Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Indian students at the Bureau of Indian Affairs new Gray Hill High School will have the opportunity to become environmentalists, homemakers, and carpenters, all under the same roof. The school is now under construction on the Navajo Indian Reservation just outside of Tuba City, Ariz.

The $7.7 million federal installation is expected to be ready for youngsters from the 9th through the 12th grade by September 1972. Completion of an adjoining public school building is expected to follow. Construction on it will start during the 1971-72 school year.

The Bureau school will draw pupils from six elementary schools under the Tuba City Agency of the federal organization. It will serve 600 boarding school students. The public school is also expected to enroll about 600 day students.

A boarding school rather than a day school was designed because federal funds are not available to build a high school onto each elementary school. Distances in the land of the Navajo and Hopi are so great and the roads too few to bus all the youngsters to a single consolidated high school.

Tailored to Educate Navajos, Hopis

Gray Hill High School is being built to serve youngsters of the Navajo-Hopi community in the Southwest. There, will be no long walks through blowing reservation sand between school buildings because the new structure will have “all under one roof" architecture.

"Educational opportunities other than the minimum necessary to meet state standards will be included at Gray Hill High school," said Kirby K Jackson, school superintendent of the Tuba City Bureau of Indian Affairs Agency, headquarters for the planning of the school.

It will offer courses in Indian history and culture and attempt to build a concept of the Indian heritage to reinforce the student’s sense of their Indian identities.

Vocational courses will follow the thrust of job openings, on and near the Navajo and Hopi Reservations and throughout the nation.

Leaders of the Indian community the school serves say that the area is very short of skilled people those who can successfully repair an automobile, build a house, install plumbing and electric wiring. In an effort to fill this need, Gray Hill High School will have two multi-purpose shops in which enrollees of the school can learn both basic wood and metal working.

In keeping with the Indians typical reverence for his natural environment, the school will have a greenhouse in which plants can be started to landscape the school grounds. Through this project the school children can learn the "why" of soil erosion and overgrazing, both problems of the Navajo and Hopi land base.

The school will also offer enriched academic studies for those who elect a college preparatory

curriculum.

The three-story dormitory that will house boarding school, pupils is designed to give each student maximum privacy. A large lobby will serve as a waiting room for parents who are encouraged to visit their children every weekend. Patio areas where the youngsters can develop gardens or hold cookouts will be built along the edge of the dormitory. Plans call for a duplicate dormitory to be built later.

A dining commons will also serve as a student union for dances and other recreational activities. Classrooms will be separated by dividers and all equipment will be portable. A lecture room can serve as a small auditorium or be divided into six classrooms.

Included in the design is a library and a TV center that can produce closed circuit television programs to be “piped in” to other portions of the school. A gymnasium to serve as a community meeting place and an athletic arena will have a seating capacity of 2,600.

A complex devoted entirely to personnel services and offering the privacy of conference areas will enable counsellors to "work with pupils individually and will also house meetings of the student body council.

School Reflects Community Planning

"Gray Hill High School has involved more community planning. A than any other Bureau of Indian Affairs school” said the Bureau of Indian Affairs superintendent at Tuba City.

The development of educational specifications for the Bureau high school started when a questionnaire was submitted to Navajo and Hopi parents, tribal leaders, prospective pupils, and other citizens in the area.

Then the federal planners studied an eight-state project in designing education for the future and the educational specifications of two Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding schools that have been operating for some time: Albuquerque Indian School and Wingate High School.

Next came days of meetings of the Technical Planning Committee. First it developed a philosophy. Then it drew up 20 basic assumptions as to the future the Gray Hills High School pupils would face. Both were refined after Indian committee members had submitted them to their home communities.

After a working draft of school specifications were developed, meetings were held at Tuba City with the Community Advisory Council. These meetings helped the council to better understand the Gray Hill High School students and the facility it would take to serve them

The contractor now building the school on what was once a sagebrush covered slope is Lebke Construction Co., Albuquerque, N. M.