen the relationship between their agencies, especially regarding the BIE, and have participated in several events held to highlight the importance of education, including roundtable discussions with educators and school visits at Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming and the Beatrice Rafferty School on the Passamaquoddy Tribal Reservation in Maine.

As a part of the work stemming from the White House Council on Native American Affairs and the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education, Secretary Jewell and Secretary Duncan convened an American Indian Education Study Group in 2013 to diagnose and take action on the systemic challenges facing the BIE and to propose a comprehensive reform plan to ensure that all students attending BIE-funded schools receive a world-class education.

DOI and ED are also working together through various initiatives to strengthen technical assistance between the two agencies and among BIE-funded schools. ED has helped conduct technical assistance sessions for BIE, bringing together experts from the field and sharing lessons from other organizations that have undertaken efforts similar to BIE's reform. During listening sessions and consultations, some

school officials at tribally controlled grant schools have asked that they be allowed to spend carryover funding on a variety of activities including: teacher bonuses, complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act, computers, and several activities that are not currently permitted under the ESEA or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, including information technology infrastructure (e.g., broadband) and major repairs to school facilities. As a result, DOI and ED collaborated on guidance to tribally controlled schools regarding how they may use existing Federal funds to improve school facilities, fund family literacy programs, and purchase technology and technological upgrades. DOI and ED also conducted a webinar for tribally controlled schools to provide for dialogue and answer questions about this guidance. The letter (<http://www.bie.edu/cs/groups/xbie/documents/text/idc1-029076.pdf>) and guidance (<http://www.bie.edu/cs/groups/xbie/documents/text/idc1-029077.pdf>) were posted to the BIE site in January.

Additionally, in response to the BIE's request for additional support for technical assistance, ED's Office of State Support (OSS) has identified dedicated personnel to administer technical assistance to the BIE. OSS is organized specifically to provide high quality performance management and support to SEAs in administering and leveraging the grant programs, focusing on the SEAs' quality of implementation while continually reducing the burden of ED's necessary stewardship and compliance role.

Furthermore, ED provides regular technical assistance to the BIE, which is coordinated by ED's Risk Management Service (RMS). ED meets with the BIE quarterly to oversee the implementation of a department-wide corrective action plan developed to improve BIE's administration of its ESEA and IDEA Part B programs to maximize the effectiveness of those programs in providing needed services to students attending BIE-funded schools.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be pleased to respond to any questions.

Chairman KLINE. Thank you very much.

Thank you both very much. We will start now with member questioning.

I will start by asking—Dr. Roessel, I was listening to your testimony, and you said education is the goal. And Mr. Mendoza said the same thing, and Mr. Scott. We want these Native American students to be well educated.

But you can't be well educated, in my opinion, when you are attending school wearing your coat and wearing your mittens and hoping that the blanket keeps out the 30-degree-below-zero air. So safety—we have got to start with safety.

You have got collapsing roofs, leaking roofs, buckling floors, exposed wires, popping circuit breakers, gas leaks. That is totally, totally unacceptable. There is no way to get that education and to learn under those conditions.

So when I was touring the Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig School up in the Chippewa National Forest in northern Minnesota, and I saw all of these things I said, "Well, how can this be? Where is the list that shows when this school is going to be fixed?"

And by the way, it is not that money isn't being spent. They are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars making repairs. And yet, the school is still fundamentally a metal pole barn with all of those safety hazards.

So how can it be that this school has not been on the list for replacement? How can that be? How can you have a system with a school like that?

And yet, the Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig High School is not on the list. So how can that be?

Mr. ROESSEL. Mr. Chairman, the process of school construction within BIE and Indian Affairs within the department is there was a list that was created in 2004—priority list. And currently right now, with the '15 budget we have enough money to build and rebuild the Beatrice Rafferty School. And in our proposed '16 we have finally money that is being asked to build the last of that 2004 list: the Little Singer School as well as Cove Day School.

Indian Affairs, through DFMC—Division of Facilities, Maintenance, and Construction—they are in the process of finalizing an application to create the next list. That is the process that we have.

When I was the co-chairman of the Negotiated Rulemaking Construction Committee prior to becoming the director, we viewed a lot of these schools. I have been to the Bug School and I have seen those deplorable conditions—and I agree, it is one of the biggest frustrations that we have.

In order to repair all of our schools, that report said that we would need \$1.3 billion. And so of course right now we don't have \$1.3 billion. But what we do have within the process is to align with that new list is a plan going forward much like the Department of Defense did when they had a long-term plan to repair their buildings.

So we are in the process of developing a 6- to 7-year plan to begin that process. I think we start on that road by first having the first Beatrice Rafferty and add two more schools—

Chairman KLINE. When—excuse me for interrupting. When would we see that plan?

Mr. ROESSEL. We hope to have it this summer—the final plan that will be aligned with the new school construction list. It is our hope that with the new school construction list that is coming up, the applications are due the end of June, and then we will go through the review of those lists and then make it public at the end of this summer. And that way then we would have a ranking of the next list for construction and also in concert with our plan to move forward with our '17 budget and beyond.

Chairman KLINE. Well, we are looking forward to that plan, and I think that the Native American students and American people, as they are starting to learn more and more about this, are frustrated because we don't ever seem to get to it. So if you drive through to completion here and let's see this plan, but I am concerned because the Bug School, which I say the same thing, it is a whole lot easier to pronounce, that wasn't even on the list.

And it is not safe. And we are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to make yearly repairs. It is just not money wisely spent when we should be replacing the school.

I will try to set the example here and yield back my time with 10 seconds to spare.

Mr. Scott, you are recognized.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Roessel, let me follow through on that. You said you needed more money. What is the status of your funding request?

Mr. ROESSEL. In our '16 budget we have two areas. One of the things that we have done also with our budget is try to be more strategic, when I said we can—in my opening statement—replace an entire school or just a component. That allows us to actually address more—

Mr. SCOTT. Well, you said you needed more money. What is the status of that request?

Mr. ROESSEL. Well, we have asked in the '16 budget for about \$45 million for new school construction.

Mr. SCOTT. And did it make it into the administration budget?

Mr. ROESSEL. Yes, it did.

Mr. SCOTT. Do you know what the status of it is in the appropriations committees?

Mr. ROESSEL. No, I don't.

Mr. SCOTT. I understand the Cherokee Nation, since 2002, has contributed \$19 million to schools serving their students. Why did they have to put up the—was it their responsibility to put up this money, or were they just making up for what the Federal Government wasn't doing?

Mr. ROESSEL. I am not exactly sure what their intent was to do that. Some schools do—

Mr. SCOTT. Well, their schools are doing better than others.

Mr. ROESSEL. Some tribes do provide additional funds for targeted areas that they have goals and priorities, such as maybe Native language or some specific issue like that.

Mr. SCOTT. Well, their schools are doing better. Should they have had to have put up that kind of money, or should that have been a federal responsibility?

Mr. ROESSEL. The federal responsibility is to provide the education, and through BIE we are. Programs that are above and be-

yond that I think are at the discretion of tribes and part of their—at their discretion.

Mr. SCOTT. Okay. You indicated a significant improvement in schools—in bureau schools—making annual adequate yearly progress, but still, half are still failing. When can we expect virtually all of the schools to come up to standard?

Mr. ROESSEL. I think in a reform effort it takes 3 to 5 years as we move forward. I think we are taking some action immediately that has shown improvement.

The focus of our reform efforts is how do you improve the instruction in a classroom. That is what we are trying to build. Everything builds upon that, even the school buildings. You know, how do you expect to improve instruction if the walls are falling around them? So it is a comprehensive approach that we are addressing.

What our plan is, is you build a better system of instruction, a better system of leadership, a better system of accountability for that, and I think that is what our reform effort does. It does align our accountability, and in the past we had people doing a lot of different things. Now we have had clear roles and responsibilities.

Mr. SCOTT. A recent GAO report suggested a huge number of vacant positions: 40 percent of regional facility positions are currently vacant. Is that still true?

Mr. ROESSEL. I would believe so at this point. BIA is not under my purview, but I don't think that we have made any big gains in hiring people.

Mr. SCOTT. Is that affecting your ability to educate children?

Mr. ROESSEL. Not directly at this point. What is affecting our inability is trying to get our staff—BIE teachers and principals—hired, and I think that is something that we are doing with quality people, and I think that is something that we want to do as we move forward.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. Mendoza, one of the things that we are finding on solving achievement gaps—one of the things we are finding is that the achievement gap doesn't happen in school, it happens outside of school—children starting out behind, summer slide, where they regressed during the summer, and other outside of the schoolhouse. What can be done to reduce the achievement gap by presenting a holistic approach to education rather than just a in-school approach?

Mr. MENDOZA. Appreciate the question, Congressman Scott.

The challenges, as you mentioned, are needing a collective impact approach, and I think this is one of the not only tenets of how we have tried to respond to what we have heard from not only tribal leaders and educators, but that there is a shared responsibility, there are tribes who, like the Cherokee, are willing to resource more to, you know, really address those challenging needs that many of our American Indian and Alaska Native students are dealing with.

And so our Native Youth Community Projects were designed with this focus in mind, to take culturally responsive approaches in a comprehensive way to provide for the kind of flexibilities that we have heard from tribal leaders and educators and to be able to apply those, whether those services are needed in school or out of

school, but to keep focus on the college and career readiness that we know that those students will need to get to to not only aspire to complete, but to also get at, you know, the really core issue is jobs within Indian country.

