



OFFICE OF  
**INSPECTOR GENERAL**  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

# **REVIEW OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AT THE SICANGU OWAYAWA OTI (ROSEBUD DORMITORY)**

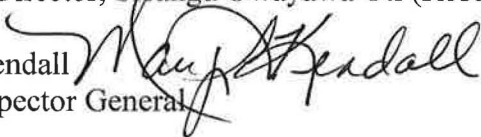


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**INSPECTOR GENERAL**  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

APR 30 2015

Memorandum

To: Ms. Nancy Keller-Hernandez  
Executive Director, Sicangu Owayawa Oti (Rosebud Dorm)

From: Mary L. Kendall   
Deputy Inspector General

Subject: Inspection Report – Review of Academic Achievement at the Sicangu Owayawa Oti (Rosebud Dorm)  
Report No. C-IS-BIE-0014-2014

This memorandum transmits the findings of our inspection of academic achievement efforts at the Sicangu Owayawa Oti (Rosebud Dorm). Our objective was to evaluate the programs in place to improve educational achievement at schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). We chose to focus specifically on how BIE worked to close the educational achievement gap and increase the graduation rate.

Please provide us with your written response to this report within 30 days. The response should provide information on actions taken or planned to address the recommendations, as well as target dates and title(s) of the official(s) responsible for implementation. Please send your response to:

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The legislation creating the Office of Inspector General requires that we report to Congress semiannually on all audit, inspection, and evaluation reports issued; actions taken to implement our recommendations; and recommendations that have not been implemented.

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## Results in Brief

The objective for our inspections was to evaluate programs in place to improve educational achievement at schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). Since the Sicangu Owayawa Oti (Rosebud Dormitory) was a peripheral dormitory, no requirement existed for it to assess the academic needs of its students.

We did find, however, that the dormitory had a number of programs in place to help support the educational achievement of its student population. In addition, the dormitory had developed a number of cultural programs to increase cultural awareness and student success.

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# Introduction

## Objective

Our objective was to evaluate the programs in place to improve educational achievement at schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE).<sup>1</sup> We chose to focus specifically on how BIE worked to close the educational achievement gap and increase the graduation rate. The scope and methodology for this inspection are included in Appendix 1.

## Background

In May 2013, Secretary Jewell appeared before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to discuss Department of the Interior (DOI) priorities in Indian country. Among other issues raised, Committee members expressed concerns about academic achievement at BIE-funded Indian schools. Academic achievement concerns generally fall into one of two broad areas, the achievement gap and graduation rates.

1. **Achievement Gap** - Standardized achievement tests, designed to measure an individual student's knowledge and skill as an indicator of academic progress, are given to students in both public and BIE-funded schools. In general, BIE students lag behind the public school population. Research has found that, as early as grade 4, students attending BIE-funded schools achieve test results below those of their public school counterparts. Furthermore, the higher the grade level, the greater the gap in test scores. For example, if a student reaches grade 12 in a BIE-funded school, that student may be testing at the grade 9 level, while a public school counterpart generally will be testing at the grade 12 level.
2. **Graduation Rates** - BIE calculates graduation rates based on guidance from the Department of Education on a 4-year adjusted cohort or group of statistically similar students, in this case those who entered grade 9 at the same time and stayed in the same school they entered. Cohort numbers may only change by adding students who transfer in later during that same year or over the next 3 years, or by subtracting students who transfer out during that same period as long as the school has documentation supporting where the student has reenrolled. The public school graduation rate averages roughly 76 percent, while the average graduation rate from BIE-funded schools is below 50 percent.

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to day and boarding schools, BIE also funds peripheral dormitories established on or near reservations to board students who attend schools nearby. Schools attended can be public schools, private schools, or BIE day schools. Children who reside in peripheral dormitories generally live too far away from the school to make the daily trip from their homes to school and back.

Federal laws attempt to provide resources to help improve educational opportunities for all students. The Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1965 was enacted to ensure that all children have fair and equal opportunities to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on academic achievement assessments. The Act also aimed to help close the achievement gap between high and low achieving students, especially achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers. It also authorized that funds be made available to meet the unique educational needs of Indian students. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 was a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1965 and has the same stated purpose of improving academic achievement.

Executive Order 13592, signed by President Obama in December 2011, aimed to close the achievement gap and increase the graduation rate for students by improving educational opportunities for Indian and Alaska Native students, including those attending BIE-funded schools. The executive order specifically promoted efforts to—

- increase kindergarten readiness;
- expand access to college support services;
- increase teacher recruitment in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM programs); language; and special education subjects;
- support innovative dropout prevention strategies;
- implement pathways for dropouts and adults to reenter education;
- increase college access; and
- meet unique cultural and language needs.

