2015 Student and Parental Involvement Surveys

By Bethaney Hale, Associate Statistical Research Analyst, Office of Education Research & Statistics

In September and October 2015, the OERS staff attended tribal fairs across the Navajo reservation to collect student and parent information on student attitudes towards school/culture and on parents’ perceptions of their involvement. Provided below are select findings that can potentially inform future research projects, design of academic and teaching interventions, guide parental involvement workshops, supplement professional development, and inform current efforts by tribal programs.

Fig. 1 displays the distribution of the 1,008 student participants by grade (803 elementary, 147 middle school, 36 high school students) who completed surveys at three tribal fairs in Window Rock, Dilcon, and Shiprock. 53% of the sample was female, 47% was male.

Procedure: Students completed a one page survey consisting of 15 items which addressed student experiences about school. Topic areas included importance of school, perceived effort with school work, learning Navajo culture, parental assistance, and peer relationships. Examples of the 15 items included “I like going to school” and “I get along with my friends”. Student responses were rated on a five-point scale (1=Never; 2=Rarely; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; and 5=Always).

-46% of students reported their parents always speak Navajo. 17% reported their parents never or rarely speak Navajo. -Fig. 2 shows the summary of student responses to learning Navajo culture and history. Students like to learn about Navajo culture in school. -64% of students reported their parent’s help with homework when asked (See Fig. 3) and the same percentage (63%) reported that their parents check homework before students submit. -18% reported parents never help at school activities/events while only 37% reported their parents always help. This question also had a high standard deviation of 1.5 (See Fig. 4). -54% of students reported they always trust their friends (See Fig. 5). -61% reported living with both parents, 20% with their mother only, and 8% with their grandparents. -Internal consistency (Cronbach’s
alpha) for the student survey = 0.7. Student survey findings depict the attitudes of Navajo youth towards school, Navajo culture, and peer relationships, which are all important topics in Navajo education today. As the Navajo Nation is constantly striving to improve teacher and student performance and parental involvement, insights into student opinions and perceptions is critical to this endeavor.

**PARENT SURVEY**

From two tribal fairs (Dilcon and Shiprock), 205 individuals completed parent surveys. Eligible participants were parents of students currently enrolled in grades K-12.

**Procedure:** OERS staff selected four demographic questions (occupation, annual income level, barriers preventing desired parental involvement, and school notification preferences). An additional 15 items were adapted from a Parental Involvement Questionnaire by Hossain and Shipman (2009), which evaluates parents’ perceptions of how often they are involved within areas of child care and academic related tasks. Responses were rated on a 5 point scale (1=Never, 5=Always), with high scores representing strong agreement to the items. Examples of child care questions are “I assist my child with daily hygiene” and “I play with my child.” Examples of academic related involvement items are “I discuss school progress with my child” and “I attend parent meetings at school.”

- Overall, parents agreed to often or always being involved with child care and academic related tasks (See Fig. 6, 7).
- 11% of parents are employed in Education, 8% in Personal Care Services, and 7% in Office/Admin fields.
- 35% of parents are unemployed. These parents reported being stay at home parents, retired, or homemakers.
- 42% have an annual income of $20,000 or less (individually).
- 30% of parents agreed that work hours prevent them from being involved in their child’s academics. Other barriers included gas availability and lack of transportation (15%).
- Parents preferred to be contacted/notified by telephone (34%), email (28%), or school calendars (27%).
- Less than 14% preferred radio ads, or newspaper ads (See Fig. 10).
- Internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha) for all 15 items = 0.9.

Information from the Parent survey offers recommendations and raises questions concerning relationships among parental involvement and student academic achievement. Additional research is important to the understanding of relationships between community/family factors and child development and learning. Future research should investigate additional related topics such as:
- Effects or relationships of unemployed parents on factors such as child motivation, child self-esteem, parent efficacy, and teacher efficacy.
- Student opinions and preferences in how to learn Navajo language and
cultural knowledge.

- Gender differences in elementary socialization and peer group relationships and their influence on classroom performance.
- Use of correlation analysis to examine relationships in detail.

These survey projects are examples of how types of quantitative and qualitative research can further inform knowledge about the factors influencing Navajo education from student and parent perspectives. They can also inform decisions about functions of school and community support services.

*This is a shortened analysis report. Please email for more information. Thank You to OERS staff and other volunteers for their assistance throughout this project.

