Media Contact: Information Service
For Immediate Release: August 27, 1954
Print PDF

A $3,000,000 program of public school expansion to accommodate nearly 3,000 Navajo Indian children by September 1955, in communities of Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado bordering the Navajo Reservation was announced today by Acting Secretary of the Interior Fred G. Aandahl.

Funds for the program, which is to be administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, were included in the supplemental appropriation act approved by President Eisenhower on August 26. Grants will be made to the local school districts, on an estimated cost basis of $1,000 per Navajo student, to finance new construction, remodeling of present facilities, and purchase of equipment.

The 3,000 Navajo enrollees include about 1,000 to be enrolled this fall in existing facilities and another 2,000 to be accommodated by the fall of 1955 through the expansion program. Board and room for the children while they are attending the public schools will be provided in the border communities by the Indian Bureau. Only children of the fourth grade and above will be included.

The communities participating in the program are Flagstaff, Holbrook, Winslow and Snowflake in Arizona; Gallup, Farmington and Aztec in New Mexico; Richfield, Utah; and Cortez, Colo.

All work under the program must meet State standards for school construction and the facilities are to be available to Navajo students on an unsegregated basis.

The public school expansion is part of the Indian Bureau’s broad program aimed at providing educational opportunities for all 27,000 of the Navajo children now of school age by the fall of 1955. Only a little over 14,000 of these were enrolled in school during the term which ended last June. Plans now under way will provide for an additional 8,000 in the fall of 1954.

In approving the $3,000,000 item, the congressional conferees made the following statement: "This program is authorized under the Navajo-Hopi Rehabilitation Act (25 U. S. C. 631) which was enacted to meet a special situation due to the large number of Navajo children for which no school facilities have been provided in accordance with the treaties made with these tribes. No statutory authority exists for this type of program for Indians other than Navajo and Hopi Tribes, therefore no precedent is established by this action."