

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Regents
From: Board Office
Subject: Annual Report of the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School Advisory Committee
Date: July 6, 2001

Recommended Actions:

1. Receive the report.
2. Approve the appointments to the IBSSS Advisory Committee for 2001 – 2003.

Executive Summary:

The Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School Advisory Committee presents its annual report as specified in the Regent Procedural Guide §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.

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.

The Advisory Committee met twice during the 2000-2001 academic year. Dr. Ann Thompson, professor of curriculum and instruction at Iowa State University, chaired the Committee. A copy of the minutes of both meetings and the roster of Advisory Committee members are included in the Regent Exhibit Book. The following items were discussed at the meetings:

- ◆ IBSSS strategic plan update 1998-2002;
- ◆ performance indicators;
- ◆ teacher training for visually impaired students;
- ◆ study of preschool age children with visual impairments
- ◆ Summer 2000 and Summer 2001 programs;
- ◆ Fall 2000 enrollment;
- ◆ FY 2001 and FY 2002 budget;

- ◆ IBSSS reorganization; and
- ◆ Iowa Department of Education compliance review.

This report addresses the following objectives contained in the Board's 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.
- 4.4.0.0 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.

The Board is also asked to approve the appointments to the IBSSS Advisory Committee. Committee members are nominated by their respective institutions and serve for a period of two years. When Committee members are not able to complete their two-year terms, the Board must approve new members to complete the unexpired terms of the outgoing Committee members.

Background:

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

(1) Advise the Board of Regents on policy matters related to the education of visually-impaired students:

- ◆ Reviewed the School's strategic plan updates.
- ◆ Discussed the School's reorganization implementation.
- ◆ Discussed the School's study of preschool age children with visual impairments.
- ◆ Discussed the need for a statewide training program for teachers of the visually impaired.

(2) Advise the superintendent in the development of policy based on current educational research.

- ◆ Discussed the School's performance indicators.
- ◆ Discussed the need for the School to conduct student outcomes assessment.
- ◆ Reviewed the report prepared by the Iowa Department of Education regarding the School's compliance with federal and state mandates relating to the education of students with visual disabilities.

(3) Forge linkages between the Regent universities and the School for research and professional development opportunities.

- ◆ Discussed the need for a statewide training program for teachers of the visually impaired.

Analysis:

The Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School met twice during the past year. The October 4, 2000 meeting was held at the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School with a telephone conference call linkage to facilitate member participation. The June 26, 2001 meeting was held at the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School with ICN linkage to facilitate member participation.

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

- ◆ Superintendent Thurman reviewed the updates to the strategic plan. Mr. Thurman explained that there are two types of performance indicators – those that are common elements with the other institutions and those that are specific to IBSSS. He explained that the indicators that are specific to the School are the expanded core curriculum and that the School will be working on assessing the attainment of the skills by the students.
- ◆ The Committee discussed the need for a training program for teachers of the visually impaired. UNI will be the lead institution for the program; the three Regent universities will provide as many of the required courses as possible, and the remaining courses will be provided under contractual agreement(s) with institutions offering those courses. There was extensive discussion about the cost of such a program and the interest of students in such a program.

- ◆ Mr. Thurman described the need to gather information about preschool age children with visual impairments and the role that the School could play in meeting their needs. A study has been approved by the Board of Regents at a cost of approximately \$25,000. The study, working under the direction of a steering committee, will be designed and conducted by the Center for Social and Behavioral Research at UNI.
- ◆ The Committee received a copy of the School's compliance review report from the Iowa Department of Education. Dr. Gonzalez explained that the Board of Regents uses the compliance reviews as a means to assure the public that the School meets the requirements of the Department of Education. Mr. Thurman indicated that many citations resulted from IDEA legislative changes; all of the citations have now been corrected.

During the Spring 2001 meeting, the following issues were discussed:

- ◆ Members of the Early Childhood Study Committee discussed aspects of the study and shared a progress report. There are a number of national projects whose purpose is to identify the needs of preschool age children with visual impairments. Because children with visual impairments tend to have multiple handicaps, a team approach to services is desirable. Services need to start early to prevent children's learning from being delayed because children with visual impairments do not have the same opportunity for incidental learning which sighted children have. Professionals in this field believe that this age group of children tends to be vastly under-served due to difficulties of identification and due to limited resources, including lack of teachers who have been trained with this population. The study will be completed during the next few months and the results will be shared with the Advisory Committee to assist the School as it develops its next strategic plan.
- ◆ Dr. Sitlington updated the Committee on the training program for teachers of the visually impaired. Under the direction of a staff member, UNI has been gathering information on existing programs. The Committee agreed that there is a severe shortage of teachers in this area. There was discussion about the impact of budget reductions on the development of the program and about the need for convenience to students who undertake the program, especially if they are employed.

- ◆ The Committee received information about the School's summer programs. Most of the students enrolled in the summer programs are not residential students during the academic year; they are students who enrolled in their local school districts. A new program will involve students who are interested in sports; the School intends to share information with the students' local schools about ways to adapt sports to allow students with visual impairments to participate.

The Board is asked to receive the report and to approve two-year committee appointments (beginning September 1, 2001 and ending August 31, 2003) for the following individuals:

Dr. Richard Nelson (SUI) – Executive Associate Dean, College of Medicine;

Dr. Patricia Sitlington (UNI) – Professor, Special Education;

Dr. Ann Thompson (ISU) – Professor, College of Education.


Diana Gonzalez

Approved: 
Frank J. Stork

IBSSS/2001 annual report.doc