So through the Native Youth Community Projects, through the Promise Zones Initiative, much of the shared goals around building tribal capacity to do this work, and then the partnership components all, as I would frame as collective impact, are essential to creating much more different contexts than we have historically been involved with.

Chairman KLINE. Gentleman's time has indeed expired.

Mr. Carter?

Mr. CARTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, Dr. Roessel and Mr. Mendoza, for being here.

Let me preface my remarks by sincerely saying that if at any time I appear to be disrespectful that it is not my intent to do that. But I have some questions for someone who—truthfully, I have never even been on—to one of the tribes or visited your area, so I don't really understand it that well.

But I just want to ask you, are there students who are on the reservations—do they have the option to attend a public school if there is one nearby?

Mr. MENDOZA. They do. And many reservations, as I said in my testimony, are—have public schools that—over that—well, all of them do. And so the vast—

Mr. CARTER. All—

Mr. MENDOZA.—the vast majority of Native students, 93 percent, attend public schools. So any given reservation and upwards of 50 percent to 70 percent of their reservation population are attending a public school.

Mr. CARTER. If the performance, as you testified and as we have learned, the performance of the Indian schools are below that of the public schools, why don't we just let the public schools onto the reservations and have the public schools there?

Mr. ROESSEL. I think the—when we have—you know, we have 183 schools in our system, and 129 of those are operated by tribes. The reason tribes get involved is they are able to operate, so they are able to exercise their tribal sovereignty. They are able to teach Native language; they are able to teach Native history; they are able to teach Native culture.

In public schools you don't have that same opportunity. Well, some schools do. Some districts do. But that is a big reason why tribes want to maintain that control of their education.

Mr. CARTER. And I understand that, and I am fully respectful of that, but if that option were there and if we made sure that option were there, wouldn't it make more sense, instead of duplicating something, to just try to incorporate it in there? And I am very respectful of the fact that you want—and very thankful that you want to maintain your heritage, and I think that is extremely important. But it just appears to me that could be done through the public school system.

Mr. MENDOZA. So, Mr. Carter, I think that goal is a part of this comprehensive work. The way that tribes see this, and certainly Native students, is that language, history, and culture for any stu-

dent—and this is what they have been telling us—is the foundation of their ability to succeed in all of the other areas that the world is working to advance. And the diversity that represents, the ways of knowing—bringing—that they bring to those school systems, whether that is reflected in the Bureau of Indian Education schools or public schools, are the kinds of condition that we know are not only driving innovation and excellence for other areas of the country where we are bringing diverse perspectives to the country, but it is also addressing an economic imperative.

You know, these are some of the most economically depressed concentrations in the country, and this should be a priority and focus for not only bureau-funded schools, but public schools as well. So the keys to success is having that reflected within the school systems, and that is where we are trying to bring partnerships together to address those challenges.

Mr. CARTER. I understand that. But it appears to me that it is much more of a problem than just the physical facilities.

What about—tell me about your teachers. If a teacher on a reservation in an Indian school—do you only take teachers who are Indian?

Mr. ROESSEL. Within our Bureau at Indian Education we have, again, those two systems. So one are federal employees, and so they are paid very well.

Then you have tribal schools, and they don't only take tribal members. They will take the best-qualified teacher they can. Now, that is—

Mr. CARTER. But if that qualified teacher doesn't understand the heritage and culture and everything, then that is not doing what you want it to do.

Mr. ROESSEL. Well, I think one of the things that happens with these schools on the reservations is they also then provide programs and opportunities to teach the teachers on the students. I think that is—

Mr. CARTER. Okay, that—and I don't mean to interrupt you. I understand. But the final question I have is exactly that.

Do you ever take those teachers who are at the Indian schools and have them interact with the teachers who are at the public schools who are succeeding and we know that they are doing things that work, so that they can learn and take that back with them?

Mr. ROESSEL. Yes, we do. And I think it is important to mention, too, that it is not that public schools are way up here at BIE. There is a school in Arizona, Tuba City Boarding School, and it is—across the street there is a public school—high school. Tuba City Boarding School has made AYP 8, 9 years in a row. The public schools around it have not. Teachers that are teaching at the public school have their kids go to our school.

So it is—what we are trying to do is take those successes, where we have them, and scale them up.

What is it that they have there? They have strong leadership. They have strong professional development. They have these things that can help build. That is what we are looking at.

I think to pit us against public schools—you know, there are very good public schools on reservations; there are very good BIE schools on reservations. How can we learn from both?

I think the ability to have both—you know, we talk about school choice. Well, that is school choice. We talk about a tribally controlled school. What that really is a charter school. They have a federal system, and that is a tribal—a federal type of charter school in a way, so they are able to do different things.

So I think it is wrong to say just public schools are doing so much better. I think there are pockets of success and we need to learn from both pockets. And—

Chairman KLINE. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. Takano?

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Roessel, I represent Riverside, California, and I have Sherman Indian Institute in my district. Can you tell the committee—many committee members don't know that we have residential Indian—Native American schools. How many of them exist in our country? Do you have a number?

Mr. ROESSEL. We have—trying to get the exact number here—about 30 percent of our schools have residential programs with them, and we have standalone residential dorms that those students then go to public schools, and then we also have schools like Sherman that actually have a school and a residential program combined.

Mr. TAKANO. So it is a boarding school. It is a boarding school.

Mr. ROESSEL. Boarding school.

Mr. TAKANO. How many of those boarding schools, like mine, exist in the country? There are relatively few, aren't there?

Mr. ROESSEL. Well, like yours, that is from an area, there are five. I believe there are five—

Mr. TAKANO. Five in the country?

Mr. ROESSEL.—serve a large population. But we have quite a few across the system individually, like in Navajo and Akomas.

Mr. TAKANO. But there are five that are like mine, that are like Sherman Indian Institute. And they—any Indian Native American or indigenous person can go to these schools if they find out about it, right? They have a right to go to one of these schools?

Mr. ROESSEL. Yes.

Mr. TAKANO. About how much money do we spend on these five schools?

Mr. ROESSEL. I would have to get back to you on the exact number of that.

Mr. TAKANO. Do you have a knowledge of how well the students are doing in these residential schools like Sherman?

Mr. ROESSEL. A lot of our—

Mr. TAKANO. And who—what kind of students tend to go to these schools?

Mr. ROESSEL. A lot of our off-reservation boarding schools are coming from homes that are not the best and conducive for learning. Some are trying to get away from certain avenues. Some are court-ordered students. Some want to just try a different part of the country and attend.

So you have a myriad of different types of students from many different tribal backgrounds, too. We have, I believe Sherman in Riverside. We have a Riverside school in Anadarko, Oklahoma and we have like 40 different tribes that are served there.

Mr. TAKANO. So in general these schools tend to have students that come from backgrounds that are challenged. Is that fair to say?

Mr. ROESSEL. Yes, that is fair.

Mr. TAKANO. And that is—that tends to be the student population at these schools. Do you feel that they are adequately funded?

Mr. ROESSEL. I think in the case—some of them I—it is difficult to say. The Sherman Indian School has a very progressive vocational program, and it is the best in our system.

Mr. TAKANO. Partly funded by one of the local wealthy tribes.

Mr. ROESSEL. Exactly.

Mr. TAKANO. Yes.

Mr. ROESSEL. One of the tribes. Exactly.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Mendoza, I noticed that a lot of these students come from Navajo country. Do you know about this—do you know about Sherman Institute, and the student body there, and the fact that many of the students come from Navajo country?

Mr. MENDOZA. I do. I do. We actually had a large delegation from Sherman Indian School participate in our student environment listening sessions that we had in Los Angeles, and so we heard direct testimony from them about not only the challenges that they face in finding their way to an opportunity like Sherman Indian School, but the challenges that they feel like they have within that setting, and they really emphasized they are worried about where they are going next.

And so I think to get back to Mr. Carter's point about the comprehensive nature of this work, it is absolutely essential for us to begin to look at not only how tribes are meaningfully involved in there, but also the individual student experience and the continuum that they move along.

Mr. TAKANO. Given that these students come from challenged backgrounds, is there enough proprietary interest by the stakeholders in the governance structure?

I have a lot of school districts that I work with, I have school boards that are elected, and they are local and I can work directly with them. But the struggle for me as a member of Congress who represents such a school—and I want to make it—I want to be able to create a school and encourage the development of a school that is truly a center of excellence and opportunity and to do the things necessary to connect them to the local community college, the University of California, whatever we have to do—to the private universities in the area.

But it is elusive how to deal with a governance structure—I understand that a lot of time there is not enough people for a quorum for the governance or that—it must be difficult to have governance from—of a school where the tribal members are kind of distant from the school itself. I mean, do you feel there is an—the governance structure is adequate?

Mr. MENDOZA. I think any governance structure, if it is leading to outcomes that raise concerns for us and we can identify areas where we can be better, I think that could take some work. And I know that we see that at the—through the study group, through the reforms that Director Roessel is putting in place. I think that

is an acknowledgement that we can do things better for school districts. Certainly Sherman Indian represents that.

