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Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan and Secretary of Energy James D. Watkins have signed an agreement committing their departments to a cooperative program to improve the teaching of science, mathematics computer science and other technical subjects in American Indian elementary and secondary schools in New Mexico and Arizona.

"Historically, Indians have been under-represented in scientific and technical careers," Lujan noted. "Under this agreement, we will encourage young people in this minority group to pursue these careers, and will provide them greatly broadened educational opportunities in cutting-edge science."

"This agreement enables our departments to reach a special group of students and teachers, as we work to attain the National Education Goals established by President Bush and the Nation's Governors following the Education Summit," Watkins said. "The Department of Energy will provide technical expertise, research experiences and the loan of equipment," Watkins continued, "while Interior will assist us in implementing this program in American Indian schools."

Under the memorandum of understanding, scientific and technical personnel at the Department of Energy's Sandia and Los Alamos National Laboratories in New Mexico will serve as science consultants to schools funded by Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs. They will also bring students and teachers to the laboratories for hands-on science experiences, provide career counseling and mentoring, as well as lend scientific and technical equipment to the schools.

Interior will coordinate these efforts with the schools, including consultation with tribes; select pilot sites in three Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) agencies; assist in selecting sites for the second year of the program; identify schools for the long-term loan of instructional and scientific equipment, and coordinate DOE involvement in other math and science programs sponsored by the BIA.