

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Regents
From: Board Office
Subject: Annual Report of the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School Advisory Committee
Date: July 8, 2002

Recommended Action: Receive the report.

Executive Summary: The Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School Advisory Committee presents its annual report as specified in the *Regent Policy Manual §1.07G*. The Committee serves a three-fold purpose: (1) to advise the Board of Regents on policy matters related to the education of visually-impaired students; (2) to advise the superintendent in the development of policy based on current educational research; and (3) to forge linkages between the Regent universities and the School for research and professional development opportunities.

Advisory Committee Composition The Committee includes an administrator and a faculty member from each Regent university, a subject area consultant from outside of Iowa, a visually impaired person from the community, the superintendent, and a Board Office representative.

Future of the IBSSS Advisory Committee The organizational review includes an evaluation of the role and composition of the special schools advisory committees. The review focused on the role and function of advisory committees, school improvement teams, and input from the current advisory committee. A recommendation for change in the committee structure at the two special schools is included in G. D. 5.

The recommendation, supported by the Board Office and the existing advisory committee, proposes that the Board terminate the advisory committee. The superintendent may appoint any advisory committee, but it is strongly recommended that a school improvement committee be appointed.

Therefore, this report does not include nominations, as it has in the past, for the Board's advisory committee.

Meetings The Advisory Committee met twice during the 2001-2002 academic year. Dr. Kathryn Gerken, associate professor of psychology and quantitative foundations at the University of Iowa, chaired the Committee.

Major Issues The following major issues were discussed at the meetings:

- IBSSS strategic plan update 1998-2002;
- Performance indicators;
- Training program for teachers of the visually impaired;
- Study of preschool age children with visual impairments;
- Summer 2001 and Summer 2002 programs'
- Fall 2001 enrollment;
- FY 2002 and FY 2003 budgets;
- Quality Programs for Students with Visual Impairments (QPVI);
- TEACCH Program;
- MGT Organizational Review Recommendation II-9;
- Iowa Study of Braille Literacy.

Link to Strategic Plan:

This report addresses the following objectives contained in the Board of Regents' Strategic Plan:

- 2.2.0.0 Evaluate annually and, where appropriate, make recommendations to meet relevant educational and service needs of the state.
 - 4.2.0.0 Improve the operational effectiveness and efficiency of the institutions.
 - 4.2.1.0 Strengthen public understanding and confidence in the Board of Regents, its governance authority, and the programs and services of the institutions under its jurisdiction by measurable indicators of legislative outcomes and public support to be annually reported to the Board.
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Background:

During the year, the Advisory Committee fulfilled its three-fold purpose through the following activities:

Advise the Board of Regents

The following activities occurred to advise the Board of Regents on policy matters related to the education of visually-impaired students.

- Discussed the School's study of preschool age children with visual impairments.
 - Discussed the Board's organizational review and the recommendations regarding the School's advisory committee.
 - Discussed and recommended a statewide training program for teachers of the visually impaired to be offered collaboratively by the Regent universities.
 - Reviewed the School's strategic plan updates.
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Advise the Superintendent

The following activities occurred to advise the superintendent in the development of policy based on current educational research:

- Discussed the School's performance indicators.
 - Discussed the proposed TEACCH program for children with autism.
 - Discussed the Iowa Study of Braille Literacy.
 - Discussed the Quality Programs for the Visually Impaired (QPVI) in special schools as an accreditation model.
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Forge Linkages

The following activities occurred to forge linkages between the Regent universities and the School for research and professional development opportunities:

- Discussed the proposed TEACCH program for children with autism.
 - Discussed and recommended a statewide training program for teachers of the visually impaired to be offered by the University of Northern Iowa in collaboration with the Regent universities.
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Analysis:

The Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School Advisory Committee met twice during the past year. The October 29, 2001 meeting was held at the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School with ICN linkages to member participants. The April 29, 2002 meeting was held at the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School.

Fall 2001
Meeting

During the Fall 2000 meeting, the following topics were discussed:

- Ms. Karen Blankenship, IBSSS State Vision Consultant, described the Iowa Study of Braille Literacy. For students to be competitively employed or successful in a postsecondary educational placement, they must be able to read and comprehend at a 10th - 12th grade reading level. Experts in transition and outcomes purport that students must read 150 words per minute for most menial jobs and 400 words per minutes to be successful in a postsecondary education placement. This project was the first step in a results-based decision-making process to evaluate critically the level of literacy in Iowa and to develop a plan of action to improve the baseline. Superintendent Thurman informed the Committee that there is no national testing process to determine literacy/reading levels.
- Ms. Nancy Oddo, IBSSS work transition coordinator, presented the results of a follow-up study of IBSSS graduates.
- The Committee reaffirmed the need for a training program for teachers of the visually impaired. The Committee urged the institutions to work collaboratively to develop this much needed program.
- Superintendent Thurman reviewed the draft of the School's Strategic Plan and expressed concern that the recent and impending budget cuts will significantly affect the initiatives contained in the Strategic Plan. The staff reductions that have resulted from the budget cuts include outreach positions as well as on-campus positions. Federal grants may also be affected. Superintendent Thurman also expressed concern that the federal government's requirements for a free and appropriate public education for children with visual impairments may affect how and when the School provides services to children.
- The Fall 2001 on-campus enrollment was 38 and the off-campus enrollment was 312. There were two racial/ethnic minority students enrolled on campus. All students were residents of Iowa.

Spring 2002
Meeting

During the Spring 2002 meeting, the following issues were discussed:

- Education Director Mike Hooley reviewed a draft of the proposed collaborative model TEACCH Program. Grant Wood AEA contacted IBSSS about the possibility of providing a non-residential instructional program to students with autism from its service delivery area using the highly structured TEACCH model. The objectives of this model are to improve students' behavior and communication ability.

- IBSSS State Vision Consultant Blankenship provided an update regarding the early childhood registry. There are 58 children in the registry. Less than 1% of the children are being served every week. Approximately 80% of the children have received no consultative services.
- The Committee received information about the recruitment of a faculty member for UNI's training program for teachers of the visually impaired. At the time of the meeting, there had not been any applicants for the position.
- The Committee received information about the system of intervention used by the School. It is a non-aversive approach whose focus is to de-emphasize physical techniques and to assist students to take responsibility for their behavior.
- Ms. Blankenship shared information about Quality Programs for Students with Visual Impairments (QPVI) in special schools. The program, which is aligned with the school improvement concept, is a means to conduct self-assessments, incorporate promising practices, and make changes at the local level.
- The Committee received information about the Board's organizational review and the study of the special schools advisory committees. The Committee discussed the recommendation of the study to expand the composition of the committee to include more "stakeholders" and to expand the role and function of the committee to be advisory to the School. The Committee unanimously agreed with the recommendations.
- Superintendent Thurman presented information regarding the School's budget. There have been budget cuts throughout the year totaling approximately 10.5%. The School will also be expected to make up the salary shortfall from its institutional budget. The summer programs will be reduced because of budget constraints.

Regent Exhibit
Book

A copy of the minutes of both meetings and the roster of Advisory Committee members for 2001-2002 are included in the Regent Exhibit Book.

Board Office
Recommendation

Receive the report.


Diana Gonzalez

Approved: 
Gregory S. Nichols