

## Assistant Secretary Tara Mac Lean Sweeney Reopens Improved, Expanded Santa Rosa Ranch School

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Tara Mac Lean Sweeney recently reopened the Santa Rosa Ranch School (SRRS), located on the Tohono O’odham Nation reservation. The school provides education for grades K-8 and serves approximately 66 students. The school had been closed since December 13, 2018, when the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) leadership and safety personnel identified several high priority deficiencies during a campus walk-through.

“I am proud to return to the Santa Rosa Ranch School after working closely with Tohono O’odham Chairman Edward Manuel and I was delighted to welcome back the students, teachers and staff. I applaud the diligent and expedited response made by our leadership, staff and the SRRS Community to improve the school’s facilities and upgrade its equipment,” said AS-IA Tara Sweeney. “My priority is for our BIE students to receive a quality education and study in safe facilities and environments, and I continue to look forward to working with the community on future improvements.”

“The Nation has been very pleased to work with Assistant Secretary Sweeney and BIE to facilitate the prompt improvements and reopening of the Santa Rosa Ranch School,” said Tohono O’odham Nation Chairman Edward D. Manuel. “Providing

our youth with safe, accessible places to learn and grow is vitally important. We will continue working with our federal partners to ensure that schools on the Nation meet that standard.”

ASIA Sweeney toured the school’s new five modular units and refurbished buildings, which include several classrooms and a kitchen. Additional improvements at the school include the installation of: new access ramps, access platforms and stairs; fencing around the campus area; a new fire alarm system; and six new classrooms. The new kitchen includes a dining room facility with new furniture, appliances and ice machine. Preexisting buildings received new doors and fresh paint. The Indian Affairs Office of Information Technology installed new computers with internet access and landline phones.

While the Office of Facilities, Property and Safety Management for Indian Affairs made improvements, the BIE provided daily transportation for displaced students and teachers to the nearest BIE school, Santa Rosa Day School, where the facilities include a gym, computer lab and cafeteria. Indian Affairs leadership and the Tohono O’odham leadership worked closely together to ensure an efficient time table was planned and followed for the SRRS to reopen on the target date set for when the students returned from Spring Break. ♣



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