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**STUDENT SURVEY DATA**

Students completing surveys during Kids Day at the 2015 Navajo Nation Fair in Window Rock, Arizona.
**DR. TOMMY LEWIS’ MESSAGE**

"Education is the cornerstone of the Navajo people, the Navajo traditions, and the Navajo society."

**PRESENTATION ON KTNN-660 AM**

In October 2015, on the radio airwave and with a 30-minute allocated time, Dr. Lewis presented information on the transfer of authority of 32 BIE Operated School to Navajo. The presentation was on the KTNN-660 AM airwave four times on separate days around 11:30 AM on each day.

The same information was provided at the five public hearings mentioned below. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation on the SIEG is available at the Department of Diné Education and at [www.navajonationdode.org](http://www.navajonationdode.org).

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

In the First Quarter of Fiscal Year 2016, Department of Diné Education convened five public hearings on the Sovereignty in Indian Education Grant pertaining to the transfer of authority of 32 BIE Operated Schools to Navajo. The public hearings schedule:

- Monday, November 9, 2015, at SASI, Shiprock, NM;
- Tuesday, November 10, 2015, at T’iists’oozi Community School, Crownpoint, NM;
- Thursday, November 12, 2015, at Many Farms High School Auditorium, Many Farms, AZ;
- Friday, November 13, 2015, at Grey Hills Academy High School Auditorium, Tuba City, AZ;
- and Monday, November 16, 2015, at DODE Auditorium, Window Rock, AZ.

Dr. Lewis invited all BIE Operated Schools, Contract and Grant Schools, School Board Members, School Administrators to attend, including the general public. In the public hearings at the five locations, NNDODE receive public comments on the transfer of authority of 32 BIE Operated Schools to Navajo.

The public hearings - dates and locations - complied with the Navajo Sovereignty in Education Act of 2005. All Hearings started at 9:00 AM.

**ASSUMPTIONS OF GRANT SCHOOLS**

In 2014, DODE assumed three Grant Schools. The schools are:

- Rock Point Community School,
- Chilchinbeto Community School, and
- Wide Ruins Community School.

Rock Point Community School was assumed because the school was more than a year behind in its contract with the BIA, causing a financial short fall. Rock Point Community School has made tremendous progress and there is current discussion to return authority back to the Board possibly in January 2016.

Chilchinbeto Community School was assumed on July 1, 2014, for failure to make reasonable progress toward student academic achievement; failure to comply with federal financial and audit requirements resulting in repeated violation; and failure to comply with Criminal Background check and minimum standards of character checks as mandated by the Indian Child Protection and Family Protection Act.

Wide Ruins Community School was assumed August 8, 2014, by the Navajo Nation Board of Education for failure to make reasonable progress toward student academic achievement; failure to comply with federal financial and audit requirements; and failure of the Board to take proper leadership role.
In addition to receiving reports, some major issues addressed by the Navajo Nation Board of Education in this Quarter includes:

■ Resolution: Supporting to implement the Navajo braille within the Navajo Nation. NNBOE recommends the Navajo Nation government approve a standard Navajo/Diné Braille Code. The Board recognizes that the Diné language is an essential element of the life, culture and identity of the Diné people. There is a sizeable number of Diné citizens and students who are visually impaired and use standard braille code to read.

■ Resolution: Recommending the President of the Navajo Nation approve the updated Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Navajo Nation and Bloomfield School District. In 2012, the Board approved the initial MOA. Bloomfield School District has seven schools located near the Navajo Nation. The updated MOA incorporates Diné Content Standard and a provision to share with the Navajo Nation the student achievement data.

■ Reauthorization of schools for six months:
  - Naa’Tsis Aan Community School, Inc., Navajo Mountain, Utah.
  - Ch’ooshgai Community School, Inc., Tohatchi, New Mexico.
  - Dibe Yazhi Habit’iin Olta, Inc., Borrego Pass, New Mexico.
Patrick D. Lynch Receives Second Master’s Degree

December 18, 2015, at Northern Arizona University, Patrick D. Lynch, received his second Master’s. He also has a Master in Public Health from the University of New Mexico.

Mr. Lynch is a current member of the Navajo Nation Board of Education as a Parent Representative.

This time, Patrick received his Master’s in Administration Program. “The Navajo Area Indian Health Service paid 85% of the cost through the NAIHS Leadership Development Program,” said Patrick.

