



Facts on the BIE Reform

NEW EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTERS

BACKGROUND

In 2013, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan convened an American Indian Education Study Group to diagnose the systemic challenges facing the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) and to propose a comprehensive plan for reform to ensure all students attending BIE-funded schools receive a world-class education. After conducting listening sessions and tribal consultations, a framework for transforming the BIE into an “innovative organization that serves as a capacity-builder and service-provider to tribal nations with BIE-funded schools” has been provided by the agency.

As part of the reform plan, the BIE is proposing to realign staff and reporting relationships within the BIE to improve services to schools and tribes. According to the BIE, the realignment will:

1. Shift the management focus to the field;
2. Clarify roles and responsibilities;
3. Acknowledge the different requirements of Bureau operated schools and tribally controlled schools to better meet their needs; and
4. Establish clear reporting and accountability structures for academic operations and administrative operational functions.

EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTERS

BIE will realign 22 existing education line offices (ELOs) into 15 education resource centers (ERCs), 3 facility support centers, 3 technical assistance centers, and 1 National Johnson O’Malley center. The BIE has stated that the ERCs will address a key recommendation of the blueprint – specifically, to provide improved technical assistance and more comprehensive services to schools. The ERCs will be geographically positioned close to schools and staffed with school solutions teams to provide customized support to meet the unique needs of each school.

BIE considered two major factors in planning the ERCs:

1. Proximity to schools served: Determined by considering the school’s distance to the ERC, the number of students served per school, and the number of schools per ERC
2. Needs of schools: Determined by including the schools adequate yearly progress status, special education data, and the number of tribes per ERC

Current ELO Structure:

ADD Office	No of ELOs	Schools Served	States Served
East	9	66	13
West	7	54	9
Navajo	6	65	3

Proposed ERC Structure:

ADD Office	No of ERCs	Schools Served	States Served	ERC per School	ERC Locations
Tribally Controlled Schools	7	95	21	1 per 13 schools	Minneapolis, MN; Nashville, TN; Seattle, WA; Albuquerque, NM; Rapid City, SD; Flandreau, ND; Bismark, ND
Bureau Operated Schools	3	23	8	1 per 7 schools	Phoenix, AZ; Albuquerque, NM; Belcourt, ND
Navajo Schools	1	65 (32 BIE operated & 33 Tribally operated)	3	1 per 13	Shiprock, NM; Crownpoint, NM; WindowRick, AZ; Chinle, AZ; Tuba City, AZ

EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER VS EDUCATION LINE OFFICE

According to the BIE, the primary differences between the ELOs and the proposed ERCs are:

1. ERCs will specialize in a set of services to meet the needs of the schools they are serving (*i.e.*, BIE or tribally operated);
2. Positions at the ERCs will have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The ELOs currently address a variety of needs for both school structures and leaving staff little opportunity to specialize. Under the new structure, staff will work more regularly at the schools, assess and assist schools, and take ownership of academic achievement at their assigned schools.

The BIE has also proposed to reorganize the School Improvement Specialists under the ERC by making the specifically tasked to work directly with schools. The Specialist will be an expert in performing school assessments and developing school improvement plans. This specialist can share best practices between schools or modify them as necessary to meet the unique needs of each school.

Additionally, the BIE is proposing to expand the ERCs reach beyond academics to improving program administration, services, and resources. A Chief Performance Officer will work through the ADDs to coordinate grant services and technical assistance to schools. Staff from the Division of Performance and Accountability will be relocated from Albuquerque to the ERCs, providing the ERCs with staff who have expertise regarding Department of Education programs.

NIEA is providing this series of Fact Sheets on the BIE reform to help inform and educate our members. For additional information or questions, please contact Dimple Patel, National Indian Education Association Federal Policy Associate, at dpatel@niea.org.