We need to be purposeful about that. If we are going to change that, it takes education. It takes organization, and it takes providing the kind of supports that school boards need, ensuring that our teachers and our leaders are not only quality when we bring them into the institution, but if there is mediocrity there then we need to be addressing that.

Chairman KLINE. The gentleman's time has expired.

We have—my colleagues on both sides are playing the ask-the-question-with-15-seconds-left, and then we are getting the answer. And I want everybody to have their full 5 minutes so I am going to be a little bit more aggressive.

And I apologize in advance to Dr. Roessel and Mr. Mendoza, if I stop you in the answer, because we have a lot of members that just want to ask questions.

Mr. TAKANO. I apologize.

Chairman KLINE. I am just watching you.

Mr. Russell, you are recognized.

Mr. RUSSELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you both for your testimony here today, and also your efforts that you do in trying to make this education better.

In the course of the testimony it has come up that both the Cherokee and Choctaw tribes, which obviously we have Oklahoma ties to, have had some success in dealing with a lot of the educational concerns, largely due to good leadership and also tribal resources that are made available. So it shows that success stories can happen with good leadership and good resources.

It seems that the streamlining of leadership and resources among the various agencies would focus the effort and give it more educational impact. If they were all under the BIE, Dr. Roessel, how would you change the current system?

Mr. ROESSEL. All BIE schools, or—

Mr. RUSSELL. For the educational shortfalls that we are seeing, if you were given full responsibility, rather it—than it being dispersed among the various agencies, how would you fix it?

Mr. ROESSEL. Well, I think one of the first things I would do is expand the participation of tribes. These are their students. This is their future. And I think too often in the past we have actually not provided a place for them to be in looking at the education.

They are the ones that are closest to those students. They are their kids. And I think trying to bring them to the table and giving them the resources and capacity and the training to develop their own tribal ed department so they can be full partners, just like the state of Virginia can be a full partner in the education of their students.

I think that is what I would do probably first and foremost, because then you are talking about them being able to—tribes being able to develop standards, curriculum, to be able to align what is most important. If they have more than a few schools in their—within their reservations, maybe they make one a magnet school, a school for the arts or a STEM school. It gives them the capacity to make those decisions on their own.

And that is what I would do is try to say how can we try to build tribal participation up, build their capacity, and then move forward from there.

Mr. RUSSELL. With the limited resources on construction and seeing how it impacts everything, as a follow on, how would you prioritize that?

Mr. ROESSEL. Well, I think the first priority has to be on the safety—the critical safety areas and needs, is prioritizing those. And right now the DFMC, Division of Facility Construction and Management, have done just that. They have a line item that is called “facility improvement and repair,” and they are targeting those most critical elements with that fund to try to make sure that, to the best extent possible, our schools are safer.

Mr. RUSSELL. Thank you for that.

And, Mr. Chairman, my last question.

Mr. Mendoza, can you specifically address how the GAO shortcomings that were identified with regard to staff, oversight, and data tracking are being fixed?

Mr. MENDOZA. I appreciate the question and the opportunity to speak to our role in trying to help the Bureau of Indian Education address some of the findings from the General Accountability Office report.

One of the key things has not only been to work with the Bureau of Indian Education to begin to provide technical assistance—we have not only worked directly with the BIE, in terms of their capacity and trying to advise accordingly on the formula programs that they manage; we had, prior to the emphasis that has been represented under the secretary’s commitment to address these areas, we worked with our risk management services, all of our program offices, and developed a corrective action plan that is quarterly advanced in relationship to any areas of concern.

In terms of technical assistance on a broader level, our Office of State School Support, as it works with other states, you know, began—is in the process now of looking at some key areas of capacity for the Bureau of Indian Education as they have communicated those needs.

On the school level, for the funded schools themselves, the issue of facilities, certainly technology and technological infrastructure, we have been able to partner with the BIE to get more clarity around how they can use annual formula dollars to be able to resource them and purpose them in ways that they might not otherwise have understood. So this collective effort is building that capacity that we are looking for and I think is in response to many of the findings in the GAO report.

Chairman KLINE. Gentleman’s time has expired.

Mr. Polis?

Mr. POLIS. Thank you.

Dr. Roessel, as has been acknowledged for many years, Native American students have had some of the worst educational outcomes in the country and many of the problems cited involve schools and being plagued by bureaucracy and red tape.

As you know, charter schools are public schools that provide flexibility from traditional rules and regulations that govern and sometimes strangle both public or Bureau of Indian Affairs schools.

This type of flexibility allows charter schools to focus curriculum in specific areas, like science or math or Native American heritage.

In this case, it could allow Native American youth to learn their own language and culture in school. How can the Bureau of Indian Affairs encourage high-quality charter schools on reservations and collaborate with national charter school organizations?

Mr. ROESSEL. I think one of the first things is, as I mentioned earlier, the Bureau of Indian Education, we directly operate some schools—about 59 of them. The others are tribally controlled schools, which we call, in one word, a grant school.

In many ways, if they were talking about charter schools back in 1988, when the Tribally Controlled School Act was passed, they may have called it a charter school. That—

Mr. POLIS. So just a quick follow-up question: So they have the type of autonomy where they choose their own staff, the length of their school day, their curriculum—the type of autonomy traditionally associated with the charter school?

Mr. ROESSEL. Yes, sir.

Mr. POLIS. And go ahead, and so you are developing those and encouraging that type of autonomy?

Mr. ROESSEL. I think we are encouraging that type of autonomy, in addition bringing the tribes into it so that they have that type of autonomy. And some tribes have come to us and said, “Can we provide—you know, get a charter management company to come in and oversee our schools?” And they have that opportunity if they so choose.

So the Tribally Controlled School Act gives tribes and schools a lot of autonomy to move forward and create those curriculums and different approaches that they want.

Mr. POLIS. And is there an active process that a tribe can apply to—what is it called, what is the word you used, grant—to become a grant school as opposed to be centrally run?

Mr. ROESSEL. Yes, there is.

Mr. POLIS. Okay.

Mr. ROESSEL. Part of an initiative that we just had our first year, and it is called the Sovereignty in Indian Education Initiative, and that is really moving tribes in a direction that they look at their school system in its totality, so they focus on the H.R. aspect, the finance aspect, governance, and academics, and they are able to be very creative. And we have had some really good results for the tribes. The interaction and collaboration between tribes has been—

Mr. POLIS. I also wanted to address the issue of LGBT bullying in schools. As you know, there are many students that are bullied simply because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. I wanted to ask what the Bureau of Indian Affairs is doing to prevent bullying against too-spirited or LGBT students and discrimination in the Bureau of Indian Affairs schools.

Mr. ROESSEL. That is something that I think we can do more on. Within our system we—again, with this reorganization and restructuring we are trying to identify those areas that we have been lax in the past and what we can do as we move forward.

Mr. POLIS. Do you currently have an anti-bullying policy that includes bullying based on sexual orientation or gender identity?

Mr. ROESSEL. Yes, we do.

Mr. POLIS. And so you will be working on some of the enforcement of that and the modification of that.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs FY 2016 budget requests zero funding for juvenile education. No other federal program exists to assist at-risk Native youth who are adjudicated. How does the BIA plan to address the educational shortfall facing the most at-risk Native youth, including those who are juveniles in custody?

Mr. ROESSEL. We fund—and one of the proposals moving forward—and Mr. Mendoza can probably speak to this in greater detail with Department of ED—but we have JDCs, juvenile detention centers, that are within the BIE system, and we are—have a partnership and a contract with education providers to provide that education for them while they are in there.

One of the things that we are also looking to do and have started this process is to actually share the data and information. When a child might be in a detention center, they may not come from that tribe where that detention center is; they may be in a different one. So if we share our information system we then can identify when there might be a child in a detention center that is off the reservation or outside of the area of a school.

So we are trying to focus on first identification of them and making sure that we can follow them.

Mr. POLIS. Thank you.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman KLINE. Thank the gentleman for yielding back.

Mr. Curbelo, you are recognized.

Mr. CURBELO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank you and Chairman Rokita for your attention to this very important issue, and of course, to the ranking members, as well. We are clearly failing many of these children, and I appreciate everyone looking for solutions.

I had a question for Mr. Mendoza with regards to the structures that govern BIE. Department of Interior, in my view, is a department that is focused on issues mostly foreign to education, and perhaps there is a dissonance there between the BIE's mission and the department's mission.

From your perspective, Mr. Mendoza, would it make sense for an agency like the BIE to be housed under DOE instead of the Department of Interior?

Mr. MENDOZA. Thank you.

On the onset, this is something that has been discussed with tribal leaders early on in the administration. They wholeheartedly and without equivocation rejected the idea of any such move of the BIE from the Department of Interior to anywhere else, so I want to say that on the onset.

The question is how do we improve the delivery of services, and irregardless of where we think that is situated within the federal family, we not only have a responsibility to ensure that our students—American Indian and Alaska Natives—whether they attend bureau-funded schools, tribally controlled, or public schools, are receiving a world-class education.

And I agree with Dr. Roessel, this is reflected in our policies and how we jointly, the two agencies, worked to address this issue, that tribal leaders are the missing piece to what we are talking about

in the governance structure of schools right now. How can we begin to create a system where educators are supported and tribal leaders are involved so that there is a shared responsibility in the tribal context—reservation lands and tribal communities? And then how are we building that outwards?

