

Welcome and Charge to the Coordinating Council

Sister Jude Fitzpatrick and Regent Rose Vasquez, co-chairs of the coordinating council, welcomed members and reviewed the charge to the coordinating council approved by the State Board of Education and Board of Regents.

National Perspectives and Trends

Joseph Finnegan, executive director of the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (www.ceasd.org) spoke on National Perspectives and Trends in education of the deaf and hard of hearing. He described the conference as the oldest organization in special education, established in 1868. The conference holds an annual meeting, operates an accreditation program, and works at the national level to influence public policy.

Mr. Finnegan indicated that schools for the deaf are more dissimilar than they had been previously. Variables at the state level which account for these differences include: geography and demographics (rural vs. urban and population density), funding patterns, history and tradition, leadership philosophy, and governance of special schools. He said that Iowa should not try to copy another state; but rather learn from other states and implement that which would work in Iowa taking into account the variables listed above. A second trend he noted is that fewer deaf students are being served full time in special schools, about 25% nationally. However, more students are receiving partial services from schools for the deaf. Mr. Finnegan described the “National Agenda: Moving Forward on Achieving Educational Equality for Deaf and Hard of Hearing”, as a tool we might find useful in guiding our work. He described it as a set of eight goals with a menu of objectives aimed at eliminating the under-achievement of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Copies of the “National Agenda” were provided to members of the Coordinating Council.

Mr. Finnegan also addressed issues associated with No Child Left Behind (NCLB), cochlear implants, technology, and programs for students with multiple disabilities. He described the highly qualified teacher requirement of NCLB as a serious problem in deaf education. Teacher education programs are diminishing and recruitment and retention of current teachers is difficult. High stakes testing associated with NCLB is a struggle for deaf and hard of hearing students. The use of cochlear implants is affected by the availability of nearby medical services. Programs and services are being developed for students with cochlear implants with some special schools now offering two distinct programs. He described the effects of technology as mostly good contributing to an enhanced quality of life, literacy, and personal safety. Students who are deaf or hard of hearing with multiple disabilities are still underserved in most states and services for lower functioning students are not being done well in most states. Mr. Finnegan closed his remarks by reporting that some states are building new schools for the deaf and several states are establishing or expanding outreach programs and services. He commended Alabama and South Carolina for the array and quality of their outreach services and described outreach resource centers as being funded by a combination of fee for service and additional appropriations.

In response to questions, Mr. Finnegan indicated that the deaf club concept is greatly diminished now due to technology improvements; but, that the deaf community is just as active with a school for the deaf often serving as a hub for this activity. When asked, what really makes a difference in education of the deaf, he responded very early intervention with emphasis on the whole child—social, psychological, cognitive, language, literacy, and family. He suggested that we review the early intervention programs of Maryland and Massachusetts. In response to a question about the national trends in joint schools for blind and deaf, he indicated that about ten began as joint schools or combined early on with Michigan recently merging and recent interest or activity in about four more, namely, Minnesota, Mississippi, Oregon and Ohio. He also noted that both Alabama and South Carolina serve both blind and deaf students at their regional centers. Mr. Finnegan also reminded us that the deaf and hard of hearing live in very different worlds and that sign language controversy is not settled nationally and complicates the education of children substantially.

Statewide Data

Marty Ikeda, Administrative Consultant, Iowa Department of Education, provided copies and reviewed data that will provide context for the scope of the work of the coordinating council. These data were from the October 2006 special education count and were for 1092 children and students receiving deaf or hard of hearing services and included: the number of children and students receiving deaf or hard of hearing services by area education agency, the number of students by age, the number of students by disability, the types of programs and services provided by age and severity, and the number and type of staff supporting these children and students. Mr. Ikeda also provided information about the sources of funding supporting the education of these children and students which total \$14,317,872. Of that amount, about \$11,000,000 comes from state and local funds generated by school districts.

He also reported that of about 40,000 births in 2006, newborn screenings were completed for 9884 children. Of that number, 802 were referred for services. Reading and mathematics proficiency data were reported for 371 students for the 2005-2006 school year. Of the 371 students, about 40% met proficiency in reading and about 48% met proficiency in mathematics.

These data generated requests for more information as follows:

- Enrollment data, by age, over time to show trends,
- Density map by district for the 1092 students,
- Number of students by AEA further analyzed as a percent of the AEA student population and as a percent of the AEA special education population,
- Number and type of service providers by AEA,
- Number of deaf and hard of hearing students who receive speech and language services,
- Least restrictive environment and achievement data compared to state targets,
- More complete information on the screening data.

Iowa School for the Deaf

Dr. Jeanne Prickett, Superintendent; James Heuer, Director of Business Affairs; Rich Connell, Director of Facilities; and John Cool, Director of Student Life provided an overview of the Iowa School for Deaf's student demographics, programs and services, finances and facilities.

Dr. Prickett described ISD as an environment that is language rich where all students have accessible communication at all times, where all students are exposed to both speech and sign language and where all students have maximum inclusion, academically and socially. She pointed out that literacy skill development requires four essential elements be built sequentially; these elements are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Students who are born deaf or experience early hearing loss do not have the first essential building block to literacy. With appropriate early intervention, potential delays in the development of literacy skills and learning can be significantly reduced.

