

Grants encourage innovative Indian education projects

Over a thousand grants have been awarded public school districts in 40 states to make school more meaningful and rewarding for the nations's first Americans, HEW's Office of Education announced recently.

The grants, totaling more than \$31.8 million, were awarded under Part A of the Indian Education Act of 1972 (Public Law 92-318).

They will enable schools during fiscal year 1976 to establish, maintain, or expand programs to improve the quality of education presently available to Indian students. Some 300 of the grants will finance new programs.

The remainder will fund for another year programs which have proved their contribution to broadening the educational opportunity for Indian children as a result of the 1972 legislation.

An example of a Part A program is that run by the Gallup-McKinley County School District in New Mexico. This district has the largest Indian enrollment in the nation—more than 9,000 pupils out of a total enrollment of over 13,000. It is also the largest school district in the nation in terms of territory serviced, with 28 schools spread over an area of 5,700 square miles.

Gallup-McKinley received the largest award this year, a grant of \$811,425. It is the fourth made to this district and brings the grand total awarded to it since the act was passed in 1972 to over \$2.5 million—an estimated \$85 a year for each student.

Among the innovations are:

—Two career education vans which travel to schools for

counseling and special instruction.

—A new mathematics laboratory.

—A playback system that permits the children to enjoy video tapes of interest to their own culture such as the swearing in and inaugural address of their Navajo chairman.

—Materials purchased for students to be taught to build shelters for those who must wait for school buses in bad weather.

Such improvements have had a marked effect upon school attendance. Over the four years the school has received aid under the Indian Education Act, attendance has increased 35 per cent.

The dropout rate has decreased by some 20 per cent and there has been a substantial increase in the numbers of seniors going on to college.

The average grant awarded for Part A under P.L. 92-318 for the current fiscal year is

\$29,000. Projects funded range from the creation of textbook materials in languages that are spoken rather than written, to sending teachers into homes to work with parents as well as children with learning difficulties.

The two smallest grants of \$540 each will enable Indian children in two elementary schools in California to take field trips of special historical

interest.

Since passage of the Indian Education Act in 1972 some \$89 million has funded 3,239 programs in public school districts across the nation. Alaska's 46 school districts received \$3,244,714.78 for local education agencies for development of elementary and secondary school programs to meet the special needs of Indian children.