There are exciting things happening right now in states like Montana. Washington is on the cusp of that. We also have North Dakota looking at, you know, the coordination of essential understandings that makes it better for Native students to navigate these systems, but also gets at the added value of what they bring to the rest of our population in the United States.

And so that is kind of the structure, and I think governance is key to that, as you have already pointed out.

Mr. CURBELO. Well, I think we certainly should take into account the view of the tribes on this issue, but I certainly believe that at the very least DOE should be given a greater role. I mean, for all our criticisms of DOE—Department of Education—we recognize that it is the only federal department almost exclusively dedicated to ensuring that children in this country have access to a quality education.

So I certainly believe that at the very least it would make sense to expand Department of Education's role in all of this.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman KLINE. Thank the gentleman.

Mr. Jeffries, you are recognized.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank the witnesses for their presence here today.

Mr. Mendoza, can you drill down for me on the comparison of the performance of Native American students in BIE schools as compared to the performance of students—Native American students within the traditional public school system?

Mr. MENDOZA. Certainly. Appreciate it.

We know that through the National Assessment for Education Progress, that in terms of that survey and that information, through the NAEP, that the gaps between American Indian and Alaska Native students that attend public schools and Bureau of Indian Education are certainly concerning. They are only incrementally different than public schools. And as I pointed out in my testimony, these are the worst indicators among many ethnicities.

But, given that, we also see progress. And so the 4.7 percent gain in graduation rates for American Indian and Alaska Native students overall in the adjusted cohort graduation rate represents a jump from 65 percent to 69.7 percent.

We have also learned that early learning for Native kindergarten students are held back at nearly twice the rate of their white kindergarten peers. And then 22 percent of Alaska Natives in the higher education realm age 25 and older have not finished high school. And 39 percent of Native students who enrolled in a 4-year institution in the fall of 2004 completed a bachelor's degree by 2010, as compared to 62 percent of their white students.

So these numbers on a national level are kind of our baseline information for the state of Indian education.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Now, am I correct that on a given reservation it could be the case that you have some Native children who attend

a BIE school and there may be others on that same reservation who attend a traditional public school?

Mr. MENDOZA. Could you repeat the question? Sorry, Mr. Jeffries.

Mr. JEFFRIES. That there are some instances where on a given reservation you could have some children who attend a BIE school and others from that same reservation who may attend a traditional public school.

Mr. MENDOZA. Yes. Yes. The majority of students, as a matter of fact, if not a vast majority. Many reservations 50 percent attend public schools; there are some 70 percent, 90 percent is actually the norm rather than the exception.

Mr. JEFFRIES. And in that circumstance, are there perceptible differences on a reservation-by-reservation standpoint? In other words, children on the same reservation presumably subjected to some of the same socioeconomic conditions or other factors that may impact an education—is there a perceptible difference on a reservation basis as to how those students might perform in a BIE school as compared to a traditional public school?

And, Dr. Roessel, you could weigh in if you want to, as well.

Mr. MENDOZA. In general, it depends on the same kind of measures that any urban or rural comparison or suburban rural—you know, I come from a state like South Dakota and the experiences in Montana, where Billings isn't the same as a Denver, Colorado, and neither is a Rapid City the same as a Minneapolis.

And so it comes down to teacher quality; comes down to leader effectiveness; it comes down to adequate infrastructure and resources. And so there may be differences, but where we see those differences it usually amounts to one of those factors being stronger in one area or worse in another.

There is high mobility among these students from those urban to suburban to urban, and so we see that being a challenge for these systems to not only track those students but ensure that where they left off, that the next system picks up on the experience of those students.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Dr. Roessel, I think that the suicide rate amongst Native American teens is perhaps the highest of any population group in the country. I think it is more than 2.5 the national average.

You know, what, if anything, is being done to address this phenomenon specifically, and/or the underlying factors that may lead to such an alarming rate?

Mr. ROESSEL. One of the primary factors, if you look at suicide rates for young people, is identity—where they fit in into the culture, into the community, into their traditional culture or the Western culture. And I think one of the things that I think BIE tribally controlled schools and BIE-funded schools really focus well on is bringing in that tribal type of education—talking about language, heritage, culture, history.

That helps identify. Research shows that if a student knows who they are, they are less—they are going to be more successful, they are less likely to have problems.

Chairman KLINE. I am sorry, the gentleman's time has expired. Mr. Grothman?

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you. A few questions.

First of all, on one of the sheets we have here I just wanted to make sure this is right. They talk about per-student funding for these schools, and they give us the last 4 years. I think the year we are about to begin they are anticipating \$20,600 per child. Is that accurate?

Mr. ROESSEL. No. That is not accurate.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Okay. What do you think the funding is per child on one of these—

Mr. ROESSEL. I will use the GAO number, which said about \$15,000, but it—and they said it was higher. But I would—also in the very next sentence they talk about the reasons why.

Our schools have to also have a water department. They have to have a housing department. They have to have an EPA inspector. They have all these other things that most schools have within a municipality.

So in our case with BIE schools, you have a lot of other needs because they are so remote. A lot of our schools predate the public school system in these very remote areas.

And I think it comes back to Mr. Jeffries' question in terms of one of the reasons why is that these are in very remote locations where we have some of our schools, and so they have to do a lot of other things than just educate.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Okay. The numbers they give us here, they do say \$15,000 for Bureau of Indian Affairs, but then they say the Department of Education is kicking in another \$4,700. That is how they get over this \$20,000 number.

You know, some money coming in from Bureau of Indian Affairs, some money coming in from Department of Education. They say when you combine those they are well over \$20,000. Is that possibly true?

Mr. ROESSEL. Again, the part of the money is being used for things other than just education.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Okay.

Next question: You said a lot of the kids are attending the public schools, but when you have a Bureau of Indian Affairs school are they still covered by state laws as far as licensure is concerned, mandated state tests, that sort of thing?

Mr. ROESSEL. Most of the process that we have within our BIE is that we defer to the state from which the school resides, so yes. In terms of the graduation, most of our schools, because, as Mr. Mendoza mentioned, a lot of our students go from one school to another, they have adopted graduation requirements that are similar to the state so that they are not falling behind if they were to transfer to another school within their state.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Okay. Now, I mean, I assume, you know, like I said, we have this \$20,000 figure, and they are saying about \$4,700 actually from Department of Education and \$15,800 from Bureau of Indian Affairs.

I realize a lot of these schools are very small in their economies of scale, and I know smaller schools—but even then, even, let's say, \$5,000 is going for something else. That has still got to be way over that national average per child.

Is there some breakdown as to where this money is going, or the average amount spent per teacher per school, or is some of the money getting stuck up in the Bureau of Indian Affairs bureaucracy? How do you go through that much money? Still not—

Mr. ROESSEL. Well, again, I think, I mean, I will—just look at the GAO report. They actually explain it that, again, when I say we have a water treatment center, when I was a superintendent of school I had to have my own water department. We had to do testing to comply to EPA standards.

We had to have our own housing, so we had our own housing maintenance people. You know, so you have all these other things that a city would take care of if they had a school district.

You don't have that in Indian country. They have to take care of everything.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Okay—

Mr. ROESSEL.—fire department was also something we had to—

Mr. GROTHMAN. Yes.

Mr. ROESSEL. Things like that.

Mr. GROTHMAN. I will give you one final question. There have been people trying to poke around as to why the test scores aren't that good, and people never like to talk about family and this.

But it seems to me that normally when I talk to my teachers a lot of times the family has a big impact on how well the children are doing. And, you know, we have been through a situation in this country over the last 50 years in which the number of children in nontraditional families has grown through—because various federal programs encourage not raising children in a traditional family.

Do you have statistics on the reservations or among these kids the number of children who have, say, a mother and father at home, rather than not a mother and father at home?

Mr. ROESSEL. I don't have statistics, but anecdotally, we know that is happening and their—the families are large at the homes, so they have grandparents and parents and aunts and uncles. And so a child may not have their own room. So we know that anecdotally.

Mr. GROTHMAN. I don't understand. You say there are a lot of children in traditional family or are not?

Mr. ROESSEL. I would say there are a lot that are not. They are very young families, parents that are very young.

I know when I was superintendent the age of some of the parent-teacher conference participants were very young; you thought they were actually students sometimes. So you don't have that foundation that you might have.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Well, young—the young thing doesn't—

Chairman KLINE. The gentleman's time has expired.

Ms. Bonamici?

Ms. BONAMICI. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Chairman Kline and Ranking Member Scott. This is an important hearing, an important issue.

It is pretty clear that we have work to do both to improve the Bureau of Indian Education schools as well as addressing the educational outcomes for all American Indian and Alaska Native students.

So Salem, Oregon, which is just south of the district I represent, there is the Chemawa Indian School. It has been open since 1880; it is the oldest continuously operating off-reservation boarding school in the country.

It has struggled over the years with budget deficits, and there appears to be a clear need for some improved federal support and oversight.

And of course, Chemawa is not alone. There are too many, as we heard already, Bureau of Indian Education schools that are operating facilities that are in disrepair and need some work, and also produce graduation rates and math and reading scores that aren't what they need to be.

But we also need to discuss the educational outcomes and the dropout rates that affect the more than 90 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native students who are enrolled in public schools. And I am glad we are talking—having that conversation, as well.

