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## VICE PRESIDENT NEZ SAYS DSAP HELPS NAVAJO SCHOOLS SET THEIR OWN PRIORITIES



Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez spoke at DODE's Education Summit stating that the goal of DSAP is to create a better educational system for Navajo students.

FLAGSTAFF, ARIZ.- The Dine School Accountability Plan (DSAP) was the prime topic of discussion yesterday at the Department of Dine Education's (DODE) Education Summit, in which Vice President Jonathan Nez said DSAP provides schools an opportunity to set their own goals and priorities.

"We are gathered here today to talk about the DSAP which empowers schools to improve their systems according to the needs of their students," Vice President Nez said.

DSAP was signed in September 2016 by Department of Interior (DOI) Secretary Sally Jewell and U.S. Department of Education Secretary John King. Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye, Vice President Nez, Health and Human Services Committee Chairman Jonathan Hale, Navajo Nation Board of Education President Dr. Pauline Begay and Diné Department of Education Superintendent Dr. Tommy Lewis Jr. witnessed the signing ceremony.

The Plan applies to the 60 Bureau of Indian Education-funded schools

on the Navajo Nation and "ensures that Navajo children will have equal standards and curricula that highlight Dine language, history and culture," said President Begaye.

Through the DSAP, Navajo BIA-funded schools are able to gather critical input that helps educators and administrators gain a better understanding of what the Navajo schools should strive for in setting educational priorities for their communities.

"Navajo education needs to be improved. The status quo is not acceptable," said DODE Superintendent Dr. Lewis. "What we are talking about here is the ability to share information while seeking input on how we can get there. It assists our educational perspectives in getting our children to that next level. As educators, we have a big responsibility to improve the standards of education for our children."

Dr. Lewis addressed the No Child Left Behind Act and how it aimed to standardize U.S. student proficiency levels in math and reading by the year 2014. He said that the majority of schools across the U.S.

achieved proficiency levels at about 50-60% as opposed to the 100% proficiency it aimed to achieve.

“On Navajo, the scores were not good at all,” he said. “We did not get to the top and that’s just a matter of fact.”

Moving forward in addressing proficiency levels across the Nation, Lewis said the DSAP will assist by establishing guidelines as to how Navajo schools will set their standards.

“How can we be a part of the solution? How can we pool our expertise to gain positive outcome?” he asked.

Vice President Nez said DSAP will help by in gathering data to ad-

dress areas of need under one voice.

“The Federal Government and the DOI signed this document with the intent that the Navajo Nation is taking control of its education system,” he said. “We hope this summit will re-energize you. Our goal in this is to have a better system for our Navajo students, not just for now but also for the unborn generations.”

The Education Summit was held at the High Country Conference Center in Flagstaff, Ariz., on Tuesday, Jan. 31 and Wednesday, Feb. 1. Speakers included Vice President Nez, Delegate Hale and Assistant Deputy Director of BIE, Dr. Tamara Pfeiffer.

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