



Ensuring Full Funding for Bureau-Funded Operations in COVID-19 Relief and Recovery

National Indian Education Association



The National Indian Education Association (NIEA) is the nation's largest and most inclusive organization advocating for comprehensive culture-based educational opportunities for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

Changing National Landscape

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the national education landscape has shifted dramatically. The spread of COVID-19 in tribal communities has highlighted and exacerbated existing inequities for Native students. Native nations acted quickly to save lives, shuttering classroom to limit community transmission.

As we enter the second year of the pandemic, students continue to feel the impact of long-term virtual education and schools face the daunting challenge of safely reopening for assessments and in-person instruction. At the national level, the new Administration has prioritized reopening K-8 classrooms due to the disproportionate academic and social growth experienced over the past year of virtual education.

Bureau of Indian Education Operations

Each year, 185 K-12 schools and 37 tribal colleges receive funding for operational support through the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) annual appropriations. According to the FY 2020 BIE Greenbook, nearly 47,000 Native students enroll in K-12 BIE operated and tribally controlled schools, while just over 8,000 Native students attend tribal colleges and universities (TCUs).

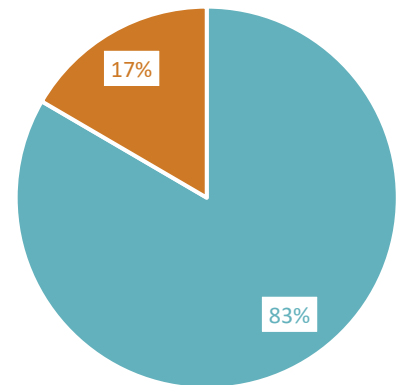
Historically, Bureau-funded schools have relied disproportionately on the BIE to provide core funding for school operations. However, additional streams of funding across federal agencies have created diversified sources of funding for TCUs. As a result, 83 percent of congressional appropriations for school operations in FY 2021 was allocated to K-12 education.

NIEA Recommendations

Provide Separate Set-Asides for K-12 Bureau-Funded Schools and TCU COVID-19 Relief

Native students and the institutions that serve them have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic since it began. Full funding for all Native-serving institutions is essential to ensuring that Native students have access to resources to recover and thrive after the pandemic. Our schools must have access to separate set-asides that support the unique needs of students throughout our education systems.

FY 2021 BIE School Operations Programs Appropriations



- Elementary and Secondary Education
- Post-Secondary Education





Prioritize Funding for K-12 Education in COVID-19 Relief for BIE School Operations

Many Bureau-funded schools remain shuttered, or have only begun the process of physically reopening classrooms. As a result, most students have only experienced education virtually in the past year. While broadband challenges have proven difficult for students from kindergarten to graduate school, our youngest students have often struggled the most to adapt to this new method of education. We must support these students by prioritizing funding to support effective educational strategies and a safe return to the classroom for K-12 schools.

The continued closure of Bureau-funded schools and the prolonged disruption to educational services has created major complications in the first year of implementation for BIE's assessment under the Every Student Succeeds Act. High-quality data is essential to ensuring student progress and supporting our schools. However, many of our schools lack the basic funding, resources, and infrastructure to safely return to the classroom. As our schools look at reopening, even our newest facilities are undergoing major renovations to heating and air, plumbing, and other systems to ensure the safety of students, staff, and faculty in the building. Due to space limitations, some school leaders are considering the use of temporary modular classroom units to relieve overcrowding in classrooms.

Ensure Access to Full Funding for Bureau-Funded Schools

- \$1.5 billion in direct funding to Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) funded schools, as defined in 25 U.S.C. § 2021(3) to meet the health, safety, and educational needs of students due to the impacts of COVID-19
- \$1 billion to address deferred maintenance and failing infrastructure in BIE schools, as defined in 25 U.S.C. § 2021(3).

Ensure Access to Full Funding for Tribal Colleges and Universities

- Establish a \$24 million Tribal College and University (TCU) IT Service Fund within the USDA-Rural Utilities Service Program
- \$500 million for TCU Deferred Maintenance & Rehabilitation
- Increase TCU portion of HBCU and Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) Education Stabilization Fund to 10 percent.

For additional information, please contact Adrienne Elliott, NIEA Senior Legislative Associate, at aelliott@niea.org or 202-847-0040 or Chris Topoleski, NIEA Legislative Director, at ctopoleski@niea.org or 202-878-6285.