His NAU Capstone/Thesis Project focused on a comparison of the strategic planning management and performance improvement methods between the Chinle Services Unit Hospital and the Tsehootsoi Medical Center.

Lynch also states that, “Getting through this second Master’s degree was difficult and it took a lot of time management, dedication, and balance between a full-time career, family obligations, and being on the DODE board of education.”

“I pursued this educational opportunity because I know that this degree will assist me with my journey into upper levels of responsibility within my career,” said Patrick. “As the Parent Representative on the Navajo Nation Board of Education, I encourage and challenge all Navajo students, teachers, and parents to seek any available opportunities to help further the development of your educational goals and dreams.”
The AdvancED Navajo Nation Council held its Fall meeting at the Hilton Garden Inn, Gallup, NM. In addition to reviewing and taking action on recent External Reviews and submitted Accreditation Progress Reports (APR), council members were brought up-to-date regarding the AdvancED organizational and performance changes that took effect on the 1st of July. The changes indicate that AdvancED is moving toward a very different approach to successful school improvement. The focus will continue to be on individual student performance. AdvancED’s revised standards coming out in 2017 will go even deeper into serving the individual needs of students. In order to improve any aspect of education, however, the whole system must be considered and addressed. Accordingly, AdvancED Navajo Nation is focusing on the development of strategies designed to help education institutions attract, develop, retrain and utilize TALENTED people; increase their KNOWLEDGE of the education institution’s core functions, expectations, and disciplines; increase their understanding that the CULTURE of the collective organization determines its effectiveness and success; and increase their understanding that an education institution cannot be successful without keen EXECUTION.

Dr. Barbara Remondini, Mountain Region Vice President, shared the following salient points during her Power Point presentation, which are indicators of AdvancED’s efforts to better serve network schools:

- North America has been divided into six regions. The AdvancED Navajo Nation Operations Office is in the Mountain Region.
- The functions of the AdvancED Operations Offices have been expanded to include not only Accreditation but also School Improvement, Diagnostic and Advocacy.
- The role of AdvancED council members has been expanded. Members now have the authority and the responsibility to make accreditation decisions at the AdvancED Council level.
- Operations Offices will use the AdvancED Management of Operational Services (AMOS) as a self-assessment tool for continuous improvement.

During the appreciation luncheon, Isabell Charley, was recognized and honored by both Dr. Davis and Dr. Remondini for her service with the AdvancED Navajo Nation Operations Office (1985-2015). Ms. Charley was presented with a retirement gift from AdvancED by Dr. Remondini. Lori Chee, Principal of Pinon High School, and Marlene Tsosie, Principal of Chichiltah /Jones Ranch Community School, were acknowledged and welcomed as new AdvancED Navajo Nation council members.
On September 13, 2015, at a quiet afternoon session, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee of the Navajo Nation Council approved Legislation No. 325-15, by a unanimous vote of four in favor and zero oppose. Jonathan Hale, Chairperson of the Committee sponsored the Legislation which supports the application of the Department of Diné Education (NNDODE) for the Tribal Education Department Grant administered through BIE. The Legislation moves forward to the Budget and Finance Committee and then to the Naabik’íyáti’ Committee, which has the final authority to approve intergovernmental matters. If approved, NNDODE will accept the grant award of $350,000.00 for the first year and $350,000.00 for the second year.

Pursuant to 25 U.S.C. Section 2020, the U.S. Department of Interior, through the BIE, solicited grant proposals from federal-recognized tribes and their tribal education department.

The grant award will assist the Navajo Nation Department of Diné Education develop and operate tribal education departments for the purpose of planning and coordinating education programs of the Navajo Nation that may include: Improve education outcomes for students and improve engagements and management with BIE-funded schools. The Resolution authorizes the President and/or the Vice President to execute any and all documents necessary to effectuate the intent of the resolution.

Using the Grant funds and maintaining tribal education background and vision, the Navajo Nation will develop and implement three projects identified under 25 U.S.C. Section 2020, as follows:
1. Tribal Education Code Development;
2. Tribal Education Control; and
3. Tribal Administration Support.

NNDODE’s vision is “Diné Education is our Strength” and the mission is to provide lifelong learning for the Navajo people and to ensure culturally integrity and sovereignty of the Navajo Nation. The values honored by NNDODE are k’é, teamwork, communication, integrity, creativity, achievement, and knowledge.

