Questions posed by webinar participants:

Partnerships:

1) How will expertise/successes garnered from these efforts be communicated to support public schools serving Native American students?

The Department of the Interior (DOI) will communicate the expertise and success garnered from these efforts to all stakeholders and tribes through the Bureau of Indian Education’s (BIE) website. Updates of our progress with the implementation of the BIE restructuring will be provided on the BIE website at http://www.bie.edu/BFRI/index.htm. DOI will also provide updates regarding implementation through the use of press releases and media advisories.

In addition, DOI officials will continue to meet with stakeholders and tribes on a regular basis throughout the upcoming school year, including at several National Indian organizations’ events (i.e., National Indian Education Association and the National Congress of the American Indians conferences/summits). Secretary Jewell – who visited six BIE-funded schools during the past year – plans to visit additional schools.

2) I run a non-profit organization in Phoenix for Native American students, parents, and educators of Native students. How can we support the efforts of BIE schools? Can we partner with the BIE on providing needed services?

BIE is always seeking opportunities to partner with organizations with similar visions and goals for American Indian students. In order to receive support from your organization, please send information about your organization to the following e-mail address: BIEpartner@BIA.GOV.

3) Is the BIE able to develop a consortium for education, housing, health and economic/community development?

BIE provides educational opportunities from early childhood education to post-secondary education. BIE does collaborate with other federal agencies to garner assistance for students and school staff to address housing, health, economic and community development initiatives.

4) How do you see other schools supporting BIE through partnerships?
BIE is working with other educational institutions Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) to build “bridge programs” that help prepare students attending BIE-funded schools to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. Furthermore, the BIE is always interested in partnering with other schools that serve American Indian students and would welcome discussions with interested schools.

5) Can a tribe allow a private or non-profit education organization (similar to a charter school management group) to take over and operate chronically failing grant schools?

Under existing law, a tribally controlled grant school has much flexibility in determining who will take responsibility for the management of their schools and school system; however, the Department’s legal office has not issued an opinion on this specific issue. We would be happy to work with tribes interested in working with non-profit organizations and the Department’s legal office on this matter.

Operation:

6) With five Education Line Offices assigned to the Navajo Region, three with BIE operated and eight with tribally-controlled grant schools, where will these offices be located and where, specifically, will the support for the Northwest Region come from?

Secretarial Order Number 3334 intends for the Education Line Offices will be converted to Education Resource Centers (ERCs). As discussed in the Study Group’s Blueprint for Reform, the BIE would ensure that these ERCs are geographically positioned close to schools and staffed with mobile School Solutions Teams that can be deployed to schools to provide customized support that meets the unique needs of each school. Instead of issuing mandates, these Teams would ensure that principals and teachers have the resources and support they need in order to operate high-achieving schools. The location of the Education Resource Centers is still under consideration.

7) Will tribes have more power over who they hire in relation to licensing requirements, as charter schools do?

Under P.L. 100-297, the Tribally Controlled Schools Act, if a tribe determines to set up its own licensing of teachers, BIE will work with the U.S. Department of Education to explore tribal licensing of highly qualified teachers. In addition, the BIE will review its own regulations to determine if revision to allow tribal licensing is possible and appropriate.

8) What resources will there be for BIE schools and how will it utilize funds to support online assessments and 21st Century learning?

As discussed in the Blueprint, ensuring that BIE-funded schools have the educational technology and bandwidth necessary to operate 21st century schools is a major barrier to reform. To support online assessments, BIE is working to address the technological structural needs at schools that lack the bandwidth to ensure online assessments are
feasible for valid and reliable testing of students. BIE conducted a review of the bandwidth needs at all of its schools and is currently identifying resources necessary to ensure that all BIE-funded schools meet State Educational Technology Directors Association (SEDTA) standards for educational technology.

