



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240

**MAR 28 2014**

Dear Tribal Leader:

In September 2013, Secretaries Sally Jewell and Arne Duncan convened an American Indian Education Study Group (Study Group), which was charged with finding solutions to the challenges faced by our Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools. I would like to invite you to attend a consultation session with the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to provide feedback on a reform framework for the BIE prepared by the Study Group, and to provide you an update on their important work.

Since September, the Study Group has been busy developing a draft framework for education reform. We conducted numerous listening sessions with tribal leaders and representatives throughout Indian Country to determine how to build the capacity of tribes to operate high-performing schools that ensure all BIE students are well-prepared for college, careers, and tribal and global citizenship. In response to the many insightful comments presented at the listening sessions, we have developed a draft framework based on four pillars of educational reform:

- **Effective Teachers and Principals:** Help tribes identify, recruit, retain and empower diverse, highly effective teachers and principals to maximize achievement in all tribally-controlled schools.
- **Agile Organizational Environment:** Build responsive organizations that provide resources, direction and services to tribes so they can help their students attain high-levels of student achievement.
- **Budget Aligned to Capacity Building:** Develop a budget that is aligned to and supports BIE's new mission of tribal capacity building and scaling up best practices.
- **Comprehensive Support Through Partnerships:** Foster parental, community, and organizational partnerships to provide the emotional and social supports BIE students need in order to be ready to learn.

Enclosed is a more detailed description of the Study Group's work so far, as well as a summary of the insights tribal leaders and representatives have provided at our listening sessions.

During the ongoing development and review process, we encourage you to ask questions and provide comments on the Study Group's draft reform framework at one of four consultations sessions that will be held throughout Indian Country:

Monday, April 28, 2014      9:00 am – 5:00 pm      Loneman Day School, Oglala, SD

Wednesday, April 30, 2014      9:00 am – 5:00 pm      Riverside Indian School, Anadarko, OK

Friday, May 2, 2014            9:00 am – 5:00 pm    Muckleshoot School, Auburn, WA  
Monday, May 5, 2014           9:00 am – 5:00 pm    Gila River Head Start Bldg., Sacaton, AZ

Once we have incorporated feedback from tribal leaders during these consultations, we will present those recommendations to Secretaries Jewell and Duncan for their review.

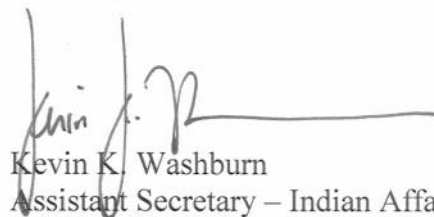
We also invite you to submit comments on or before June 2, 2014, via email at [IAEDTC-CMTS@bia.gov](mailto:IAEDTC-CMTS@bia.gov); fax at (202) 208-3312; or via mail: Bureau of Indian Education, 1849 C Street NW, MS-3609-MIB, Washington, DC 20240. For additional information about the consultation sessions and the Study Group, please visit: <http://www.bie.edu/NewsEvents/StudyGroup/index.htm>.

Finally, I would like to share a piece of exciting news. In January, I appointed Dr. Charles Roessel as the permanent Director of the BIE. During his tenure as acting Director, Dr. Roessel proved to be an effective and successful leader of Indian education, and he brings to the Bureau extensive experience in school leadership and administration. He is a valuable member of my senior management team, and I am confident that you will find him a committed partner in our combined mission to provide better education to Indian students.

Your participation in this process and demand for change is essential. We all agree that creating high-achieving tribally controlled schools is our common goal; and now we must focus on how to get there. I look forward to our continued dialogue with you. Should you have questions, please contact Ms. Jacqueline Cheek, Special Assistant to the BIE Director at (202) 208-6983.

Thank you for your interest and participation.

Sincerely,



Kevin K. Washburn  
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs

Enclosure

## American Indian Education Study Group Enclosure

The Study Group has made significant progress since its inception in September 2013. Consistent with the Obama Administration's commitment to tribal sovereignty and self-determination, the Study Group has spent the last 6 months reaching out to tribal leaders and their representatives to identify issues Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools face as well as possible solutions.

Although the Government shutdown for much of October interrupted the Study Group's work early on, it has been making meaningful and measurable progress. Members of the Study Group spent several weeks visiting BIE-funded and grant schools in New Mexico, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Washington, and Arizona. They also met with numerous representatives including tribal presidents, governors, council members, school principals, teachers, BIA support staff, parents, and members from national education organizations to gather information, listen to stakeholder concerns, and hear their recommendations. In addition, the Study Group engaged tribal leaders at the Tribal Interior Budget Committee conference, at three sessions related to the White House Tribal Nations Conference here in Washington, DC in December and at an event sponsored by the National Congress of American Indians in March. Overall, the Study Group met with nearly 400 individuals and received nearly 200 comments.

As a result of this extensive outreach, we now have a detailed understanding of the issues that BIE schools face on a day-to-day basis. In order to address those issues, many of you have recommended that we:

- Reduce and eliminate redundant reporting requirements to increase the time principals and teachers can focus on instruction and instructional leadership;
- Streamline bureaucratic operational processes (e.g., hiring staff, contracting for services, purchasing of basic supplies, requests for repairs) and improve responsiveness of services to meet the unique needs of schools and school year operations;
- Ensure smooth school year openings such that staff, classrooms, facilities, supplies, and services are ready for students and learning on the first day of each school year;
- Identify and eliminate unnecessary overhead costs;
- Provide incentives to recruit and retain effective teachers and leaders, especially in remote locations;
- Allow for curricular flexibility so that schools can implement Native language and culture classes;
- Prepare principals and teachers for the implementation of the Common Core and ensure an effective information technology infrastructure to administer 21st century assessments;
- Act more timely on requests for alternative definitions of AYP, accountability workbooks, and facility repairs;
- Create greater transparency in the process used to select and prioritize school repairs and new construction, and as necessary improve the processes to ensure school facilities enhance 21st century teaching and learning;
- Provide training to school boards and tribal councils so they understand their roles and responsibilities; and
- Improve the quality of technical assistance and support to schools, including strengthening the capacity of schools to transition to tribally-controlled schools.

We value your recommendations and have considered each of them as we develop the draft framework for educational reform we plan to discuss at the upcoming consultations. We look forward to your continued partnership and insight as we strive to improve BIE schools.