The Navajo Nation Council authorize NNDODE with administrative and regulatory authority to implement and enforcement Navajo Nation Education laws and policies for one contract school operating under PL 93-638, 32 BIE funded schools operating under PL 100-297, and other school systems operating on the Navajo Nation.

NNDODE provides assistance to such schools to ensure compliance with education regulations and laws of the Navajo Nation and applicable federal laws. The Navajo Nation serves 66 federal funded school, as follows:
- 33 PL 100-297 tribal controlled schools;
- One PL 93-638 Contract school; and
- 32 BIE operated schools.

The plan for the Grant Funds is to strengthen NNDODE’s capacity to monitor all 66 federal funded schools in areas of school operations that involve monitoring and auditing grant funds. This will facilitate the school reauthorization system. Under this plan, the primary plan is to unify all 66 Navajo federal funded schools in all aspect of school operations, such as: Unify personnel and policy manual covering school governance, human resources, finance, and curriculum and assessment.

On November 12, 2015, the Naabik’íyáti’ Committee, approved the resolution.

“This Grant will move us along towards preparing the Navajo Nation to exercise our own school system as we address critical issues facing our future generations in knowing their culture and language with a sense of respecting themselves as Diné,” said Jonathan Hale, HEHSC Chairperson.
On October 5, 2015, Superintendent, Dr. Tommy Lewis, and Assistant Superintendent, Timothy Benally, of the Department of Diné Education released the final FY 2015 quarterly report covering July, August, and September, to the Office of the President and Office of the Vice President.

The Fourth Quarter Report covers an executive summary statement, critical issues, status on ongoing major projects, highlights on some operational and improvement initiatives, and budget status reports by the end of September. The Quarter Report utilizes the new report format recommended by President Russell Begaye.

The DODE Quarterly Report represents the 11 DODE program activities in the fourth quarter. The eleven DODE Programs reporting include:

- Navajo Head Start
- Navajo Johnson O’Malley
- Office of Diné Accountability & Compliance
- Office of Standards, Curriculum & Assessment Development
- Office of Diné School Improvement
- Office of Diné YOUTH
- Office of Navajo Nation Library
- Navajo AdvancED
- Office of Educational Research Statistics
- Office of Special Education & Rehabilitation Services
- Office of Navajo Nation Scholarship & Financial Assistance

DODE has been expediting documents for approval on the items highlighted in the Executive Summary section of the quarterly report. In several of the report items, DODE has been coordinating with the BIE when necessary, such as the Navajo Nation Accountability Workbook and Sovereignty in Indian Education Grant. The executive summary, which is followed by the program reports, covers four items: Navajo Nation Sovereignty in Education Act of 2005; School Reauthorization; Navajo Nation Accountability Workbook; and Sovereignty in Indian Education Grant.

**SCHOOL REAUTHORIZATION**

In 2012, HEHSC approved Resolution HEHSCMY-012-12 which delegated the Board of Education authority to oversee school reauthorization function. On annual basis, the Board of Education convenes meetings to address school reauthorization applications from PL 100-297 Grant schools and PL 93-638 Contract Schools. Pursuant to PL 100-297, reauthorization process started in 1988 and continued to the present time. At the federal level, PL 93-638 amended PL 100-297 (Tribally Controlled Schools Act). The Education Committee by Resolution ECF-12-01 reaffirmed the Reauthorization process and HEHSCMY-012-12 reaffirmed ECF-12-01 (Grant/Contract Conversion/Maintenance Handbook).

**NAVAJO NATION SOVEREIGNTY IN EDUCATION ACT OF 2005**

Provisions in Title Ten, Navajo Nation Code, Section 106, et.al, pertain to authorities and functions of the Navajo Nation Board of Education. In Section 106 (G)(1)(a), the Board is authorize to assume control of local community controlled school from the local community school board. One of the primary function is that the Board is established to oversee the operation of all schools either directly or by JPA, MOA, or IGA. The Board is also empowered to establish policies and procedures to carryout federal accountability provisions and laws for BIE funded schools. Section 106 (G)(3)(n) authorizes the Board to establish enforcement procedures for education laws and to implement such laws.