9) Under Phase I of Secretarial Order Number 3334, what is the immediate relief referred to for BIE schools? There is a big difference in operations between BIE-run and tribally-controlled. Many tribally controlled schools are doing things that are creative and successful. These should be recognized and be templates of a sort.

As stated in the Blueprint for Reform (Blueprint), the BIE is identifying best practices among tribally controlled schools and seeking means for scaling up those best practices. For example, the Sovereignty in Indian Education (SIE) enhancements provides incentives to tribes that have three or more BIE-funded schools to scale up an educational practice such as those initiated by the Mississippi Band of the Choctaw. In other words, the Department used the Tribe’s educational management structure as a template for the SIE enhancements.

The Department is also aiming to provide “immediate relief” in the form of improved delivery of operational services for BIE-funded schools. As discussed in the Blueprint, numerous BIE stakeholders and tribes complained about poor operational support in the areas of contracting and acquisitions, human resources and facilities and maintenance. Improved integration of these administrative functions with BIE operations and the establishment of Education Resource Centers would enable BIE to respond more quickly to school needs.

10) Are most tribes ready to assume operations of their BIE-funded schools?

We must look at each tribe on a case-by-case basis. Some tribes are undoubtedly ready. Based on the feedback during formal tribal consultations and listening sessions, tribes asked for support in developing the capacity of their tribal education departments to assume control of their school systems. BIE is working with tribes to build their capacity to assume operations of their BIE-funded schools. Ultimately, conversion to tribal operation is voluntary and up to the tribe’s discretion.

11) Will the School Improvement Grant Schools be allowed to be funded to continue their work past the three-year time frame?

This is an issue that we will discuss with the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and with each tribe that receives School Improvement Grant funding. We would be happy to work with tribes and ED on this matter.

12) Our tribe, and we believe many other tribes, is interested in a brief description of each of the offices or sets of offices in the organizational chart and how they plan to implement their duties, especially the resource centers that replace the ELO offices. We would like
to know the locations of the resource centers, the staff positions at each resource center, and the duties of each position.

The locations of the resource centers are still under consideration. The proposed structure was part of the presentation materials. Updates on the BIE restructuring process will be posted on the BIE website at http://www.bie.edu/BFRI/index.htm.

Language and Culture:

13) In regards to the language acquisition grant, it is my understanding that only those reservations with three or more BIE funded schools can apply. This means that there will only be 11 tribal communities that will be allowed to apply for those funds. If this is good for all kids then why did we have eliminating factors put into place by providing those services to some and not all?

Currently, there is no language acquisition grant. However, we do have the Sovereignty in Indian Education Initiative. The eligibility requirements to apply were for tribes that had three or more BIE schools as a starting point. The Department is providing this enhancement funding within existing budget resources and targeted the competition to reservations with three or more BIE schools.

14) I did not hear any mention of foundational values of Native nations as a whole. What is the role of culture-based and place-based education that is unique to the tribal nations and their lands?

The BIE does not believe that it has a role in discussing the foundational values of tribal nations; those are issues for tribal nations to decide. Therefore, BIE is not promoting a ‘one size fits all’ approach. We recognize that each tribal nation has unique needs, and that the BIE’s role is to support tribal self-determination by providing as much flexibility as possible. The role of culture-based and place-based education recognizes that it is unique to tribal nations and tribal lands. It follows that tribes are empowered to determine the direction of their school systems and we are offering the Sovereignty in Indian Education Initiative to support tribes in defining how they want their educational environments structured to help their children learn.

15) Are there any opportunities for BIE policies to identify through collaborative agreements with the U.S. Department of Education (ED) the recognition of tribal languages as official languages of the federal government as part of self-determination for each nation or tribe?