Director Mendoza, you discuss in your testimony the STEP, State Tribal Education Partnership program. In Oregon the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation are participating, the confederated tribes in the Pendleton School District, and that partnership have yielded some promising results. The state, the local education agency, and the tribal education agency have collaborated on a new educator evaluation system, and that places emphasis on the students' culture and heritage.

Can you discuss the preliminary results of the STEP program? Do we have information about student outcomes? How is that program working?

And I do want to save time for a question for Dr. Roessel, as well.

Mr. MENDOZA. No, thank you for the question.

The STEP program, when we came here to Congress in, you know, kind of the idea of it 2010, 2011, we were met with, you know, how is this going to work? You know, not only was there lack of faith and concern for whether or not tribes were ready to do this or whether states were willing to do this or vice versa.

STEP is now, coupled with the Sovereignty in Indian Education Grant and the 2020 Grants that are on their way, really calling that question.

Ms. BONAMICI. How widespread is the use of the STEP program?

Mr. MENDOZA. Yes. So we have six tribes and four grants represented through there. It is a small amount, but this is how movements start. This is how tribal college and university movement, but 40 years, you know, dramatically changed the experience for Native education—

Ms. BONAMICI. So you would say that is an effective partnership?

Mr. MENDOZA. It is effective. It is tremendously effective, really popular. We just finished a webinar the other day that talked about the application process for STEP. Over 80 participants were on the phone there.

The tribes are working with their state educational agencies. State education agencies are building their capacities simultaneous to tribal education agencies, and we are getting to concrete outcomes—

Ms. BONAMICI. Terrific.

Mr. MENDOZA.—around what their—outlined in their programs.

Ms. BONAMICI. That is very encouraging.

Mr. MENDOZA. And it is only in its third year of funding, so we are really excited about this momentum.

Ms. BONAMICI. Terrific. Thank you so much.

And, Dr. Roessel, I mentioned the Chemawa School in Oregon. They currently have a superintendent but at times they have had to operate without one. They have had challenges. It is just an example of the challenges that the BIE schools face retaining effective school leaders, and it is—I don't think that anyone would disagree that effective school leadership is important.

So can you talk about strategies that have proved effective at recruiting and retaining school leaders and educators to work at the BIE schools? And if there are effective strategies, can those be replicated? And what might be some of the barriers that are preventing wider implementation of those successful strategies?

Mr. ROESSEL. Thank you for that question. I think in terms of Chemawa, we are very excited with the superintendent that is there and the way she is turning that school around and really working well with the students.

One of the challenges that we have in recruiting quality staff, whether they are teachers or principals or superintendents, is housing. Teacher housing is very difficult.

I know we hear stories all the time, and I have experienced it myself, where we have hired a teacher. They drive out to the school, they see their house, they never even unpack their U-Haul. They just keep driving because it is just so deplorable. So we need to try to repair those.

I think one of the things that we have done, in partnership with ED, is the clarification that they have made for our schools of money that can be used to help renovate some of the houses that we have out in Indian country, so that is one of the big things I think that will—it is a little thing but it has a big impact if you can have a good teacher there as opposed to starting school without a teacher.

And so I think the other thing, too, is that we need to—with HUD we have a \$10 million in the '16 budget to try to build new teacher housing, also.

Ms. BONAMICI. Thank you.

My time has expired. Thank you.

Chairman KLINE. Gentlady's time has expired.

Mr. Brat, you are recognized.

Mr. BRAT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for being with us today. I just have a couple kind of big, 30,000-foot kind of questions. You are kind of in a unique situation where you have the ability to envision your future, and we want to help.

And so at the end of the day, our public school systems face huge challenges with the vision problem. They want to pack everything into the curriculum, right?

And so we want to do the skills stuff, the STEM stuff, the fine arts get left behind a lot of times. We want to teach kids about

business. They graduate high school without even knowing what a business is sometimes.

Parents have multiple objectives in their mind, right? They want success in business, but they also want, you know, reading, writing, and arithmetic skills inculcated.

And so just so we are on the same page, I mean, what is the vision you have for these kids? At the end of the day, when they graduate from high school, what do you want to see?

I mean, if you could have it, your dream, ideal education—because you talked about your culture and history and all that. I am hugely in favor of that. Without meaning and passion in their life the kids don't even know why they are studying.

So at the end of the day, what is your vision for what you want for these kids at the end of, say, high school?

Mr. ROESSEL. I think one thing is that they would be in a position to make a decision and not have a decision made for them, so that they can say, "I want to go to college," or maybe in some cases, like when I was at Rough Rock I had a graduate who said, "I want to become a medicine man. I want to learn my grandfather's ways." That is just as successful. And he was accepted to colleges.

So I think it is giving them the tools that they can make a decision, and that is reflective of who they are, where they come from.

Of course, it has to have reading and writing and math to be successful today. But you have to know who you are.

And when you come from a tribal school, when you come from a tribal community, when you talk about education you are talking about nation-building. You are talking about sovereignty.

So they come in and it is about survival. But when they leave it is about identity. And so I think that is what I would see as a vision for our BIE system or any system that deals with Indian students.

Mr. BRAT. Any difference or—

Mr. MENDOZA. No. I think we share a lot of that in common, and I think I would add—maybe Dr. Roessel is saying the same thing—opportunity, making sure that they, in their foundation of who they are, they know that that's been—it is certainly absent, but throughout history has been, by no fault of their own, and their parents, and others, torn from them, if not purposefully targeted for elimination.

And so they need that in order to provide for a foundation of these other areas that I know that they would want to seek opportunities in math, language, science, you know, all of the other fields that every other youth in this country aspire and dream about, but they want to know who they are. And they know that their family members have a lot to contribute to that, and right now they are not—at least in—out beyond the tribal colleges—or tribal—tribally controlled schools, they are not seeing that in the systems that they navigate.

So they want to come back to their communities, just like rural Bozeman, Montana, other places like that. And so they want to see their communities thrive and grow in healthy ways.

Mr. BRAT. Good. So that is how—and then, so the vision thing is pretty standard. Most parents have said similar. I just wanted to make sure. So that sounds like the standard American dream

kind of thing, getting the skills and being able to make choices and being prepared.

And then up here, I mean, we used to have this thing called the 10th Amendment to the Constitution—that is kind of an inside joke—where we would—states and localities were responsible for education. Now everything goes through D.C. and it is ineffective.

So when you look at the structure, you are in a unique place where you can kind of dictate a different kind of structure if that is good for you. What do you see as the structure you would favor if you could just start from scratch, right? Have a tribe, local, state mandates, federal mandate—what is getting in your way and what kind of structure would you conceive of if you are just starting from scratch to get it right?

Mr. ROESSEL. Well, I think the current structure within BIE, I think there is the opportunity, through the tribal grant—Tribally Controlled School Act, to allow—I don't think it is for BIE to say, "This is the structure," and I don't think it is right for the Federal Government to say, "This is the structure."

I think it is right for the tribe to say, "This is the structure I want," to create that outcome that we talked about earlier, that vision. So I would assume it would look different at different tribes, just like local control looks different all across this country and how it is exercised.

But I do think that there has to be accountability, and I think that is what tribes are looking at right now: How do we ensure that we get that vision, that we don't just put money into a school and we don't get where we want to go?

And so I think the structure is accountability, and I think that is the word that we hear all throughout, you know, in education. But tribes have not had that role in accountability. Giving them that role in accountability, I think through the STEP grant, through our Sovereignty in Education grant, gives them that opportunity to build from there.

Chairman KLINE. Gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. BRAT. Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman KLINE. Mr. Grijalva?

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the hearing.

Mr. Mendoza, if I may, in the initiative and in the process of looking at Indian country and the first Americans in a comprehensive way, one of—I—in my opinion, one of the most glaring examples of historical neglect—is education. Whether it is a traditional public school, a charter school, a for-profit school, a tribally controlled school, there—the statistics we are seeing about Indian education is not particular to the 7 percent BIE schools. It is reflective of the entire education outcomes for Native students.

Tell me about what the comprehensive need is to look at this in the totality. Today we are dealing with one part, but there is a totality here that we are not talking about, and it is glaring, and it is not a good picture. So if you wouldn't mind, in terms of the initiative, looking at it collectively.

Mr. MENDOZA. Yes. Well, I—again, if I keep saying it over and over it is because every time I step in front of Native youth and elders and tribal leaders it is the first thing that they say to us is

that we not only lack a meaningful role in the education of students, but it is not rooted in the foundation of language, history and culture.

And whether the circumstance is on a reservation in Pine Ridge, South Dakota, or an urban Native center such as the secretary visited in Denver, Colorado, they wouldn't change it for a world if it meant that it cost them their identity. Whether it is strong or as fractionated as it can be, that collective bond throughout history and how it is going to be moving forward is that they need that in order to succeed in the world around them. So they will hold on dearly to that.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Yes.

Mr. MENDOZA. So as much as educators, much as decision-makers such as ourselves can honestly say that needs to be a starting point, that needs to be the case if we are going to be able to address these challenges for these students.

Mr. GRIJALVA. I think it is part of the education. You said it very well, that identity is critical to success.

And, you know, after decades upon decades of forced assimilation with no other option and no retention of one's culture or language, there's going to be outcomes and they are not good. And I think we have to lay that premise on the table in the discussion of Native education as a whole before we start looking at parts.

