

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Regents
From: Board Office
Subject: Approval of the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School Strategic Plan Progress Report
Date: December 4, 2000

Recommended Action:

Approve the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School's strategic plan progress report.

Executive Summary:

The Board approved the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School's Strategic Plan for 1998-2002 at its May 1998 meeting. Since that time, the School has been actively involved in carrying out the plan. The IBSSS plan has three Key Result Areas (KRA) -- quality and access in education, diversity, and finances.

The attached copy of the plan updates the benchmarks achieved from November 1999 through October 2000. Refinements in language from the initial plan have been made to describe better the activities in which the School is involved. All 2000 updates are underlined. Action steps and benchmarks have been added to the original plan, where necessary. For example, a new strategy (1.1.4) was added last year. Its purpose is to enable the School to provide quality services and access to education for students throughout Iowa who are blind or visually impaired.

The IBSSS Advisory Committee has reviewed and approved the 1998-2002 strategic plan.

The first KRA for Iowa Braille School is quality, which aligns with the first Board of Regents' KRA of quality. The second IBSSS Key Result Area focuses on diversity, which matches another Board KRA. The third IBSSS Key Result Area addresses finances, which relates to the accountability KRA of the Board.

Services provided by Iowa Braille School are available to all students of the state who are blind or visually impaired, which also relates to the Board's diversity KRA.

Background:

The Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School is now in its third year of its 1998-2002 strategic plan. The Board approved the plan in May 1998. At its December 1998 meeting, the Board approved the IBSSS request to modify Action Step 1.1.1.3. This modification reduced the extended core curriculum goals for a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) from three to one. The rationale for this modification was based on clarification from the Federal Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services.

At the Board's November 1999 meeting, Superintendent Thurman summarized the progress made on IBSSS's strategic plan. Since then, several important changes have occurred at the School. The School is now accredited by the North Central Association, using new criteria based on outcomes assessments. As a result, the curriculum is being revised, and IBSSS explored ways to work more closely with local school districts and area education agencies. To better serve students and their families, the School proposed, and the Board approved, a restructuring plan.

The School's Strategic Plan continues to be strongly influenced by both the Board's Strategic Plan and its performance indicators. The report provides a number of specific outcomes for students (from their IEPs) in indicators 10 and 11. In 1999, IBSSS was reaccredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Universities, using a new Outcomes Assessment approach. This new approach emphasizes changes in student behaviors and learning rather than institutional resources (number of faculty and staff, classroom equipment, funding, and library holdings).

Analysis:

Key Result Area 1, Quality and Access in Education, includes three initiatives. The three initiatives are: 1) focusing services; 2) outcomes endorsement; and 3) targeting technology. Initiative 1.1., Focusing Services, includes four strategies:

- Strategy 1.1.1: Focus the Residential Option
- Strategy 1.1.2: Target Summer Programs
- Strategy 1.1.3: Provide Parent and Professional Development
- Strategy 1.1.4: Continue to Develop Comprehensive Services to Students throughout Iowa

The first strategy, "Focus the Residential Option," was a primary emphasis during the first year of the 1998-2002 plan. All of its benchmarks have been achieved. The second strategy, "Target Summer Programs," continues to be a major focus for the IBSSS staff, since the institution has gone to year-round programming. The third strategy, "Provide Parent and Professional Development," is an on-going program. The fourth strategy, "Continue to Develop Comprehensive Services to Students throughout Iowa," will be the primary focus of IBSSS for the remaining years of the Strategic Plan.

A brief review of the progress made by IBSSS, as judged by Board of Regents Performance Indicator data, reveals that:

- The average undergraduate class size was dropped from 3.2 to 2.6
- All classrooms at Vinton are now technologically-equipped
- Computers are an integral part of all classroom equipment and instruction
- Faculty resignations and retirements are balanced by new hires.

A sampling of data changes in performance indicators over five years are included in the IBSSS report. These data were developed by IBSSS for MGT #10 and 11 from FY 1996 to FY 2000. They reveal the percentage of students with skills:

- necessary to attain literacy in reading and writing -- has been increased from 36.2% to 63.2%
- for acquiring information, including appropriate use of technological devices and services -- has increased from 56.8% to 76.9%
- of orientation and mobility and independent travel -- has decreased from 56.8% to 54.4%
- of independent living (dressing, eating, and household maintenance) -- has increased from 50.0% to 69.7%
- for transition to adult life (i.e., identifying community supports and developing family supports) -- has increased from 41.1% to 71.4%
- to obtain and maintain employment -- has increased from 54.4% to 58.3%.

Other IBSSS indicators that show progress in the past year include:

- families served (number served increased from 18 in FY 1999 to 36 in FY 2000) and professionals served (number served increased from 233 in FY 1999 to 427 in FY 2000)
- students served through summer programs (number increased from 73 to 83).

Last year, the Board Office observed that some of the "benchmarks" in the IBSSS report were, in actuality, action steps or sub-action steps. The fact that a review of a visiting team will be completed, or that a survey will be conducted, is not customarily viewed as a benchmark. The IBSSS administration and the Board Office have concluded that the benchmark data on student performance is the best way to reflect the unique mission of the School. The data also indicate how students are impacted by the institution's faculty, curriculum, and programs. The IBSSS Strategic Plan, benchmark data, and performance indicator data are provided as Attachment A, pages 5-33.

There are action steps, including 2.1.1.1. and 4.4.2.4, which do point to data that will be helpful in further modification of the IBSSS Strategic Plan in the future. What will be more instructive is specific data on student outcomes and a report of the modifications in programming which come as a result of surveys of students and their parents.



Charles R. Kniker

Approved:



Frank J. Stork