

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
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EXEMPLARY INDIAN SCHOOL TO OPEN IN OKLAHOMA

A new "exemplary" Indian school, set up to pioneer new teaching techniques, will open this fall at Concho, Okla., Robert L. Bennett, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, has announced.

The 256-pupil boarding school, to be operated in a new \$2.5 million building complex, will be used to develop new educational methods to overcome the cultural and linguistic differences which often handicap Indian children in a traditional learning experience, Bennett said.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has entered into a contract with Southwestern State College at nearby Weatherford, Okla., to provide consulting services to devise, test and evaluate new educational techniques under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

The exemplary program, Bennett said, "will continue the thrust of our present day educational planning, which seeks to emphasize the variety of experience and background that make up the American population, and the fact that the many Indian cultures in our land can and should make a contribution to our society. At the same time his own culture can provide the Indian student with the sense of personal identification and belonging so necessary for emotional growth and learning."

Southwestern State College has had considerable experience training teachers for public schools in western Oklahoma which have large Indian enrollments, Bennett said, and "it is enthusiastic about exploring these new means for breaking down the barriers which have slowed Indian learning, and creating new ways to prepare the Indian student for a productive and self-sustaining life in American society." The inquiry process which stresses thinking through a problem, rather than memorizing answers to the teachers' questions, will be stressed throughout the school's program, he said.

Part of the exemplary program will be a low pupil-staff ratio, a strong guidance program and the use by students of many of the college facilities. Both Southwestern staff and students will be working "seven days a week" with the Concho School students and staff, Bennett said.

The Concho School complex will contain 10 classrooms, special subject rooms for music, practical arts, home economics, multi-purpose activities and a kitchen and dining room in addition to administrative office and two dormitories, each housing 128 pupils.

"In this exemplary school we recognize that only through the development of the most effective educational tools and concepts will we be able to give Indian children the education they must have to live lives of their own choosing in 20th Century America," Bennett said.

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