If I may, Doctor, consultation and sovereignty. Consultation as a mechanism for involvement of tribal leadership in the decision-making role that they want, and the issue of sovereignty in terms of being able to craft and design what they think the curriculum should be for the students that they represent.

Those, I think, are key, particularly consultation, as part of the trust responsibility. Is that an effective—is that being used effectively, in terms of how we bring tribal leadership and tribes into the decision-making?

Mr. ROESSEL. I think it will be.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Okay.

Mr. ROESSEL. I think as we begin that process I think, again, you can invite someone to the table, but if there is no role for them, they are not going to know what to do. And so I think right now what we are looking at is we are defining that role.

We are looking at saying, okay, the tribe is there, "What do you want?" The same question that was asked earlier: "What is your vision?"

Having that turn around, and with our Tribal Education Department grant that was recently funded, that's going to allow tribes the opportunity to ask that question: What do we want? What is our vision for education within ourselves? And then what do we need to do to get there?

And so I think one of the things that BIE is doing is moving away from a direct provider of education and to a school improvement agency so we support the tribes, we no longer dictate to them. And that is where we are going with our reforms.

Mr. GRIJALVA. I think the joint memorandum between ED and Interior is a good starting point because I think it provides a way to look at this comprehensively, as Mr. Mendoza indicated, and make—have some roots to what is being done.

The last question, just because it is about resources—little magic too—you have got to—resources are needed. You mentioned creating a plan for school construction based on the Department of Defense, since it is—which the Defense Department has done successfully.

Could you speak to the different funding levels between the Department of Defense and Interior with regard to education, facilities, school construction, et cetera?

Chairman KLINE. Unfortunately, you will have to answer that for the record. The gentleman's time has—

Mr. GRIJALVA. It was a good question.

Chairman KLINE.—they are all good questions.

Mr. Rokita, you are recognized.

Mr. ROKITA. I thank the Chairman. I thank you for holding this important full committee hearing that is a follow up to the hearing our subcommittee had 2 weeks ago on this. These are important issues. We are getting to the heart of it now.

I want to start by thanking my friend, Mr. Roessel, for appearing before this committee this morning. In March together we toured two BIE schools on the Fort Apache Reservation in Arizona, and I certainly learned a lot.

I want to thank you for your service. And I don't say that to other directors, necessarily, that sit in your chair, but the fact of the matter is the BIE has named 33 directors in the past 36 years, and you are one of the longest-staying directors.

I can tell that there is passion in your work and you care about what is happening and what you are doing, so I will encourage you to continue that. We need your leadership.

Mr. ROESSEL. Thank you.

Mr. ROKITA. Some of that 33 in 36 years might—may be because of the restructuring that has taken place a number of times at the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and I want to know your opinion, Mr. Roessel, how those—if those restructurings improved or hurt the school system in the delivery of services, and how—your testimony accounts for a lot of restructuring that you want to do in the BIE—how is yours going to be different?

Mr. ROESSEL. Well, I came into this position with a lot of these reorganizations kind of piled on top of each other.

Mr. ROKITA. Yes.

Mr. ROESSEL. I think when we started our reform effort we really tried to get to the root of it and not do another cafeteria-style reform, where let's just pull some more and put it on our tray. Try to get to the root cause. The root cause is, one, our buildings are falling down, and our instruction needs to be improved.

So starting from those two points, I think we have really tried to address how we make that change. If everything is targeted in that classroom, I think we have a better chance up—of finding our success, and that is what we really try to do. How do we support the teacher, get new teachers, and improve—

Mr. ROKITA. So the previous restructurings, as obvious as it sounds, what you are saying, the previous restructurings didn't have that focus?

I will take that as a no.

Mr. ROESSEL. I don't think it had—I don't think it—again, I think it piled things on. It didn't clarify the roles; it added roles. And I think when you add more duties to people it made it muddier.

Mr. ROKITA. Okay.

Mr. ROESSEL. And I will say that, and I think we are trying to clarify and clear it up, things that have happened over the last—you know, I mean, just look at our success of BIE. We have not had success. And so when an organization has not had success, sometimes you wait for that perfect plan—

Mr. ROKITA. And it never comes.

Mr. ROESSEL.—and we can't afford that. Our kids deserve better.

And so this plan that we have right now I think addresses the fundamental issues, and that is instruction and improving it in the classrooms.

Mr. ROKITA. And if asked, you will stay to carry out that plan.

Mr. ROESSEL. Yes.

Mr. ROKITA. Thank you.

During our time together in Arizona and my subsequent visits to other schools in other states, it became clear that there are a variety of approaches to running the schools and addressing the issues that arise. What technical assistance does the BIE provide to support the tribes that are struggling to adequately serve their students, and what is the current process, if even one exists, for sharing best practices amongst the different schools?

Mr. ROESSEL. I think within our reform and creating the education resource centers, that will provide us the opportunity to have schools—not just a single school, but a group of schools to collaborate. So many of our schools are so small that it—we only have one teacher per grade level. So if you had a professional development on reading skills or decoding, you would only have one teacher working together.

So what we are trying to do is bring a collaborative impact, so get schools together that can work together so you have three or four or five or more third grade teachers that are focused on learning.

So I think one of the things is that—is really trying to provide that support to the school, to the tribes, to the teachers in a way that we haven't done in the past.

Mr. ROKITA. Do you share best practices?

Mr. ROESSEL. Yes.

Mr. ROKITA. And you are the facilitator of that?

Mr. ROESSEL. We would—that is what we want within our education resource centers.

The other thing we are doing is we have really upgraded our communication outreach. We are providing links and an avenue for our teachers to talk amongst each other and with each other.

It hasn't been like that in the past. One school wouldn't know what another school was doing.

Mr. ROKITA. Yes.

Mr. ROESSEL. Now we are trying to build those links.

Mr. ROKITA. Great. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, my time is about to expire so I will yield back. First time in history.

Chairman KLINE. I thank the gentleman.

Ms. Adams, you are recognized.

Ms. ADAMS. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Ranking Member, thank you, as well.

And thank you, gentlemen, for your testimony.

Poverty is a challenge facing a large number of American Indian and Alaskan Native students, which affects about one-third of students in that group. And studies have shown that poverty has a direct impact on a child's readiness on their ability to learn and the likelihood of dropping out.

I understand, Mr. Mendoza, that the Department of Interior has initiatives to address the dire conditions of schools, but what, if any, initiatives are underway to address the poverty rates among these youngsters?

Mr. MENDOZA. Appreciate the opportunity to expand on some of that.

I think one of the priorities for the administration in this area is certainly early learning, and through our preschool development grants in looking at how we can provide access, the President's budget request does allow for the Bureau of Indian Education and tribes to have access to those important grants. That is a foundation that, you know, \$7 on—return on investment on every dollar, and we know how critical that is for early learners as a whole, and especially in Indian country, where there is such a challenge on that early start, that is an important piece for us.

The other areas that we have been focusing on is not only the formula dollars that go to provide for the unique academic and cultural needs for Native students through Title VII, but also addressing teacher leader corps through our professional development grants. These dollars get at that instructional gap that is the point of Director Roessel's comments around the shortages that they face.

We have over 900 teachers that have been a part of that program since its development. Over half of these teachers are in the process of payback, in terms of the work side of it, and so continuing to strengthen these programs is essential. Many of them are grow-your-own programs from tribal colleges and universities.

In our Native Youth Community Projects we are providing for comprehensive ways that both tribes, state educational agencies, institutions of higher education can provide for a diverse array of comprehensive strategies in school or out of school to be able to address in a community-based approach these kinds of multitude of issues.

So through the development of a needs assessment, you know, designing those strategies could be diverse—could be addressing counseling, could be addressing early learning, could be addressing Native language revitalization and preservation. So these are some of the mechanisms that we call upon.

Ms. ADAMS. Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Roessel, given that the education standards set for BIE schools are set by the Department of ED, can you speak to the level of coordination that takes place between the Bureau of Indian Education and the Department to ensure that these programs are administered effectively?

Mr. ROESSEL. I think one of the things that we have had as a goal as we started this reform effort is how do we try to increase that coordination and collaboration with all entities, and in particular, the Department of ED. In our proposed reorganization, the senior management of our Department of ED funding, that team that oversees special ed, that team that oversees Title I, will be moving back to D.C. from currently Albuquerque to continue that coordination and to be closer to where they need to be in order to have that collaboration with the Department of ED.

So it has been a foundation as we move forward to make sure that we continue that collaboration, you know, either at the D.C. level and also out in the field. So that same staff now will be closer to our schools also in our realignment. So we are trying to ensure that we keep that coordination not just at the upper levels, but also down at the school level where it really makes a difference.

Ms. ADAMS. Thank you, gentlemen.

Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Chairman KLINE. Thank the gentlelady.

Mr. Allen?

Mr. ALLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I am proud to say that my grandmother on my dad's side was a descendant of the Cherokee Nation, and of course she was—played a critical role in my dad's life. My dad was the first in his family to attend college and graduate with a degree, and he told me often what she meant to him.

Unfortunately, I never knew her because she passed away before I was born. But I am proud to have that heritage.

Certainly, you know, I have looked at some statistics as far as the unemployment rate. For members of the American Indian community it is about double what it is nationwide, and obviously the reason—at least I learned at an early age that we wanted to get an education was so we could get a good job. And I have had the privilege of providing folks, through my business career, with jobs.