**NAVAJO NATION ACCOUNTABILITY WORKBOOK**

Pursuant to Section 9401 NCLB Act, the Navajo Nation Department of Diné Education seeks to waive the AYP Accountability plan administered by the Bureau of Indian Education as set forth in 25 C.F.R. §30.104. The Navajo Alternative Accountability plan is intended to serve only tribally-controlled schools. The Navajo Nation Department of Diné Education recognizes its right and re-
sponsibility for the education of all Navajo students.

Section 1116(g)(1)(B) of the No Child Left Behind Act specifies that: "The tribal governing body or a school board of a school that is funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs may waive, in part or in whole, the definition of adequate yearly progress established pursuant to paragraph (A) where such definition is determined by such body or school board to be inappropriate."

The Navajo Nation identifies four specific reasons why the current Bureau of Indian Education’s accountability plan is inappropriate:

1. The majority of Navajo children attending Bureau and tribally-controlled schools do not meet their respective state’s performance standards.
2. The current BIE accountability standards will not build the systemic and sustainable reform necessary to improve tribally-controlled schools.
3. The Navajo Sovereignty in Education Act, 2005, specifically requires that Navajo language and cultural standards developed and implemented in an accountability system; the BIE accountability plans do not meet the requirement.
4. The Navajo Nation’s application for an alternative AYP plan is part of a strategy for building the organizational capacity and leadership skills necessary to successfully govern Navajo education.

The Navajo Alternative AYP proposal is a plan to rectify these problems and to build and strengthen the capacity of the Navajo Nation to oversee the education of its children.

SOVEREIGNTY IN INDIAN EDUCATION GRANT

In August 2014, the Department of Diné Education in response to a BIE Sovereignty in Indian Education Grant (SIEG) submitted to the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) a grant proposal to promote tribal control of education and establish a Navajo Nation education system. BIE is a federal agency within the United States Department of Interior.

On October 23, 2014, the Bureau of Indian Education of the U.S. Department of Interior awarded $200,000. 00 Grant to the Navajo Nation Department of Diné Education (NNDODE).

SIEG is part of the federal BIE ‘Blueprint for Reform’ for BIE schools. In 2013, U.S. Department of the Interior under the leadership of Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan held meetings with American Indian Education Study Group which in turn held meetings with Native American Tribes across the Nation.

A think-tank organized in response to President Obama’s initiative to Tribal Self-Determination to improve BIE schools. Members of the Study Group included:

- John Roessel, Director of the Bureau of Indian Education;
- Don Yu, Special Advisor to Secretary Duncan;
- Dr. Kenneth Wong, Annenberg Professor of Education Policy and Education Department Chair at Brown University;
- Marilee Fitzgerald, Director of U.S. Department of Defense Educational Activity; and
- Charlie Rose, former General Counsel at the U.S. Department of Education.

The primary purpose of this grant is to support the Navajo Nation’s capacity to manage and to operate tribally controlled schools. At the end of the two-year project, NNDODE will have completed the process to assume control of 66 schools on the Navajo Nation. These schools currently received federal BIE funds pursuant to Public 100-297 and Public Law 93-638.

Navajo Nation statute “Sovereignty in Education Act” codified as Title Ten Navajo Nation Code, supports justification for the SIEG.

Areas to be improved under the grant include: Establish a curriculum plan; develop strategies to increase yearly achievement scores; improve graduation rates; reduce dropout rates; improve students ACT/SAT scores; and increase students’ academic achievements in Science, Technology, Engineer and Mathematics.

In another related areas, NNDODE will review school systems on the Navajo Nation to develop a uniform system in areas of human resources, finance, academics and school governance. NNDODE will research and implement the most effective laws, regulation, and policies.

In academic areas, NNDODE plans to establish a uniform academic goals, objectives, and a standard curriculum for Navajo Nation schools to adhere to.
Johanson Phillips of the Office of Dine School Improvement, within the Department of Diné Education, completed a training on the Navajo Nation Science Fair. On October 12, 2015, teachers at the Window Rock Unified School District No. 8 received training on the 2016 Navajo Nation Science Fair.

“We encourage all schools to participate in the 2016 Navajo Nation Science Fair,” said Superintendent of School Dr. Tommy Lewis. “We encourage all students to participate in Science, Math, and Technology. There are many benefits by participating in science fairs as well as in other academic areas.”

Johanson covered important items that teachers need to be aware of as they assist students submit projects in the upcoming Navajo Nation Science Fair.

