

2025 Current Fiscal Year Report: Bureau of Indian Affairs Advisory Board for Exceptional Children

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1. Department or Agency

Department of the Interior

2. Fiscal Year

2025

3. Committee or Subcommittee

Bureau of Indian Affairs Advisory Board for Exceptional Children

3b. GSA

Committee No.

5317

4. Is this New During Fiscal Year?

No

5. Current Charter

01/08/2025 01/08/2027

6. Expected Renewal Date

7. Expected Term Date

8a. Was Terminated During Fiscal Year?

No

8b. Specific Termination Authority

8c. Actual Term Date

9. Agency Recommendation for Next Fiscal Year

Continue

10a. Legislation Req to Terminate?

Not Applicable

10b. Legislation Pending?

Not Applicable

11. Establishment Authority

Statutory (Congress Created)

12. Specific Establishment Authority

P.L.108-466, The Individuals with Disability Education Improvement Act, Part B, Section 611(h)(6)

13. Effective Date

12/03/2004 Continuing

14. Committee Type

14c. Presidential?

No

15. Description of Committee

16a. Total Number of Reports

No Reports for this Fiscal Year

17a. Open

2 17b. Closed 0 17c. Partially Closed 0 Other Activities 0 17d. Total 2

Meetings and Dates

Purpose	Start	End
<p>The Advisory Board was established under the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004 to advise the Secretary of the Interior, through the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs, on the needs of Indian children with disabilities. The following agenda items will be for January 16-17, 2025, meeting: A Panel Discussion: Early Childhood Transition; and A Panel Discussion: Secondary Transition. A Panel Discussion with Transition Specialist (Pre-Kindergarten through grade 12), to include Early Childhood Transition and Secondary Transition. BIE Special Education Program—Transition Updates BIE Behavior Wellness Program—Updates and overview about the program. Public Commenting Sessions will be opened any time throughout both meeting days to encourage public input.</p> <p>The Advisory Board was established under the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004 to advise the Secretary of the Interior, through the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs, on the needs of Indian children with disabilities. The following agenda items will be for the April 24-25, 2025, meeting. BIE Central Office—Updates and Changes. The BIE's Special Education Program Updates. Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute: Address the challenges of preparing educators for schools serving significant numbers of Native American students in Bureau funded schools. Overview of Blindness and Visual Impairment Advisory Board Work Session: To address the next meeting logistics, discuss next steps, provide recommendations for future projects or meetings, wrap-up important decisions, discuss outstanding tasks, and share working folder with board members for future meetings. Public Comment Sessions will be opened any time throughout both meeting days to encourage public input.</p>	01/16/2025 - 01/17/2025	
	04/24/2025 - 04/25/2025	

Number of Committee Meetings Listed: 2

	Current FY	Next FY
18a(1). Personnel Pmts to Non-Federal Members	\$0.00	\$0.00
18a(2). Personnel Pmts to Federal Members	\$0.00	\$0.00
18a(3). Personnel Pmts to Federal Staff	\$0.00	\$0.00

18a(4). Personnel Pmts to Non-Member Consultants	\$0.00	\$0.00
18b(1). Travel and Per Diem to Non-Federal Members	\$0.00	\$0.00
18b(2). Travel and Per Diem to Federal Members	\$0.00	\$0.00
18b(3). Travel and Per Diem to Federal Staff	\$0.00	\$0.00
18b(4). Travel and Per Diem to Non-member Consultants	\$0.00	\$0.00
18c. Administrative Costs (FRNs, contractor support, In-person/hybrid/virtual meetings)	\$0.00	\$0.00
18d. Other (all other funds not captured by any other cost category)	\$0.00	\$0.00
18e. Total Costs	\$0.00	\$0.00
19. Federal Staff Support Years (FTE)	0.00	0.00

20a. How does the Committee accomplish its purpose?

The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Advisory Board for Exceptional Children (Board) typically meets three to four times per year to review and discuss various BIE documents and processes, Special Education (SPED) Integrated Monitoring Process; SPED 616 and 618 data, SPP/APR Indicator data performance, Office of SPED Programs (OSEP) official monitoring reports; U.S. Department of Education (DOE) reports; Indian School Equalization Program data; and the BIE Reorganization Plan, BIE Strategic Direction, SPED Policy & Procedures Handbook, SPED Coordinated Services Plan. As a stakeholder, the Board provides input and receives comments from parents, Tribal Education Departments, Tribally Controlled School personnel, Bureau Operated

School personnel, BIE departments, and other stakeholders and other interested individuals interested in improving services for students with disabilities by receiving comments during the Board meetings. The Board uses information obtained from the various resources to advise and offer recommendations to improve services for students with disabilities and to support the BIE in carrying out the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004.

20b. How does the Committee balance its membership?

