

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**UPDATE REPORT OF THE FEASIBILITY STUDY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**Action Requested:** Receive the update report regarding the Feasibility Study and Planning Committee which was created to examine the administrative and programmatic functions of the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School and the Iowa School for the Deaf as required by Iowa Code §270.10.

**Executive Summary:** The Iowa School for the Deaf and Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired operate under the direction of the Board of Regents as two separate entities to provide needed educational services to students who are deaf or hard of hearing and students who are blind or visually impaired. In order to plan for future effective and efficient operation of services for students with sensory impairments, it is necessary to examine the administrative and programmatic functions of the two schools. This update report addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priorities to provide “educational excellence and impact; and economic development and vitality.” It also addresses Goal #8 of the Board’s Strategic Plan – “Iowa’s public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and productive.”

**Background:**

The Feasibility Study and Planning Committee includes representation from parents, constituent organizations, state agencies, area education agency, local education agency, and the Board of Regents Enterprise. Support membership is provided by leaders from Iowa School for the Deaf and Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

The Feasibility Study and Planning Committee has met three times during all day meetings. The first meeting was held on June 25, 2012 in the Des Moines area; the purpose of the meeting was to review the committee purpose and charge and to discuss the guiding questions that will be critical for the Committee.

The meeting on July 30, 2012 was held on the campus of the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School in Vinton; the purpose of the meeting was to assist Committee members to understand services to Iowa students who are blind, visually impaired, and deafblind. Iowa’s Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired operates from the Vinton campus in providing services to 515 children and students statewide.

The focus of the third meeting on August 27, 2012, held on the campus of the Iowa School for the Deaf in Council Bluffs, was to assist Committee members to understand services to Iowa students who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind. The focus of the meeting was on services provided by the Iowa School for the Deaf to more than 100 children and youth as well as statewide services offered through local school districts and area education agencies to approximately 1,800 students.

The Committee outlined eight guiding questions which will be used in deliberating future service delivery and providing efficient and effective services.

1. What might be the advantages and disadvantages of a regional model or centers to serve students? Regional centers may be in four or five locations in the state within an hour's drive to receive services.
2. If Iowa had regional centers, what would be the advantages and disadvantages of maintaining the campuses at Council Bluffs and/or Vinton? Would their location allow for them to be used as regional centers?
3. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of continuing to provide services for students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind on the campus in Council Bluffs and services to students who are blind, visually impaired, or deafblind from the campus in Vinton?
4. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of providing services for students who are deaf, blind, visually impaired, hard of hearing, or deafblind on a single campus?
5. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of a single campus being located centrally in the state?
6. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of a single campus located on the current Iowa Braille School campus in Vinton?
7. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of a single campus located on the current Iowa School for the Deaf campus in Council Bluffs?
8. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of centralizing the administration and coordination of services for students who are deaf, blind, hard of hearing, visually impaired, or deafblind?

Public input has been and will continue to be sought throughout the study process. A public hearing was held on the campus in Vinton on July 30, 2012; approximately 70 individuals attended the public hearing and 28 shared their comments. A second public hearing was held on the campus of the Iowa School for the Deaf on August 27, 2012. Input from the public hearings will be considered by the Committee at their September meeting and throughout the study process.

The Feasibility Study and Planning Committee will present its recommendations to the Board of Regents at its meeting on December 5, 2012. Following approval by the Board of Regents, the Committee's recommendations will be presented to the Iowa General Assembly by the Iowa Department of Management for consideration during the 2013 legislative session. Upon action by the Board of Regents and General Assembly, an implementation plan will be developed.