

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

IBSSS MONTHLY REPORT

Action Requested: Receive the IBSSS monthly report.

Executive Summary: IBSSS continues to address the implementation of the Task Force recommendations especially in light of the three key areas that are guiding the work of the School in 2007-08:

- ◆ Finalize cooperative agreements among the Board of Regents, Department of Education, area education agencies, and the Department for the Blind to develop a statewide service delivery system for students who are blind or visually impaired, including those with additional disabilities.
- ◆ Continue to improve efficiency and effectiveness of services supported by the Vinton site faculty and staff, including continued development of flexible and innovative services delivered in regional locations as needed and continue work with Iowa State University to finalize recommendations for efficient use of physical facilities in concert with the feasibility study.
- ◆ Develop and implement a comprehensive professional development plan that will provide all Iowa service providers, including the IBSSS faculty and staff, with the knowledge and skills needed to contribute effectively to the continuous improvement of services to children who are blind or visually impaired and their families.

The following describe the School's activities during October 2007:

- ◆ The Roy J. Carver Charitable Trust awarded a grant of \$128,691 to establish a lending program of adaptive instructional equipment and materials for teaching science and math to Iowa middle and high school students with motor and sensory impairments.
 - 📖 Dr. Greg Stefanich, University of Northern Iowa professor of science education, will lead the two-year project. Through loans of materials and equipment, the project will enhance and support science and mathematics experiences for students with disabilities. The project staff will interact with staff members from the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School, the Iowa School for the Deaf, the Iowa Department of Education, and the area education agencies.
 - 📖 The project co-director is Ms. Sara Larkin, a secondary mathematics teacher with 18 years of experience, including 11 years at Vinton High School. Currently, she works for IBSSS providing mathematics services throughout the state.

- ▣ According to Stefanich, “there are approximately 3,000 students in Iowa’s K-12 schools who have profound disabilities. While this is a significant number, it is a relatively small proportion of the school population. In many cases, the student with a disability is the only student in the district with a specific sensory or motor impairment. As a consequence, the district may consider the relatively high cost of accommodations that enable participation in secondary science and mathematics is not a good use of resources. The problem is compounded because most teachers and accommodation specialists are not aware of materials and resources to support science and mathematics instruction for students with sensory and motor disabilities.”
- ▣ Furthermore, Stefanich asserts that “the project’s greatest impact may be improvement in the quality of life for the student and the student’s improved ability to contribute to knowledge and society. Unemployment rates for persons with disabilities in the United States are approximately 70%. The unemployment rates for persons with disabilities in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) are substantially lower. Encouraging students with disabilities to study science and mathematics holds other potential social benefits. The U.S. and Iowa need more scientists and mathematicians, science and math teachers, and people who understand science and math concepts. As a society, we simply cannot afford to ignore the science and math education of any of our students.”
- ◇ The Fall Vision Conference was held in West Des Moines on October 7-9, 2007. One day of the conference focused on parent informational needs with approximately 40 parents in attendance. The remainder of the conference focused on the professional development needs of teachers and service providers, including a review of the new statewide system of services for children who are blind or visually impaired. Conference participants included more than 80 vision professionals from across the state, including counselors from the Iowa Department for the Blind, Teachers of the Visually Impaired, Orientation and Mobility Specialists, Area Education Agency supervisors, and parents.
- ◇ Two Low Vision Clinics were held in October 2007. One was held on October 17-18, 2007 in Johnston and the other was held on October 24, 2007 in Cedar Falls. Twelve students were seen at the clinic in Johnston and eight students were seen at the clinic in Cedar Falls. The purpose of the Low Vision Services is to help children with low vision to see the best they can. There will be 12 Low Vision Clinics offered throughout the state during the 2007-08 school year. Low Vision Services are provided at no cost to parents or schools and include the following:
 - ▣ Clinical vision examinations;
 - ▣ Functional vision examinations;
 - ▣ Analyses of an appropriate reading medium;
 - ▣ Follow-up in the home and school;
 - ▣ Referrals for further diagnostic exams;
 - ▣ Consultations for classroom adaptations;
 - ▣ Vision screening of children who are difficult to test;

-  Low vision device loaner program;
 -  Assistance with low vision device purchases; and
 -  Referrals for orientation and mobility assessment.
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- ◆ Students enrolled at IBSSS and students with visual impairments enrolled in public schools who are on the track and field team attended the IBSSS Conference Track Meet held at the Indiana School for the Blind on October 12-14, 2007. Students placed in a variety of competitions.
 - ◆ On October 20, 2007, an event day was held for children and families in Cedar Rapids for those living in the Grant Wood AEA area. This new program meets monthly on the third Saturday of each month and creates a format for disseminating information to parents, children, and siblings. It is provided by the IBSSS Early Childhood Specialists in collaboration with Grant Wood AEA staff.
 - ◆ On October 24, 2007, a Community Open House was held. The event was well attended and allowed the School to showcase recent renovations to the Old Main Building. The guests included Representative Dawn Pettingill, as well as representatives from Senator Harkin's, Senator Grassley's, and Representative Boswell's offices. More than 125 visitors toured the School, met students, and saw the renovations. Press coverage for the event included KCRG-TV and local area newspapers.
 - ◆ On October 25, 2007, 24 teachers enrolled in the Graceland University Master's in Education Program visited the IBSSS campus for a workshop on differentiated learning styles.

This monthly report will be submitted to the Government Oversight Committee to meet the requirements of SF 588.