Most recently, in the 2013/2014 school year, BIE provided funds to 185 schools in 23 states that serve Indian student populations. These schools included 119 day schools, 52 boarding schools, and 14 peripheral dormitories (see footnote 1). A total of 131 of these schools received BIE funds but operated directly through grant agreements or contracts. BIE operated the remaining 54 schools.

The Sicangu Owayawa Oti (Rosebud Dormitory), located on the Rosebud Reservation in Mission, SD, is a grant-operated peripheral dormitory for students in grades 1 through 12. The dormitory’s mission is to “create a positive environment free of violence, drugs, alcohol, tobacco and fear. Lakota children will learn through support, guidance and knowledge to practice generosity, respect, courage and spirituality.”

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## Findings

We found that Sicangu Owayawa Oti (Rosebud Dormitory) is not required to assess the academic needs of its students. The dormitory had a number of programs in place, however, to help support the educational achievement of its student population. In addition, the dormitory had a number of cultural programs in place to increase cultural awareness and student success.

### Educational Achievement Programs

The dormitory had a number of programs in place to support the educational achievement of its student population. For example, the dormitory had a home school coordinator who facilitated between the dormitory and school. This individual tracked each student's academic achievement, working with teachers to ensure the completion of assignments and extra help for students when needed. In addition, the dormitory had a study hall with tutors available for basic subjects and an individual who assisted younger students with reading.



Figure 1. Reading time with younger students. Photo: OIG.

Further, the dormitory offered a number of incentives to encourage student success, such as trips away and a student store where supplies and extra items were available. Incentives are awarded for good behavior and academic success.



Figure 2. Student store at Sicangu Owayawa Oti. Photo: OIG.

Finally, the dormitory gave gas cards to parents so they could attend dormitory and school functions for their children.

## **Culture and Language**

The Native American Languages Act of 1990 encourages the use of native languages as a medium of educational instruction to increase student success, performance, educational opportunity, cultural awareness, and community pride, especially in BIE-funded schools. Likewise, the No Child Left Behind Act declares as national policy “that programs that serve Indian children are of the highest quality and provide for not only the basic elementary and secondary educational needs, but also the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of these children.”

We noted that Sicangu Owayawa Oti offered a number of cultural programs to increase cultural awareness and student success. For example, the dormitory invited traditional Lakota leaders to speak about historical trauma suffered by the culture and traditional ceremonies used to support recovery from that trauma. Students then have the opportunity to use these traditional ceremonies, such as the Wiping of the Tears ceremony, to help them overcome trauma they may have experienced. In addition, students who remain in school through to graduation are honored with the traditional Name Giving ceremony. For the three students who



graduated the previous year, we heard that they took more pride in the Name Giving ceremony than their graduation ceremony.

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# Conclusion

## Conclusion

We found that Sicangu Owayawa Oti is not required to assess the academic needs of its students. The dormitory did, however, have a number of programs in place that helped support the educational achievement of its student population. In addition, the dormitory had a number of cultural programs in place to increase cultural awareness and student success.

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# Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

## Scope

The scope of this inspection was limited to the programs in place at the Sicangu Owayawa Oti (Rosebud Dormitory) to improve educational achievement. We performed the same inspection at 15 other schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) including:

- Tonalea Day School
- Lukachukai Community School
- Tuba City Boarding School
- Moencopi Day School
- Flandreau Indian School
- Pierre Indian Learning Center
- Cherokee Central Schools
- Ahfachkee Indian Schools
- Miccosukee Indian School
- Chemawa Indian School
- Yakama Nation Tribal School
- Paschal Sherman Indian School
- Ojo Encino Day School
- Te Tsu Geh Oweenge Day School
- San Ildefonso Day School

We also performed separate reviews at the Sicangu Owayawa Oti to evaluate the programs in place at schools funded by BIE to prevent violence and assess the condition of educational facilities. The results of those reviews will be presented in separate reports.

## Methodology

We conducted this review from January 2014 to August 2014 in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspections and Evaluations as put forth by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. We believe that the work performed provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions.

To address our objective—

- we reviewed criteria (e.g., laws, regulations, policies, and procedures); studies; prior reports; and school documentation;
- we interviewed officials at the Department of Education’s Office of Student Achievement and School Accountability, Office of Indian Education, and the Academic Improvement Group; BIE’s Division of Performance and Accountability; and Sicangu Owayawa Oti; and
- we visited Sicangu Owayawa Oti on January 29, 2014.

