

Introduction to Federal Government Programs

Many federal offices offer funding for programs that are relevant to the Native American community. We could not possibly list all of those, nor could we begin to describe those offices and the programs for which they are responsible. However, representatives of offices within three federal departments, in partnership with various non-federal organizations (see acknowledgements page, this issue), came together to organize and co-sponsor a series of colloquia titled “Improving Academic Performance Among American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Students: Assessment and Identification of Learning and Learning Disabilities.”

In this thematic issue of the *Journal of American Indian Education*, which is focused on educational programs and practices discussed at the colloquia, we wished to present information from the co-sponsoring offices that offer programs relevant to Native American students and their education. Co-sponsors of the colloquia included: (1) The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research, both of which are under the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2) The Offices of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, English Language Acquisition, and Indian Education, as well as the National Institute for Literacy, all of which are under the U.S. Department of Education. (3) The Office of Indian Education Programs of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior. While the National Institutes of Health support research projects focused on Native Americans, and the National Institute for Literacy disseminates research-based information on literacy that is relevant to all students in the United States, the Department of Education and the Department of the Interior directly support education programs and projects for Native American students. Therefore, they are the focus of this section. The following four papers more extensively describe the programs of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Department of Education’s Office of English Language Acquisition and Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, along with information on a Department of Education-funded project called the *Reading First Teacher Education Network*.

Office of Indian Education Programs, Bureau of Indian Affairs

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The Office of Indian Education Programs (OIEP) is an office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) within the U. S. Department of the Interior, which funds both schools and programs for American Indian students. Approximately 10 percent of Indian students attend schools funded by the BIA. The vision of the OIEP is to promote healthy Indian communities through lifelong learning; the office budget represents 46 percent of the entire BIA budget, and supports 184 elementary and secondary schools and 27 colleges.

The OIEP serves nearly 60,000 students representing more than 230 different tribes throughout the U.S. Programs vary from early childhood, title, supplemental, special education programs, and professional development programs to HIV/AIDS, homeless, and 21st century programs. In addition, the OIEP provides an early childhood program to 39 BIA-funded elementary schools. Since 1992, more than 18,700 participants, including 8,900 adults and 9,800 children, representing 6,500 families have benefited from this unique program,

The Family and Child Education (FACE) program provides educational services to American Indian families with children from birth to grade three, while supporting parents in their role as their child's first and most influential teacher; FACE provides home visiting services to families with infants ages 0-3. The FACE Program also includes a center at the school site for parents to improve their parenting skills, literacy skills, job skills, or obtain a G.E.D. In order to provide a high quality early childhood program to 39 BIA-funded elementary schools, extensive professional development is provided to all FACE Program staff through partnerships with the National Center for Family Literacy and the Parents as Teachers National Center. Research and Training Associates has just completed a study providing evidence that through an early identification of learning disabilities and referral process, the FACE program is a tool in reducing the number of American Indian children requiring placement in special education programs as they enter school. Overall, the office's goals include improvement of academic proficiency, attendance rates, and high school graduation rates among Indian students, and integration of languages and cultures. Additional information about the OIEP can be found at <http://www.oiep.bia.edu/>.

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