Public Law 108-446, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) establishes the membership requirements. As required by the Act, the Advisory Board is composed of 15 individuals involved in or concerned with the education and provisions of services to Indian children with disabilities. The Advisory Board composition reflects a broad range of viewpoints and includes at least one member representing each of the following interests: Indian persons with disabilities; Teachers of children with disabilities; Indian parents/guardians of children with disabilities; Service providers; State Education Officials; Local education officials; State inter-agency coordinating councils (for states having Indian reservations); Tribal representatives or tribal organization representatives and BIE/BIA employees concerned with the education of children with disabilities.

20c. How frequent and relevant are the Committee Meetings?

The Advisory Board typically meets 2-4 times per year.

20d. Why can't the advice or information this

committee provides be obtained elsewhere?

The Advisory Board is required under Public Law 108-446, Individuals with Disability Education Act; and it is necessary to gain input and advice from individuals concerned with ensuring special education services and related services are provided to children with disabilities throughout the BIE education system; and meaningful student participation is achieved and student academic achievement progress is being met.

20e. Why is it necessary to close and/or partially closed committee meetings?

The Advisory Board meetings are open to the general public.

21. Remarks

During FY2024, the Board had 4 meetings.

Designated Federal Officer

Jennifer L. Davis Education Specialist

Committee Members	Start	End	Occupation	Member Designation
Churchill, Spencer	05/20/2024	01/31/2025	Foundation for Blind Children	Representative Member
Cleveland, Monica	03/15/2023	03/15/2026	Director, Student Support Services	Representative Member
Finnearty, Leslie	02/10/2022	02/10/2025	Special Education Lead Teacher	Representative Member
Harrison, Rachel	04/19/2023	04/19/2026	Special Education Teacher	Representative Member
Kroupa, Wendy	04/19/2023	04/19/2026	Elementary Principal and Sped Director	Representative Member
Lehmann, Gretchen	02/10/2022	02/10/2025	Special Education Director	Representative Member
				Regular
			Educational	Government
Peltier, Pilar	02/10/2022	02/10/2025	Technician-Special Education	Employee (RGE) Member
Reval, Leon	09/15/2023	09/15/2026	Educational Program Analyst	Representative Member
Shawanokasic, Norman	07/10/2023	07/10/2026	Operations Manager	Representative Member
Slowman-Chee, Janet	09/15/2023	09/15/2026	Executive Director	Representative Member

Star, Melanie	05/20/2024	05/20/2027	Bureau of Indian Education	Regular Government Employee (RGE) Member
Wagner, Brian	11/05/2022	11/05/2025	Director of Student Services	Representative Member
Wendell, Gretchen	02/11/2022	02/11/2025	Special Education Director	Representative Member
Younce, Elizabeth	09/15/2023	09/15/2026	Exceptional Student Services Director	Representative Member

Number of Committee Members Listed: 14

Narrative Description

The Advisory Board conducted four Board meetings during FY2024. Within the 2024 Annual Report, 4 priority areas are provided: (1) The Board continues to have significant and ongoing concern regarding support for the active recruitment, hiring, and retention of special educators and related service providers for BIE funded schools. (This is a continue priority from FY 2023 and for prior years. The pandemic (COVID) certainly spiked the negative impacted for all schools nationwide (not only BIE funded schools), and all schools continue to struggle to hire and maintain special educators and related service providers) (2) Stakeholder Learning and Leadership - The Board acknowledges the importance of being a lifelong learner and the need to provide opportunities to strengthen and enhance individual knowledge, learning, leadership, and empowerment for the benefit of educating students receiving IDEA services. The stakeholder partnership is a shared responsibility to create a collaborative and inclusive learning environment. Specifically, the Board recommends supports for School Personnel and Parent/Guardian Empowerment. (3) BIE Responsibilities and Accountability; and (4) Transition and Post-Graduation

What are the most significant program outcomes associated with this committee?

Checked if
Applies

Improvements to health or safety
Trust in government



Major policy changes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advance in scientific research	<input type="checkbox"/>
Effective grant making	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved service delivery	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Increased customer satisfaction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Implementation of laws or regulatory requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Outcome Comments

The Advisory Board is established to carry out the provision of Public Law 108-446, Section 611, Paragraphs: (A) (B) (C) (D) (E), the Individuals Disability Education Act (IDEA).

What are the cost savings associated with this committee?

Checked if Applies

None	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unable to Determine	<input type="checkbox"/>
Under \$100,000	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
\$100,000 - \$500,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$500,001 - \$1,000,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$1,000,001 - \$5,000,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$5,000,001 - \$10,000,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over \$10,000,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cost Savings Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Cost Savings Comments

The BIE had 4 meetings for FY 2024. Three meetings were virtual/and in-person. Two meetings were kept to 2-days. The June 2024 meeting was a one-day virtual meeting for all board members and others involved. No travel expenses were involved reducing costs, and personal/work time to attend the meeting. Also, 3 board members consistently (out of the 14 total members) opted to attend virtually which also reduced expenses. The BIE continues to use a hired a contractor, reducing the time the DFO had to dedicate to administrative work and reporting. The contractor completes all travel planning for the board members, meeting site arrangements and set up, and report writing for the minutes and the annual report. One contractor consistently attend to help virtually, while two contractors are onsite assisting with the technology, note taking and report writing.

