

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Board of Regents

**From:** Board Office

**Subject:** Accreditation Reports, Iowa School for the Deaf: North Central Association (NCA) and the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf, Inc. (CEASD)

**Date:** October 8, 2001

**Recommended Action:** Receive the reports on reaccreditation of the Iowa School for the Deaf.

**Executive Summary:** On August 29, 2001, the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD) informed the Iowa School for the Deaf that it had received full accreditation. This accreditation will expire in 2006. In a letter also dated August 29, 2001, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA) notified ISD that it had successfully completed the on-site visitation and was engaged in a new cycle of school improvement. ISD has been reaccredited for the 2001-2002 school year. [NCA has new procedures for accrediting, which are described in the Background section of this memorandum.]

Letters from  
Accrediting  
Organizations

The CEASD and NCA had separate teams of visitors when ISD had its accreditation on-site visit from March 25-27, 2001. The reports from both teams were generally quite positive about the curriculum, faculty and staff, physical plant, and communication with families of students. No major weaknesses were found in either review.

Both reports of the visitors offered recommendations, which are described in more detail in the following pages. A significant accreditation requirement of both the CEASD and NCA for K-12 schools is the inclusion of a school improvement plan. Both teams thought the ISD plan was appropriate. Both teams raised questions about the indicators that were proposed for evaluating student performance.

The CEASD team concluded that the self study prepared by ISD accurately described its students and constituents, contained an excellent understanding of the needs of deaf students, and accurately reflected a commitment to students and their families as stated in the institution's strategic plan. The CEASD gave special praise to the students of ISD

who were interviewed; they were found to be friendly, articulate, fully cognizant of their identity, and proud of the school.

---

**Link to  
Strategic Plan:**

Accreditations are one way in which Regent institutions can demonstrate the quality of their programs. The first Key Result Area (KRA) of the Board's Strategic Plan, 1.0.0.0 is quality. More specifically, accreditations are a method of meeting Objective 1.1.0.0, "improve the quality of existing and newly created educational programs."

While ISD and IBSSS meet Action Step 1.1.1.7, "special schools report to the Board annually on student outcomes," through their annual progress reports on their strategic plans, the ISD self study places great emphasis upon student outcomes. Many of the goals of the school improvement plan are indicators measuring student outcomes.

---

**Background:**

Iowa School for the Deaf was last accredited in 1995. The NCA letter noted that ISD had been continuously accredited for 33 years.

The NCA has changed its approach to accreditation, at the K-12 level. Institutions will have their accreditation standing reviewed each year. The determination of their standing is based on written reports submitted each year. Periodically, site visits will occur. Institutions also choose to emphasize the way that they want to be evaluated. One approach is to focus on a school improvement plan. Another approach is to emphasize student outcomes. ISD chose the school improvement plan approach.

At the time of the site visit, ISD had:

- 135 students on campus and 115 in off-campus programs
  - 19 staff at the Elementary level
  - 30 staff at the Secondary level
- 

**Analysis:**

**CEASD Accreditation Report (March 25-27, 2001)**

ISD Strengths  
(CEASD report)

The CEASD report included these commendations to ISD:

- Challenging educational programs that meet the needs of students.
- A professional staff well trained in sign language.
- The Student Assistance Center (SAC) program.
- Excellent efforts to use student assessment results to increase performance.
- For efforts to include the staff in budget planning and staff development activities.
- An emphasis on student learning outside the classroom (directed by the residential staff).
- The Transitional Alliance Program (TAP) should be considered a model program for other institutions to emulate.

- An exemplary off-campus program at the Junior and Senior High levels.
- The staff wisely chose five targeted goal areas for ISD: reading, math, science, career education, and student involvement in the community.

Recommendations  
by CEASD

The CEASD report included these recommendations:

- Conduct a review of administrative team responsibilities.
- Distribute a survey to the deaf community, as well as to the deaf students, parents, and staff, asking for feedback on the Beliefs and Mission Statements of ISD.
- Teachers and staff should utilize student performance data to set annual growth targets for students, particularly in reading. [Gallaudet's Shared Reading Project offers some helpful strategies for parents and teachers of young developing readers.]
- The supervisory loads for the principals should be reviewed and adjusted as appropriate.
- Attempt to locate funds to establish a computer lab for each of the dormitories. If funding is not found, the administration should explore ways to expand student time on school computers.

ISD response

*Many of the recommendations are being addressed, through the school improvement plan and the strategic plan of the institution. As reported to the Board in the discussion of the new strategic plan, increasing reading proficiency of students is a top priority. Also, the TAP program is receiving much attention. Supervisory loads for principals have already been adjusted. Each dorm already has a working computer lab.*

**North Central Association Site Team Report (March 25-27, 2001)**

The NCA site team report noted these overall strengths at ISD:

ISD Strengths  
(NCA report)

- The action plan format was easy to follow, and should be helpful in reporting results of the comprehensive school improvement plan.
- The budget for school improvement appears to be satisfactory.
- The TAP program is an exemplary model for student application of skills.
- The campus is student-centered.
- Staff members are encouraged and supported to further their own education.
- Classroom teachers are using strategies which encourage students to develop their vocabularies.

Recommendations  
to ISD (from NCA  
site team)

The NCA site team offered these general recommendations:

- Establish annual performance goals in language studies.
- Consider developing electronic portfolios for student performance assessment.
- Follow-up on staff development programs. Implement the new strategies that the staff learns.

In addition, the NCA site team evaluated the ISD action plans in specific content areas, such as math, reading, science, and career development. The team comments were very specific in this part of the report, providing strengths, such as joint programs with Lewis Central School District, and at times, questions regarding specific teaching strategies and the appropriateness of a particular indicator.

ISD Response to  
NCA Site Team  
Recommendations

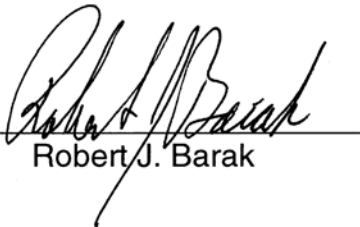
*The Faculty and Staff have viewed these recommendations as suggestions that will help ISD modify its school improvement plan. This is the first accreditation review with the school improvement format. A year or two of experience needs to be gained before ISD pursues new initiatives and recommendations.*

A copy of the institutional self study, the on-site visiting team reports, relevant correspondence, and the letters granting reaccreditation are on file in the Board Office.

---

  
Charles R. Kniker

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

  
Robert J. Barak