

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

### UPDATE ON NORTHEAST REGIONAL ACADEMY

**Action Requested:** Receive the presentation.

**Executive Summary:** Superintendent Steve Gettel will provide an update on Northeast Regional Academy. Since the last report in June 2014, the following progress has been made on the implementation of the pilot center with the Charles City Community School District, known as the Northeast Regional Academy (NERA).

The Leadership Team for Deaf and Blind continues to meet monthly to work on the Academy implementation activities that are outlined in the planning tool adopted in August 2014. The planning tool outlines the purpose and goals for the academy, the role the academy will play in the continuum of statewide service delivery for students who are deaf, blind or deaf-blind, the partner agency responsibilities, and how the effectiveness and efficiencies created by the academy will be evaluated. Enrollment data indicate there are currently 34 students with visual impairment and approximately 95 deaf or hard of hearing students living within the service area of the NERA, which is a one hour commute from Charles City. It is estimated that 25% of those students would benefit from intensive, direct instruction provided by the NERA.

#### 1. Promoting the Academy

- A marketing committee comprised of AEA and ISD/IBSSS staff was established in August and meets monthly to develop strategies and promotional materials.
- Meetings with parents, legislators, local districts and other agency personnel has been on-going since October including:
  - Charles City Community School Board,
  - Area legislators and the press
  - AEA 267 and AEA 1 superintendents, special education directors and program supervisors
  - Teachers of the visually impaired.
- Information about the Academy has been distributed to parents and area legislators.

Next Steps. Meetings with the hearing and vision discipline staff in both AEAs as well as district level administrators are continuing.

#### 2. Developing and Implementing Host and Consortium Agreements

- The Superintendent of ISD/IBSSS met with Rod Ball, Assistant Director of Special Education in AEA 267, to get information on 28E management and operation, consortium agreements, sources of funding, and approval of funding for consortium program.
- Draft agreements have been forwarded to the Superintendent of Charles City and Board of Regents staff for review and feedback.

Next steps. Upon approval of the management and operation agreement by the Board of Regents and Charles City Community Schools, ISD/IBSSS will pursue consortium agreements with local school districts. In the meantime, information is being sent to administrators about the consortium and how the consortium will operate.

3. Identifying and Referring Students

- “Guiding Questions” have been developed as a tool to help parents, teachers and local administrators determine if their students need more intensive services offered at the academy.
- Meetings have been held with the AEA special education directors and vision and hearing discipline administrators regarding the guiding questions and referral process.
- Meetings have been held with parents, administrators and staff of school districts interested in referring students to the NERA.

Next Steps. IBSSS regional directors and AEA hearing and vision discipline administrators will continue to meet with parents at IEP meetings to discuss the NERA as a placement option for students who might benefit from the intensity of services the program will provide.

4. Staff Recruitment

- The Regional Director and teacher positions are currently being advertised nationally. The projected timeline for hiring a director is mid-April with teacher positions being filled as placement decisions are made by IEP teams.

Next Steps. The human resources staff from ISD and IBSSS will continue to plan for, and recruit Academy staff based on referrals and student enrollment this spring.

5. Extended Learning Opportunities

- The director of extended learning is working with teachers from the IBSSS and AEAs to plan and implement quarterly events for elementary age students with vision loss, students who are deaf or hard of hearing and their parents.
- Activities are being planned in AEA 267 for students who are preparing for transition out of high school to work or post-secondary education.

Next Steps. Teachers and parents are being surveyed to determine the types of extended learning activities that can be implemented in the 2015-16 school year that will support transition and student growth in the expanded core curriculum.

6. Funding

- The Governor’s budget does not include the \$232,500 requested for the Academy.
- ISD/IBSSS is working with BOR state relations officers to inform the legislature of the need for additional funding for the Academy.

Next Steps. The marketing committee will continue to provide information to the legislature and constituents about the need for an appropriation for Academy funding. The superintendent will continue discussions with the Department of Education about the use of General Aid, Physical Plant and Equipment Levy, and Secure and Advanced Vision for Education funds to support actual program costs incurred by districts that enroll students in the Academy.