The seven goals of the 2016 Navajo Nation Science Fairs include:
1. Improve local Science Fairs at all Navajo Nation Schools;
2. Implement Common Core State Standards;
3. Implement Next Generation Science Standards;
4. Become an affiliated fair with Intel/ISEF;
5. Improve the Navajo Nation Science Fair with more Research-Based projects entries using the Scientific Method process;
6. Incorporate Navajo culture and environment into projects and research; and
7. Recognize and reward teachers working with students with research year-round.

The 2016 Navajo Nation Science Fair covers seven categories: Animal Science; Behavioral & Social Science; Biology; Chemistry; Engineering & Computer Science; Environmental Science; and Physical Science.

As a requirement to participate in the Navajo Nation Fair, Navajo Nation Schools are required to hold a Science Fair at their school before competing at the 2016 Navajo Nation Science Fair. In addition, schools will send their top two projects from the seven categories for the four-division to the 2016 Navajo Nation Science Fair to compete.

To make it fair for all participating students, the Navajo Nation Science Fair requires project display board dimension to be: Depth (front to back) 30 inches; width (side to side) 48 inches; and height (floor to top) 108 inches. The dimension is the same for the 2016 Arizona State Science Fair.

Only one student to a project at the 2016 Navajo Nation Science Fair. Projects with more than one student will result in disqualification; however, partners of two students can do projects in Grades K-4 only. All first place winners at the 2016 Navajo Nation Science Fair will be invited to compete at the 2016 Arizona State Science Fair.

Safety measures include:
- There will not be any electricity provided for students and their projects in the convention center.
- No glass objects are permitted such as light bulbs or glasses.
- No chemical compounds are allowed in the convention center.
- No flammable materials or liquids are permitted such as lighters, matches or gasoline.
- No live animals are permitted.
- No plant or animal tissue are allowed.
- Battery operated devices must have their power source disconnected if they are not supervised.
- Anything that can pose a hazard to participants will not be allowed in the hall.
- Our Safety Officers reserve the right to enforce these rules to their discretion.

The Office of School Improvement recommends one individual designated from a school to register students and teachers; schools conducted their science fair early so there is enough time to register all students and projects; double-check all information before submitting projects to the Navajo Nation Science Fair; and be on time for the 2016 Navajo Nation Science Fair.

The 2016 Navajo Nation Science Fair begins February 23, 2016, for Pee-Wee Division (Grades K-4). February 24, 2016, for Elementary Division (Grades 5-6). February 25, 2016, for Junior High Division (Grades 7-8) and for Senior Division (Grades 9-12).

For additional information on the 2016 Navajo Nation Science Fair contact the Office of School Improvement at (928) 871-7452 or Contact Johanson Phillips at (928) 871-7451. 2016 Navajo Nation Science Fair information is also available at www.navajonationdode.org.
2016 NN Science Fair Rules

- Only ONE student (Grades 5-12) to a project at the 2016 Navajo Nation Science Fair. Projects with more than one student will result in disqualification.
- Partners to TWO students can do projects in only Grades K-4.
- All first place winners (Grades 5-12) at the 2016 Navajo Nation Science Fair will be invited to compete at the 2016 Arizona State Science Fair.

Seven Categories

- Animal Science
- Behavioral & Social Science
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Engineering & Computer Science
- Environmental Science
- Physical Science

Required for NN Science Fair

- All Navajo nation Schools are REQUIRED to put on a Science Fair at their school before completing at the 2016 Navajo Nation Science Fair.
- Schools will send their TOP TWO projects from the (7) categories for the four divisions to the 2016 Navajo Nation Science Fair to complete.

2016 NN Science Fair at Red Rock State Park, Gallup, NM

- Tuesday, February 23, 2016
- Pee-Wee Division (Grades K-4)
- Wednesday, February 25, 2016
- Elementary Division (Grades 5-6)
- Thursday, February 25, 2016
- Junior High Division (Grades 7-8)
- Senior Division (Grades 9-12)

SAFETY RULES

- No electricity provided for students in the convention center
- No glass objects allowed such as light bulb or glasses
- No chemical compounds allowed
- No flammable material or liquids allowed, like: Lighters, matches, or gasoline
- No live Animals allowed
- No plant or animal tissues allowed
- No hazard material or objects allowed
- Disconnect battery operated devices if projects are not supervised.
- Safety Officers reserve the right to enforce Safety Rules at their discretion.

http://www.sciencefairregistration.com/az/nnsf

- On-line Registrations available January 2016 for:
  - Schools
  - Teachers
  - Students/projects
  - Judges

- 2016 Navajo Nation Science Fair projects registration deadline midnight Wednesday, February 17, 2016.
November 19th, 2015, Blanding, UT— The Blanding and Montezuma Creek Elementary Schools of San Juan School District participated in the reenactment of the Long Walk of Diné people in 1864 and returning in 1868. The “Walk” commenced at the local park with student, parent and teacher participants. The “Walk” was introduced with a presentation of a background of the Long Walk. The “Walk” also included the story of emergence with the people passing the four underworlds and bringing the four sacred mountains into the current world; they were to serve as boundaries of Diné land.