ISD was also described as a special school that serves all districts in Iowa. Students attend by referral from their home district and by IEP decision that ISD is an appropriate place for the student's needs to be met. There are 110 students participating in on-campus school programs, seventy-three of whom reside on campus. An additional 60 students participate in regular classrooms and are served by ISD and Loess Hills AEA itinerant teachers. Seventeen students currently attending ISD have cochlear implants. About 25% of the students in attendance have multiple disabilities or other additional needs.

ISD provides programs with content specialists who are also educators of the deaf, thereby providing ISD students with direct instruction from highly qualified teachers. ISD also provides after school enrichment programs, tutoring, focused reading support, and extracurricular activities which contribute to enhanced language and concept development. ISD provides a toddler program for language development, a summer program for any Iowa student who wishes to participate, and a post secondary program for students who are co-enrolled at a community college or working to help them transition from high school. In addition to itinerant teaching services, ISD provides technical assistance on request to area education agencies and local school districts. ICN sessions are provided on American Sign Language instruction and parent to parent networking. With IBSSS and several area education agencies, support is provided to the Iowa Deaf Blind Project team.

Mr. Heuer opened his comments by noting that ISD's mission statement promotes personal excellence for students who are deaf or hard of hearing by providing comprehensive, high quality educational programs and services and prepares students for community participation as successful and productive adult citizens. ISD supports this mission with a budget comprised primarily of its \$9.7 million General Fund and approximately \$1.0 million Restricted Fund. He provided copies detailing the sources of each of these funds and types of expenditures associated with each of these funds. Slightly more than \$9 million of the General Fund is from state appropriations and approximately 81% of its total expenditures are for salaries. The primary component of the Restricted Fund is revenue generated from students attending ISD from Nebraska with the second largest component being federal funds administered through the Iowa Department of Education. Sixty-three per cent of these funds are expended for salaries and 21% for supplies and service. Mr. Heuer closed his comments by noting that use of these funds ties directly to ISD's strategic plan and more specifically to the following priorities: ensure high

quality educational opportunities for students, ensure high quality transition services, develop effective outreach services and demonstrate effective stewardship.

Mr. Connell provided a handout which details the mission of the facilities department, location and size of the campus, a building inventory, a description of the facilities department, tenancy agreements, and capital plan. He described the mission of the facilities department as to develop and maintain a safe, energy efficient, environmentally friendly campus for the effective delivery of educational services to our students, staff and community and to provide a satisfying working environment that supports students, learning, service, respect for others and being good stewards for the resources entrusted to our care.

The campus has approximately 103 acres, with 35 acres comprising the campus proper and 68 acres upon which corn and soybeans are raised and also serves as a natural boundary and buffer to the ongoing surrounding commercial and residential development.

Lewis Central Community School District is just west of the campus providing access to mainstreaming opportunities. The school was moved to its current location in 1870 and buildings range in age from five years to more than 100 years with an average age greater than 50 years. Total square footage is 380,926. The facilities department has approximately 18 full-time employees and include groundskeepers, custodians, facilities mechanics, utility workers, a recreation facility coordinator and a custodial supervisor. There are tenancy agreements with ISU Extension, Southwest Iowa Regents Resource Center, Westside Alternative High School, Loess Hills Area Education Agency, Children's Choice Daycare, and residential agreements with certain staff. Planned and projected capital projects include a multi-year program to install fire sprinklers in dormitory buildings and the second phase of a multi-year project for a new science laboratory.

Mr. Cool, provided a look at student life at ISD through pictures of student engaging in a wide range of after school and extracurricular activities. These activities can be characterized by providing reinforcement for learning that occurs in the classrooms, by focus on language development and social literacy, by interaction with adults and peers in the language that is most comfortable for the student and by having fun.

Reaction, Comments and Additional Questions

In addition to the requests for information found on page 3 of this document, the co-chairs invited all members of the Coordinating Council to submit any requests for additional information, or questions they may have so that they can be used in planning future meetings. Please submit those requests for information or questions you may have to carolbradley@iowasocean.com.

The co-chairs also recommend that you read the document "The National Agenda: Moving Forward On Achieving Educational Equality for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students" in preparation for discussion of these goals and their rationale. A copy of this was provided to each of us at the October 29, 2007 meeting and you may also find it posted at www.deafed.ed.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for January 28, 2008 at the Iowa School for Deaf with an alternative date of January 30, 2008 if necessary due to inclement weather. This meeting will include a more in-depth look at programs and services offered by ISD. If you have a particular interest in an aspect of the school or a request for more information about ISD, please also send those to carolbradley@iowasocean.com by January 3, 2008.

The following requests for more information about ISD have been received to date:

How many students from each AEA attend ISD?

Do programs for students with cochlear implants differ from other students at ISD?

What is the age range of the students, the median age and how long do students typically stay at ISD?

Where do the students go after they graduate?

What are ISD current outreach services?