The SAAS final rule provides simplicity, clarity, and consistency for BIE funded schools to improve academic outcomes and services to students

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WASHINGTON – Today, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Tara Sweeney announced that the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) published its Standards, Assessments and Accountability System (SAAS) Final Rule under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The SAAS Rule will provide the BIE with the ability to operate under a single unified assessment system intended to bolster professional development and student performance. This framework and consistency across the 23 states where BIE funded schools are located is critical to improving services and providing the high-quality education that BIE students and Tribes deserve. The Rule also defines "School Year" and "Agency Plan," and clarifies requirements for comprehensive and targeted school support and improvement activities.

"The SAAS Rule will provide BIE-funded schools with the simplicity, clarity and consistency needed to establish a solid foundation for school improvement that better serves Indian students and Tribes," **said Assistant Secretary Tara Sweeney**. "Additionally, the Rule reaffirms the right of Tribes to use Native American languages as a medium of instruction."

The proposed rule was published in the Federal Register on June 27, 2019, with a 60-day public comment period. BIE held five in-person consultations sessions and one webinar with Tribes, eligible entities, stakeholders and interested parties. The BIE received 834 comments from stakeholders.

"The SAAS Rule gives BIE-funded schools the opportunity to operate under one unified system of standards, assessments and accountability," **said BIE Director Tony L. Dearman**. "This will provide educators the ability to share research-based best practice across our organization and provide timely data needed to inform and refine practices that increase academic performance for all students."

In 2015, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA or the Act) was amended by ESSA. This amendment required the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) to use a negotiated rulemaking process to establish a rule governing how to define requirements for assessments and an accountability system at BIE funded schools. BIE established a Standards, Assessments, and Accountability Negotiated Rulemaking (NRM) Committee in July 2018.

The work of the Committee resulted in the development of a recommendation for a rule that would ensure a unified system of requirements for a high-quality education for both BIE-funded schools and the students served by such schools. The Committee also reached consensus on recommendations to ensure the support of Tribal governing bodies or school boards that waive the Secretary's requirements for standards, assessments, and an accountability system and implement alternative requirements.

The Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs advises the Secretary of the Interior on Indian Affairs policy

issues, communicates policy to and oversees the programs of the BIA and the BIE, provides leadership in consultations with tribes and serves as the DOI official for intra- and inter- departmental coordination and on Indian matters.

The BIE implements federal Indian education programs and funds 183 elementary schools, secondary schools and dormitories (of which over two-thirds are tribally operated) located on 64 reservations in 23 States serving an estimated 46,000 individual students. The BIE also operates two post-secondary schools and administers grants for 29 tribally controlled colleges and universities and two tribal technical colleges.

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