The people were told not to forget the mountains as this would return them home should they ever become lost. When the Diné people were held in captivity at Ft. Sumner, New Mexico, a Coyote Ceremony was performed to determine their fate whether they could go home or be sent to Oklahoma. On the day of their return, the people left early singing “shií naashá” looking for the four sacred mountains to guide their return home.

The reenactment included giving participants hard biscuits, which served as daily food, hearing blank shots of guns, and observing horsemen use whips to keep in line the travelers going to Bosque Redondo. At the conclusion of the “Walk” and arriving at Utah State University – Eastern Blanding Campus, the students were presented with four learning stations to participate in with student presenters from the college: The reenactment of the treaty signing between Diné and the U.S. Government; the use of Diné Hózhóójį songs giving strength to Diné people during their captivity; and traditional food used by Diné at that time.

From work stations at USU, the participants left for Westwater community, the idea was, the Diné now released from Hweeldi were headed home. Down in the canyon, Mr. Clayton Long played Manuelito, where he addressed the students and shouted victory "We are going home!" "We have won".

This year the Blanding Elementary students memorized the Gettysburg address, and as Manuelito spoke, a student also gave the Gettysburg address; the Long Walk (reenactment) was on November 19th the very day President Lincoln gave his speech. Navajo traditional speaker Curtis Yanito later commented that the ceremony ʼiíʼsíí Hózhǫ́ǫjį was the very ceremony that helped not only released the Navajos but it also helped President Lincoln with his speech.

In the reenactment, the participants walked happily all the way to the Westwater community. The Westwater people along with their president dressed as a chief riding on his horse came and greeted the students. Westwater community members made fry bread and the students put honey and/or powdered sugar on their bread as they ate their sack lunches. Lis Adams, the 5th grade teacher, suggested at the conclusion of the reenactment that heading home was a joy.

The reenactment of the Long Walk project was made possible by a library grant fund from the State of Utah in collaboration with the San Juan Schools District and Utah State University – Eastern Blanding Campus. The video archive of the “Long Walk” will become a teaching video for other schools. Over 100 students participated in the “Long Walk” project.
MARCH TO BRING AWARENESS

On October 20, 2015, in the cold weather, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services with persons with disabilities – some in wheel chairs – march to the Navajo Nation Council Session in the morning. The march is to bring awareness and attention to the issues and topics to improve programs for individuals with disabilities. Walking along the roadside from the Chevron Service Station to the Council Chambers, marchers held up signs with messages of reminder that the governments still have an undaunted obligation to fulfill. One sign urged “Diné with disability lives matter” and another aim at the lawmakers to comply with the law: “Compliance with Navajo Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Act”.

“People with disabilities are people too,” Jonathan Hale said. Dignitaries were all too happy to see persons with disabilities as they gathered in front of the Council Chambers. Speeches resonated the need to continue with funds and programs for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services that works closely with persons with disabilities. All this is summarized in the recent quarterly report the Council received, OSERS reports problem areas that make it difficult to assist persons with disabilities, such as:

1. Job placement and job development for persons with disabilities are very difficult due to the 48.5% rate of unemployment and poor economy on the Navajo Nation. Unemployment is at an all-time high on the Navajo Nation.
2. Local employers are not willing to hire individuals with disabilities due to personal assumptions; some do not understand the on-the-job-training concept.
3. Some agency offices do not meet the American with Disabilities Act requirements for the public and seek renovation to meet ADA standards. Transitional Programs for high school students are limited and non-existent in most high schools.
4. Lack of adequate and accessible office accommodations in agency offices and the lack of Rehabilitation Teachers and ASL Teachers/coaches who speak Navajo on the Navajo Nation. Since 1998, the Workforce Investment Act is not reauthorized where tribal VR programs amendment request is continuation funding and set aside for independent living funds for tribes and cost reimbursement to tribes of social security recipients.

