

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**STATUS REPORT OF PLANNING FOR A PILOT REGIONAL PROGRAM
TO SERVE STUDENTS WITH SENSORY IMPAIRMENTS**

Actions Requested: Receive the status report.

Executive Summary: In February 2013, the Board of Regents approved, in concept, the recommendations submitted by the Feasibility Study and Planning Committee regarding its examination of the administrative and programmatic functions of the Iowa Education Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Iowa School for the Deaf as required by Iowa Code §270.10. One of the recommendations included the development of regional programs to extend the continuum of services and provide equitable services statewide.

In order to more fully understand the implications of the regional programming concept, the Board directed the Superintendent to develop a proposal for a pilot program which would include one regional center at a determined location. The proposal was expected to describe the operation of the regional center, including the value of the site selected, financial implications, and funding sources available for the center. The Board requested that the proposal be presented no later than September 2013 for potential implementation in FY 2015.

This 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:

As directed by the Board, the Superintendent combined the Management Team for Vision Services and the Executive Team for Hearing Services to create a Leadership Team for Sensory Impairments. The purpose of the team is to advise the Superintendent regarding the planning and implementation of recommended proposals. The Leadership Team has met monthly since February 2013 and has designed a proposal for the pilot program that includes the following:

- ⇒ A clear description of a regional program including its components and features.
- ⇒ A description of the student population to be served and their needs.
- ⇒ A description of the intent to provide for a full continuum of services and to better prepare students for employment through the services of a regional program.
- ⇒ A description of the partnership agreements, including the role of each partner organization – host school district, partner school districts, Iowa Special Schools programs, area education agencies, Iowa Department of Education, Iowa Department for the Blind, and Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation.
- ⇒ A recommendation for centralized administration of the regional program.
- ⇒ An outline of a plan to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the regional program.
- ⇒ A timeline for implementing the pilot regional program and subsequent programs.
- ⇒ Cost analysis for developing and implementing the regional program.

- ⇒ Establishment of criteria to determine the pilot location and analysis of data to select a preferred location as well as a plan for development of future sites statewide.
- ⇒ Recommendations for future consideration.

Ongoing planning is occurring with the partner agencies. Two aspects of the plan require additional collaboration before a proposal can be finalized and presented to the Board. The financial implications and sources of funding continue to be examined and discussed with the Iowa Department of Education and area education agencies; the needs, advantages, and disadvantages of different funding mechanisms are also under discussion.

The second area which needs additional consideration is the preferred site. The Leadership Team has used the criteria established by the committee to identify the preferred site for the pilot regional program. Work continues on securing a commitment from the area education agencies and partner school districts on the site recommendation.