The BIE cannot speak for the Federal Government in this matter; however, the BIE does provide funding to several tribally operated schools for their tribal language or tribal culture classes. Under the Tribally Controlled Schools Act (25 USC 2501(d)), Congress recognizes: that Indian people have special and unique educational needs, including the need for programs to meet the linguistic and cultural aspirations of Indian tribes and communities; and (3) that those needs may best be met through a grant process.
Higher Education:

16) You mentioned establishing partnerships with colleges and universities. Will there be funds available for institutions of higher education for professional development at the undergraduate and graduate levels?

BIE is currently looking into an initiative to support a Tribal College and University (TCU) and BIE partnership. We recognize that TCUs play a pivotal resource located near BIE-funded schools. We also know that many BIE schools struggle to push a college going culture at elementary through high school levels. Therefore, BIE partnered with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) to support TCU collaborations with BIE schools. The partnership will be to support bridge programs to enhance educational outcomes for students at BIE school sites.

17) As part of the effort to improve classroom instruction through teacher training, is there going to be an effort to expand and improve teacher training programs found at schools like Haskell Indian Nations University and/or through grants to state universities?

As discussed in the Blueprint for Reform, it is critical that BIE help to establish teacher pipelines that begin at TCUs and help fill the need for effective teachers at many of our BIE-funded schools. The BIE is currently identifying resources that can be used to support this effort at TCUs and other postsecondary institutions.

18) Will technical language be developed for regulating higher education to allow them to operate more as a college or university? There are currently too many restrictions under federal acquisition laws and also under Title V. The Board of Regents also is ineffective under its current status. Academics are certainly one part, but years of and millions in backlogs keep the conditions of the schools dismal and an impediment to learning.

It is unclear whether the question is referring to all postsecondary institutions or Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) and Haskell Indian Nations University (Haskell), the two postsecondary institutions funded and operated by the BIE. DOI lacks the authority to issue regulations for all postsecondary institutions. To the extent that the question was referring to SIPI and Haskell, the BIE has been discussing and resolving issues related to operations at both colleges.

19) At one time tribal colleges received BIE grants to help prepare teachers. Will that support be available again?

As discussed above, it is critical that BIE help to establish teacher pipelines that begin at TCUs and help fill the need for effective teachers at many of our BIE-funded schools.

Testing and Assessment:
20) Currently, schools in Washington State are required to administer the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) test to their students three times a year. We are also administering the State tests. Last spring, our school was administering three different tests to students at the same time. Can this be changed so our students are given one assessment, either the State or the NWEA, but not both? We spend far too much time testing students.

DOI agrees that being subjected to different accountability systems and a variety of assessments is overly burdensome for schools. We believe moving toward College and Career Ready Standards and SmarterBalanced and PARCC assessments will reduce some of this fragmentation. In addition, we are studying this issue further and anticipate including this as part of a future negotiated rulemaking committee topic.

21) Regarding assessments and data management of Indian and non-Indian education content, what are your metrics to measure impact data, i.e., return on investment, return on wellness, return on investment of cultural education?

It is critical that as DOI begins implementation of the recommendations contained in the Blueprint that we measure progress toward our goal of high-performing schools directly operated by tribes. We are in the process of developing performance metrics that are aligned to the Blueprint, including the numbers of tribes that assume control over BIE-operated schools, the number of tribes with two or more BIE-funded schools that convert to “single grant status,” improvement in certain student indicators (e.g., graduation and attendance rates) and reduction in the number of school facilities rated in “poor” condition.

22) BIE required assessments and have consistently changed BIE assessments without benefit of whatever assessment data is in place. Can be summarized with recommendations moving forward?

Although the question is not clear, DOI believes that schools have been overburdened by different accountability systems and a variety of assessments. DOI also believes that implementation of College and Career Ready Standards and SmarterBalanced and PARCC assessments will reduce some of this fragmentation.

*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act:*

23) How will Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funding be transferred to tribal schools?

There will be no change in the distribution of funds under IDEA. Any change in process involving the distribution of these funds would require tribal consultations and discussion with the U.S. Department of Education.
24) How are you handling the "needs intervention" requirements set by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) during this BIE transition? Will tribes be trained to offer adequate services for children with disabilities?