“I want to recognize the efforts made by the Navajo Nation Advisory Council on Disability for the advocacy for individuals with disabilities,” said Treva Roanhorse, Program Manager of OSERS. There is hope as dignitaries – including Jonathan Hale, HEHSC Chairperson – made speeches after speeches that it would be. The march to improve services and programs for persons with disabilities caught the lawmakers’ attention.
On October 13, 2015, in a coordination meet held at the Sunrise Conference of the Department of Diné Education, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye receive informative reports from several programs of the Department of Diné Education. The meeting started at 11 AM with Dr. Tommy Lewis, Superintendent of Schools, providing a confident welcome address. President Begaye listens intently as Dr. Lewis explains the strategic plans for growth and development of the Department of Diné Education that includes the transfer of 32 BIE operated schools to Navajo and the reorganization of the Department of Diné Education.

The report by Timothy Benally, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, shows that in Fiscal Year 2016 DODE unmet needs totaled $7,443,286.00. The breakdown of unmet needs for several programs includes: Navajo Head Start $5,734,876.00 for operation, technical training and support costs, and 20% cash match (Of the unmet total for Navajo Head Start, approximately $5 million for the 20% cash match for federal funds.); Office of Diné Accountability & Compliance $155,689.00 for personnel, technical assistance, and operating costs; Fort Defiance Diné Youth $297,741.00 for property management, youth employment and computer lab.; Office of Navajo Nation Scholarship & Financial Assistance $270,607.00 for scholarships and financial assistance; Chinle Diné Youth $157,250.00 for youth employment during winter and summer breaks; Crownpoint Diné Youth $124,644.00 for youth employment and job related skills; Tuba City Diné Youth $100,000.00 for renovation cost of the community center; Department of Diné Education Administration $230,000.00 for electrical and HVAC upgrades for the entire Navajo Education Building to implement an advanced data center.

The success of the Department of Diné Education to a large degree depends on many elements, like personnel, operating supplies, equipment, etc., to provide direct service to the constituents. All these elements rest on the amount of funds the program receives on an annual basis. As the 2016 Fiscal Year progress into the fiscal year, Department of Diné Education may experience a budget short-fall in several areas; therefore, it is requesting a supplemental appropriation to address the anticipated budget short-fall.

Ronald Duncan, Program Manager of the Office of Diné Youth, reports that in December of 2015 ODY will convene a Youth Conference to organize Youth Councils. He also confirms the need for additional appropriation for youth employment, culture and language trainings, and youth center constructions.

According to Dr. Davis’ presentation, AdvancED is the largest accreditation organization in the world. AdvancED serves as a trusted accreditation partner to 32,000 schools and school systems across the United States and 70 other nations around the world. In 1982, by resolution CAP-14-83, the Navajo Nation Council established AdvancED Navajo Nation as an affiliate between AdvancED and the Navajo Nation. AdvancED Navajo Nation provides accreditation services to public schools and Bureau of Indian Education operated, grant and contract schools located within the boundaries of the Navajo Nation. AdvancED Navajo Nation also provides accreditation services to charter, private, and parochial schools located on the Navajo Nation.

In other areas, Dr. Kalvin White reports on the status of the Accountability Workbook and intergovernmental relationship with Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona state governments. Rose Graham, Department Manager of the Office of Navajo Nation Scholarship & Financial Assistance, provides information on the scholarship & financial assistance and confirms the need for additional appropriation for scholarships and financial assistance for eligible college students. A major issue that remains to be addressed immediately is the timely transfer of federal appropriations to the Higher Education Program from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Measures need to be taken to ensure enough funds are available for spring term awards. When Federal funds are delayed and not deposited into the Higher Education Program accounts, students are adversely affected.

Federal appropriations to the Higher Education Program continue to be on the decrease while the cost of a college tuition is at a sharp increase. In an effort to serve the maximum number of students possible, the Higher Education Program has not made any significant increase in the amounts awarded to students over the past ten years. The good news is ONNSFA is working with Senator Udall (NM) on a legislation to approve a Forward Funding mechanism so funds are receive in July before colleges and universities are back in session.

The meeting adjourned around 2:30 PM.
Source: DODE Public Hearings on SIEG conducted in five locations on the Navajo Nation in November 2015.