So, you know, what we are trying to find out here is how we can change what is going on, and, you know, one of the criticisms I guess is who is actually in charge here? In other words, if you could walk me through the organization of the Bureau of Indian Education and the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Management and how their responsibilities either overlap or how they work together, and like I said, who is in charge and who do we need to look to as far as accountability.

Dr. Roessel?

Mr. ROESSEL. Okay. Within Indian Affairs you have the assistant secretary and then you have the deputy assistant secretary for management. They oversee the—we call him DAS-M—oversees the contracting, facilities, and different areas like that at a higher level, and then you have the BIE and Bureau of Indian Education, and we take care of just the educational portion.

Currently, for any of the contracting or facilities or I.T., we do not have that under my jurisdiction right now. But in our proposal, in our restructuring and realignment with the Secretarial Order 3334, those areas will fall under BIE, so we will have the ability to have our own people talk and be able to build budgets for facilities, build budgets and implement I.T. at the school level so that

teachers have the resources they need, as well as our information system that with contracting we will now have the ability to ensure that textbooks are in the classroom on the first day of school.

H.R. will also be a part of—with this new reorganization—will come under us. So we will ensure that teachers are in the classroom on the first day of school and not on the last day of school. So—

Mr. ALLEN. So we are addressing—

Mr. ROESSEL. We are addressing—

Mr. ALLEN. Okay. Is there a timetable on this—on trying to accomplish in—so we can look to someone for real accountability in this?

Mr. ROESSEL. The Secretarial Order 3334 has a timetable of being implemented by September 30th of this year.

Mr. ALLEN. Okay.

Mr. ROESSEL. We want—I want it to be done earlier so we can be ready for school year. Will it be fully implemented by the beginning of this school year? No. But I think parts can be and we can then start achieving the outcomes that we think we need in those areas that we no longer—or we don't have control over right now.

Mr. ALLEN. Well, thank you. And let us know how we can help you accelerate that, because obviously we need to do that.

You talked about the state of the facilities being dilapidated and whatnot, and the President requested \$1 billion in his budget for the Native American education, pretty much for facilities. And then in past funding requests there was not funding provided in the President's budget for school construction. Can you tell me why we are, you know, why we are at this point and exactly why we haven't looked at this before?

Mr. ROESSEL. I was not here for the previous budgets, but I think right now a big part of the focus is, you know, we are where we are and how are we going to get out of it? And I think that has been the big focus that we have had.

Secretary Jewell has had laser focus and commitment to try to improve education outcomes for Indian students, and the President has supported that. And I think right now what we are looking at is how do we try to build out of that.

I think we are looking at that with the 2016 budget, finally complete that 2004 list, so we are looking forward, in addition, expanding the ability to provide new facilities by component or total school. So I think we are looking at trying to create a plan forward, and that is the focus now.

Mr. ALLEN. Okay. Well, thank you, Doctor.

My time is up. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman KLINE. I thank the gentleman.

Everyone has had a chance to ask questions, but we have had some requests for a little follow up. I know that Mr. Grijalva asked a question and I cut him off, so we are going, without objection, we are going to—I am going to recognize Mr. Grijalva for a couple of minutes to get that. Mr. Grothman had a follow-up question, and Mr. Rokita did.

So I would think this whole thing will only last 6 or 7 minutes, but I want to give them a chance because they will plague me if we don't do this. So without objection, that is what we will do.

And, Mr. Grijalva, you are recognized to repeat briefly your question so they have time to answer.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much and, Mr. Chairman, thank you for the courtesy. Appreciate it.

I was talking about a helpful comparison to make. Since the Federal Government really operates two school districts, BIE and the Department of Defense, the helpful comparison I was looking for is comparing the amount of money allocated or used for school constructions at Department of Defense and the Bureau of Indian Education.

Doctor or Mr. Mendoza, whomever.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ROESSEL. What we have tried to do—is take those lessons learned from Department of Defense and transfer them over to our approach with facilities. The former director of Department of Defense is on our team, and we are in the process of helping—or she is in the process of helping us develop a long-term strategic plan much like they instituted at Department of Defense.

I do not know how much money they got at Department of Defense. I do know, and we do know, and everyone knows \$1.3 billion is what has been identified to fix this problem. That is not going to come overnight. We know it is going to have to be a plan in the future and it is going to have to be a joint effort by the administration and Congress as we move forward.

But we are hopeful to provide a plan to everybody so that we know exactly where we are going and when we expect to get there, and that is the completion and the updating of all our school buildings.

Mr. MENDOZA. I think I would just add that there are two completely different contexts as well, and I think that is important. There was a previous kind of point that I felt like I wanted to make around this that, you know, work in Indian country, infrastructure in Indian country is expensive. You know, you get 100 percent, 150 percent increase for crossing reservation boundaries because of the capacity there.

So in addition to the multitude of challenges that Director Roessel pointed out, it is not only a different context but a different history as well. And so the growth of those systems, the changes, the fragmented kind of ways that Dr. Roessel pointed to in trying to address those challenges is a part of the reality of what Director Roessel is currently trying to unravel, and the secretary is trying to play an appropriate role in that from the standpoint of ESEA and other resources around the administration.

Chairman KLINE. Thank you. The gentleman's extra time has expired.

Mr. Grothman, you are recognized for a couple minutes.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Yes. Just a follow up on my past questions: First of all, again, it says here total per-student funding of \$20,500 broken down \$15,000-plus from BIE, another \$4,700 from the Department of Education. A lot of public schools that I am familiar with pay for their own sewer and water if they are in the country, so that is not an unusual thing or particularly expensive things.

Could you elaborate on these high costs and maybe eventually get this committee maybe the finance statements from some of

those Bureau of Indian Affairs so we can get a handle on how you can spend over \$20,000 a child and not have enough to repair the roof. See what I am saying? Because most of the schools that I am from, \$11,000, \$11,500.

I realize you don't have that great attendance so there are economies of scale, but could you elaborate on it again and maybe afterwards get this committee just, boom, pick out some of the BIE—the bigger BIE schools here and say, "This is the money we are getting in; this is where it is going," so we know where the money is going. Because for over \$20,000 a child there shouldn't be a financial problem.

Mr. ROESSEL. I will be happy to do that.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Okay.

Mr. ROESSEL. I dispute the total number.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Okay.

Mr. ROESSEL. I think it is very easy to add all the numbers up and then divide by the number of students, but that is not really a comparable rate because you also have—each of those tribally controlled schools have their own administration that is a portion of that, so you are lumping in a lot of money.

One of the things is, again, as we look at our school system our transportation cost is much higher. Many of our schools are on dirt roads. The turnaround on buses, the ability to keep them, you know, operating, as some of your colleagues when they visited Little Singer School know all too well, the dirt roads. That has a huge impact on the turnaround.

The gas, as Mr. Mendoza mentioned, in terms of the oil and the boilers and things like that—a lot of these are old systems so the cost to keep them up is very high. So you have people that—like the school I was at we had a boiler operator, you know, somebody that knew things, and he really worked with just, you know, bailing wire and duct tape on an old system. So you had these things breaking down all the time. They have to spend money on those items.

So I think, you know, when you look at transportation costs, when you look at, you know, sewer, when you look at a fire department—the school I was at, I had my own fire department, so a fire truck and the upkeep and all of these things that came with it. Those are things that most schools do not have. They are separate.

And I think, you know, it is very easy to make the general statement, but I think if you start looking at the remoteness of the schools, the quality of the school buildings, looking at what they have to provide, you know, the—we had our own security—expanded security office because we were so remote.

These different areas I think you look at, and that brings that number down considerably—

Chairman KLINE. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. Rokita, you are recognized for a couple minutes for your follow up.

Mr. ROKITA. Again, I thank the Chairman.

I didn't get a chance to ask Mr. Mendoza any questions. I would like to now.

Mr. Mendoza, you are familiar with the Johnson-O'Malley programs, right?

Mr. MENDOZA. Yes.

Mr. ROKITA. Education has been the primary user of those programs, where Native American children who go to public schools, those schools can get reimbursed for some of those expenses, and also parents of those students have a larger voice than perhaps usual in that public school.

It has taken 20 years to get an accurate head count. Are you satisfied with that, as a representative of the administration? And what can you do to fix it quickly?

Mr. MENDOZA. Well, I think the more appropriate person to answer this question would be Dr. Roessel, since Department of Interior administers the Johnson-O'Malley program. I think from the effect that it has on public education, we have a deep interest in the comprehensive nature that I outlined within my testimony and through some of the question and answer today on not only the health but the vitality of the Johnson-O'Malley programs, because they target public school students, and so—

Mr. ROKITA. Thank you. I can probably get to Dr. Roessel quicker than I can to you, so let me take the last minute and ask a follow up there.

When you met with the tribal leaders about moving BIE out of Interior, did you also talk about moving Johnson-O'Malley out of Interior to Education and is there an opinion there? And what is the administration's opinion on that—on such a move?

Mr. MENDOZA. I would say that was a—that was not an explicit part of the conversations that I recall early on, but that they assumed that would be a part of it. And so their protection of not only the trust responsibility that Department of Interior currently holds for that and any extension of that to the Department of Education was one that they wanted to see action and, more importantly, results.

