In this presentation, Deaf and Blind mean:

- **Deaf** - students with hearing loss from mild to profound, hard of hearing to deaf, regardless of how they communicate.
- **Blind** - students who are visually impaired, have low vision, use Braille or large print.
- **Deafblind** and students with additional disabilities.

The intent is to be inclusive and not exclusive with our vocabulary.
Goals of the Regional Academies

* Ensure a continuum of quality education across the state.
* Provide a foundation for those attending college and/or pursuing work after high school.
  * An increased percentage of deaf and blind students will achieve proficiency in both reading and math.
  * An increased percentage of deaf and blind students will master skills as outlined within standard core curriculums.
  * Deaf and blind students will be provided opportunities for developing work ready skills.
The Board of Regents, State of Iowa, embarked on a study in 2012 of the administrative and programmatic functions of the Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Iowa School for the Deaf.

The study looked at future efficiencies and effectiveness for educational services of students who are blind or deaf.
Findings from the study were that services ranged significantly depending on where a child lived.

- Urban areas of the state provide more options than some rural parts of the state.
- IEP program decisions are influenced greatly by what is currently available in the local area.
It was decided to establish several regional programs around the state that would include specialized teachers and other services for these students.

- ISD as a regional site and the only site with a residential component
- Vinton campus as a potential regional site, with further planning needed to examine the efficiency of using the Vinton campus (location and cost)
- The Leadership Team for the Deaf and the Blind has been meeting over a year to identify the criteria for the first location, how it will operate and how it will be financed.
Charles City Community School District offers:

* a strong history of supporting special education programs.
* currently a limited amount of educational options for students who are blind or deaf.
* a geographic location where many students can commute to in no more than an hour.
* available classroom and office space for the program.
* a local community college to offer classes for transitioning students.
* local industry which would be open to providing job training for transitioning students.
What will the Academy do for Charles City and the School District?

* Provide equitable access for blind or deaf students living in the immediate and surrounding area.
* Bring more jobs and tax income to the area.
  * A number of teachers and other professionals will be hired based on need.
How soon will this occur?

- Plans are to start services for the fall of 2014 and to have a fully operational site in Charles City by the fall of 2015.
- The Iowa legislature did not allocate funds for 2014-15. We will be asking for funding in the 2015 session.
Who will benefit from this program?

- All students who are blind or deaf in the geographical area, even those who do not enroll at Charles City’s regional academy, will benefit from:
  - Increased professional development of teachers and other service providers in the area
  - Reduced caseloads for itinerant teachers
  - More extended learning activities to support student’s learning, such as those conducted on weekends or after school.
How will students enroll in the Academy?

* The Individual Education Program (IEP) teams, which include families, will continue making placement decisions.
  * It is anticipated students and families will understand the value of services and programming provided.
  * Teams may recommend that a student be enrolled full time, part time, temporarily, or more permanently through regular or extended learning schedules.
What does it mean to be the first site?

- Charles City will have the **first** regional site, not a **trial** site.
- The **Leadership Team for the Deaf and the Blind** is defining evaluation measures.
- As a first site, it will reflect best practices for the other sites to model.
- The site will have definitive measures of outcomes to determine its success.
- Subsequent sites will make informed decisions regarding regional programming, based on results at the Charles City site.
Separate classrooms will be established for children with vision losses and children with hearing losses.

It is anticipated some of the students will benefit by participating in general education or special education classes.

Appropriate staff support will be provided in those classrooms.
Extended Learning Opportunities

* Blind and visually impaired students have extended learning opportunities provided through IESBVI. They will continue in the Charles City area.
* Deaf and hard of hearing students will have extended learning opportunities provided through this first regional academy; as well as statewide.
What are the next steps?

- Input will be sought from personnel currently serving the special needs of blind or deaf students in the area.
- The Leadership Team for the Deaf and the Blind will continue to work with Charles City staff, AEA staff, and LEA administrators within a one-hour radius of the regional academy.
- Work will continue with legislators to pursue funding for the regional site.
- Work will continue with the Department of Education on support for this school reform initiative.
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