Implementation of the recommendations contained in the Blueprint will not affect these requirements or processes. The U.S. Department of Education annually makes determinations under Section 616 of IDEA for all states and for the BIE as a State Education Agency (SEA). BIE will provide technical assistance in response to the needs of the tribes for their students.

25) Native American students and parents have protections under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). How will protections under this Act happen with tribal schools and who will provide the monitoring of this Act? Right now the BIE has that responsibility.

Implementation of the recommendations contained in the Blueprint will not affect these requirements or processes. BIE will continue to serve as the State Education Agency for IDEA. BIE will continue to utilize the current system for dispute resolution that is implemented for all BIE-funded schools.

**Common Core State Standards:**

26) What resources is BIE providing in the form of professional development or technical assistance to help teachers use the new Common Core State Standards?

Currently, BIE associate deputy directors are working with schools to provide Common Core (or College and Career Ready Standards) professional development training. All BIE-funded schools are at various levels regarding this training; many have fully trained their staffs regarding College and Career Ready Standards, while others are just beginning the process.

27) Is the BIE reaching out to other organizations to reproduce successful implementations of Common Core?

Yes, the BIE is reaching out to other entities implementing the College and Career Ready Standards and is currently receiving technical assistance from the U.S. Department of Education and the Council of Chief State Schools Officers (the BIE attends CCSSO meetings). As discussed in the Blueprint, the Department is committed to addressing some of the major barriers to implementation including inadequate access to broadband at most BIE-funded schools.

**Other:**

28) Is this presentation being submitted to the U. S. Department of Education (ED) for Title I funding as a requirement for funding from ED?
The presentation is not a part of the BIE’s funding requirement and solely related to the DOI’s efforts to implement the BIE Blueprint for Reform. The DOI will be presenting on a regular basis to ensure that stakeholders and tribes are well-informed regarding the status of implementation efforts.

29) Will BIE fund charter schools in a state that does not fund them? A tribally-controlled grant school on a reservation?

Due to a statutory restriction imposed by Congress in BIE’s annual spending appropriation, the BIE is prohibited from establishing a charter school in any state.

30) How is the BIE coordinating with the FCC on E-rate connectivity in order to make sure our schools are connected to support digital learning?

The Department’s E-Rate team follows updates from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) closely in order to ensure that BIE-funded schools receive full benefits from the FCC’s E-Rate program. Still, as stated in the Blueprint, most BIE-funded schools have inadequate bandwidth to handle the needs of 21st century teaching and learning. Providing its schools with access to broadband is a major priority for DOI.

31) Could you please consider a follow-up in which you focus on specific areas of the circle graph?

DOI would be more than happy to participate in another webinar once additional details become available regarding implementation of the recommendations contained in the Blueprint.

32) I see boxes for Navajo, BIE schools and Grant Schools. Where do urban Johnson O’Malley (JOM) programs like Oklahoma City Public Schools JOM program fall under?

The Johnson-O’Malley program would be housed within the Office of Sovereignty in Indian Education.

33) How does this impact 638 contracts for JOM and Higher Ed? Since there will be no regional offices, where do these programs fit into reform?

The Johnson-O’Malley program and Higher Education would be housed within the Office of Sovereignty in Indian Education. The Study Group was charged with diagnosing the root cause of poor performance in BIE-operated and tribally controlled grant schools. Accordingly, the Blueprint does not directly address issues regarding the Johnson O'Malley program and higher education. That said, DOI is committed to addressing these issues once additional resources become available.

34) When will the BIE be continuing consultations with tribes and schools? Where?
Tribal consultations are posted on the Consultations page on the following websites: http://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/AS-IA/Consultation/index.htm and http://www.bie.edu/consultation/index.htm. Formal tribal consultations and negotiated rulemaking items are announced in the Federal Register.