What is the approximate Number of recommendations produced by this committee for the life of the committee?

107

Number of Recommendations Comments

For FY 2024, the Board made four recommendations. I. The Board continues to have significant and ongoing concern regarding support for the active recruitment, hiring, and retention of special educators and related service providers for BIE funded schools. II. Stakeholder Learning and Leadership - The Board acknowledges the importance of being a lifelong learner and the need to provide opportunities to strengthen and enhance individual knowledge, learning, leadership, and empowerment for the benefit of educating students receiving IDEA services. The stakeholder partnership is a shared responsibility to create a collaborative and inclusive learning environment. Specifically, the Board recommends the listed supports for the following: a. School Personnel i. Learning opportunities for general educators, special educators, and other school personnel, students and families. Some topics to be included may be autism and student-driven IEPs; Behavior intervention/management professional development; Learning needs for all and among all special education staff, residential staff, and related services; Social/emotional needs of students; Mental/health/trauma/wellness professional development for staff and students; Accessing student behavioral support; Trauma-healing for Residential Boarding Schools; and Section 504 compared to IDEA services. ii. Investigate how the IEP process can include a focus on traditional culture, language, and working with the students and provide training with a focus on collaborating with students and their families. iii. Ongoing research on the effects of COVID and assistance in appropriately determining IDEA eligibility for services versus lack of instruction. b. Parent/Guardian Empowerment i. Regional/local trainings and support for parents/guardians on special education topics that may include: Section 504 compared to IDEA services; IDEA disabilities; IDEA evaluation process and eligibility; Procedural safeguards; Community involvement and organizational resources for parents; IEP and its components (such as Least Restrictive Environment); Parent roles and rights; Student-driven IEPs; and Identify and eliminate barriers to parent engagement. III. BIE Responsibilities and Accountability i. Finalize IDEA Policy and Procedure for BIE Funded Schools with training to assist the Tribally Controlled Schools with the development of their own policies and procedures ii. Plan of action and accountability for making change with maintaining student-centered iii. What resources does a BIE Funded School utilize when it does not have the staff required to complete a student's IDEA evaluation or to provide the IEP defined services. iv. Timely communication between BIE and schools and school systems v. Accurate data through requiring all schools to submit data vi. Technical assistance provided to schools that are not meeting the indicators IV. Transition and

Post-Graduation i. Providing resources to high school students who have an IEP who want to go on to higher education. ii. Student leadership iii. Transition-Developing relationships with vocational rehabilitation and adult service providers iv. Increased awareness of resources and opportunities for post-school life

What is the approximate Percentage of these recommendations that have been or will be Fully implemented by the agency?

30%

% of Recommendations Fully Implemented Comments

40.0%

What is the approximate Percentage of these recommendations that have been or will be Partially implemented by the agency?

30%

% of Recommendations Partially Implemented Comments

58.0%

Does the agency provide the committee with feedback regarding actions taken to implement recommendations or advice offered?

Yes ☒ No ☐ Not Applicable ☐

Agency Feedback Comments

The BIE works closely with the advisory board and is very responsive to the board needs. The BIE is present (BIE Central Office, Division of Performance & Accountability) for each board meeting and provides feedback and input for topics requested by the board throughout the year and also provides input for the annual report. For FY 2024 the BIE provided input and feedback to the Board during the four board meetings. The BIE supports the Board and ensures that various BIE personnel (the Director, supervisors, and Education Specialists from various departments) respond to questions and supports the various BIE offices that are included in the published agendas. BIE personnel present the Board with various reports and answer questions from the Board. Feedback from BIE can be found in the Board's meeting minutes. All Board minutes, annual reports and other important documents are located in the BIE website located at <https://www.bie.edu/landing-page/special-education>.

What other actions has the agency taken as a result of the committee's advice or recommendation?

Checked if Applies

Reorganized Priorities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reallocated resources	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issued new regulation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Proposed legislation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Approved grants or other payments	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Action Comments

Not Applicable

Is the Committee engaged in the review of applications for grants?

No

Grant Review Comments

No grants were reviewed.

How is access provided to the information for the Committee's documentation?

Checked if Applies

Contact DFO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Online Agency Web Site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Online Committee Web Site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Online GSA FACA Web Site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Publications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Access Comments

Individuals may contact the Designated Federal Officer, Jennifer Davis at jennifer.davis@bie.edu or (202) 860-7845 (mobile). The Advisory Board section can be found within the BIE website at www.bie.edu using this link:
<https://www.bie.edu/landing-page/special-education>