And so whether it is Johnson-O'Malley, whether it is Title VII, the tribal leaders want to see more meaningful involvement and how they could have a stronger role in the education of their citizens and the state citizens, as well. We cannot forget that these are state—are citizens of their states, and so in that sense there is a shared responsibility for these students.

Chairman KLINE. Thank you very much.

We have now had every one of my colleagues has a chance or maybe a chance-plus, so we are about to close the hearing, but I would like to yield to the Ranking Member, Mr. Scott, for any closing comments that he may have.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, we are just looking at some data we have. It looks like the Department of Defense is getting significantly more money to build their schools in spite of the fact that it apparently costs more to build them on reservations. That is not complete, but we will get the exact figures.

It is obvious, Mr. Chair, that the Bureau of Indian Education is making progress, but the status quo is not satisfactory. We need to follow up with the budget requests to make sure that the agency is getting sufficient resources, but we also have to follow up with the Department of Education to make sure that the 93 percent of American Indian and Alaskan Native students get the quality edu-

cation they deserve; approximately 93 percent are in public schools, and there is a huge achievement gap there that needs to be addressed.

So I appreciate you holding the hearing and I yield back.

Chairman KLINE. I thank the gentleman.

I thank the witnesses. It really was a terrific panel, as we had anticipated.

This has been a knotty problem for a long time. I think that we all recognize that.

I was just looking here at the Snyder Act, 1921, where the Bureau of Indian Affairs is directed to do a number of things—spend money, and direct, supervise, and for all sorts of things, including general support and civilization, including education. So the federal government's tasks have been around for a long time, and it gets complicated sometimes by individual treaties and other legislation and so forth.

But the bottom—at the end of this process we still have children going to schools that are not even safe. And so we do need to get to the bottom, and the questions a number of my colleagues—to you particularly, Dr. Roessel, you are the 33rd in 36 years, director, and there have been gosh knows how many reorganization plans. You talked about them stacking up and adding more responsibilities.

It sounds in your testimony like you are really, really trying to clean that up and get a plan that will work, a plan for a structure and moving the responsibility for construction into the BIE instead of somewhere over here. And so that leads to the question that Mr. Allen had, well, who is in charge?

Again, not to blame. We are all to blame in some degree. But what are we going to do about it?

And so we are very, very anxious that your new organization succeed and that your plan succeed. And then the plan, when you are fully responsible here, to address the deplorable conditions in these schools—literally falling-apart schools—well, that plan can't just be something that sits around since 2004 and nobody knows how to execute it or get it done. In the meantime, you had whole classes—whole classes have gone through school—certainly through high school—in northern Minnesota shivering.

So we will be looking forward to a successful reorganization and to seeing the plan to address these schools as soon as you can get it.

And, Mr. Mendoza, thank you very much. It is good to have a representative from Department of Education.

We get a lot of chance to talk with the Department of Education. Not so much with the BIA and BIE. But we clearly have an education problem here and we, I think in a very bipartisan way, are determined to get to the bottom of it.

So thank you very much. I appreciate your presence here today and your forthright answers to the questions.

There being no further business, committee stands adjourned.

[Questions submitted for the record and their responses follow:]



COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND THE WORKFORCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
2181 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6100

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August 7, 2015

Dr. Charles Roessel
Director
Bureau of Indian Education
U.S. Department of Interior
MS-3642-MIB
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240


Dear Dr. Roessel:

Thank you for testifying at the May 14, 2015, hearing on "Examining the Federal Government's Mismanagement of Native American Schools." I appreciate your participation.

Enclosed are additional questions submitted by members of the Committee after the hearing. Please provide written responses no later than Monday, August 31, 2015, for inclusion in the final hearing record. Responses should be sent to Matthew Frame on the Committee staff, and he can be contacted at (202) 225-6558 or at matthew.frame@mail.house.gov.

Thank you again for your contributions to the work of the Committee.

Sincerely,


JOHN KLINE
Chairman
Committee on Education and the Workforce

Dr. Charles Roessel
August 7, 2015
Page 2

Rep. Glenn 'GT' Thompson (R-PA)

1. In your testimony, you mentioned some of the significant challenges the BIE faces in improving educational opportunities for Indian children. Can you elaborate on how the blurred lines of communication between the BIE, BIA, and the Department of Interior have contributed to these challenges?
2. I would like to thank you for your recognition of the importance of higher education/professional career preparation for BIE students. Aside from funding, what support can the federal government provide to BIE schools to help grow and strengthen college-readiness programs?
3. What is the status of Career and Technical Education in BIE schools? Is there anything we can be doing to help cultivate these types of programs?

[Responses to questions submitted for the record follow:]



United States Department of the Interior

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND THE WORKFORCE

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#1 Enclosure

The Honorable John Kline, Chairman
House Education and the Workforce Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Enclosed are responses prepared by the Bureau of Indian Education in response to questions received following the May 14, 2015, hearing before your Committee titled "Examining the Federal Government's Mismanagement of Native American Schools."

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this material to the Committee.

Sincerely,

Christopher P. Salotti
Legislative Counsel
Office of Congressional
and Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Robert C. Scott
Ranking Member

Responses to Written Questions
Hearing on Indian Education Issues
May 15, 2015

#1 Enclawm

Questions from Representative Glenn Thompson:

- 1. In your testimony, you mentioned some of the significant challenges the BIE faces in improving educational opportunities for Indian children. Can you elaborate on how the blurred lines of communication between the BIE, BIA, and the Department of the Interior have contributed to these challenges?**

Response: Over the last four years, Indian Affairs has been reviewed and surveyed in reference to administrative and educational processes. These reviews resulted in the following reports: the Bronner Study (2012); the Government Accountability Office reports (September 2013 and November 2014); and the *Blueprint for Reform* (June 2014). There are different mission goals and operational policies between the Deputy Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs (Management) (DAS-M), the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), which results in unmet needs not only in the BIA, but also the BIE. The challenge is highlighted in the procurement process, where the needs of the BIE and the BIA are very different.

Another challenge highlighted is the need for Human Resource personnel to understand the unique qualifications necessary for hiring staff, such as principals, teachers, and other educational specialists (i.e., reading specialists and special education teachers) and the unique urgencies of timing in light of the academic calendar.

Following the release of the GAO Report, the Appropriations Committees, in their Joint Explanatory Statement on the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014, stated their expectations that DOI implement certain management reforms:

“The Committees are concerned that management challenges within the Department, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Bureau of Indian Education (collectively, “Indian Affairs”), as identified in a September 2013 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO-13-774), may impact the overall success of the students in the system. Although the Committees are encouraged that Indian Affairs concurred with all of GAO’s recommendations and that a full-time director of the Bureau of Indian Education is in place after a vacancy of more than a year, the Committees expect the Secretary to oversee implementation of these management reforms.”

This resulted in the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs and the BIE issuing the *Blueprint for Reform* in June 2014. Moreover, the BIE has now had a director who has served more than two and a half years in the role of Director or Acting Director. The continuity in BIE leadership has contributed strongly to improved communication and helped to provide important leadership and advocacy for the needs of the BIE within the larger Department.

- 2. I would like to thank you for your recognition of the importance of higher education/professional career preparation for BIE students. Aside from funding, what support can the federal government provide to BIE schools to help grow and strengthen college-readiness programs?**

Responses to Written Questions
Hearing on Indian Education Issues
May 15, 2015

Response: The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools would benefit from partnerships with federal agencies that provide summer internships or other hands-on-learning. Institutions that receive federal support could be encouraged to develop articulation/transfer agreements with BIE schools. In addition, the following are suggestions to help grow and strengthen college-readiness programs:

- Engage parents in the needs of emotional and financial costs associated with having students leave their community to go away to school and consider opportunities to bring students back to the community following graduation.
- Offer workshops in financial aid assistance and opportunities for funding beyond Pell Grants.
- Build in upper level course study and other assessment measures to ensure success in college and move away from remedial instruction and toward enrichment instruction.
- Build mentorship programs that model strong adult contacts to support students in growing their vision for beyond high school (e.g., job shadowing).
- Develop a network of support systems for schools to help students navigate the transition from high school to higher education by establishing a High School Counselors network to bring best practices back to the schools (e.g., the common application process).

3. What is the status of Career and Technical Education in BIE schools? Is there anything we can be doing to help cultivate these types of programs?

Response: Career and Technical Education is an area where Bureau of Indian Education schools are at a disadvantage. Since Carl Perkins was block granted to states, BIE funded schools have lost millions of dollars in CTE. Reinstating the set-aside would be beneficial to all BIE funded high schools.

The Bureau of Indian Education's (BIE) Sherman Indian High School has successful partnerships with local colleges and universities, e.g., Loma Linda University, University of California, Riverside, and the California Polytechnic University, Pomona. These partnerships include health career demonstration forums, a biomedical scholars program, one or two week shadowing/internship programs, and tutoring and reading intervention. Partnerships with other colleges and universities in states that include BIE-funded schools would be equally helpful.

The Navajo Nation reservation hosts a program that supports Arts and Technology and which is tied to STEM fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. More programs and sharing of resources through a Career and Technical Cooperative Agreement Unit would be helpful to allow more students to take advantage of current programs at certain sites, such as auto mechanics, welding, heavy equipment, etc.

[Whereupon, at 12:25 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

