

UNIVERSITY *of* NORTHERN COLORADO



**National Center**  
*on Severe and Sensory Disabilities*

Considerations in Providing a Free, Appropriate,  
Public Education to Students who are Deaf and  
Hard of Hearing in North Dakota

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## Purpose

The National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities (NCSSD) was asked by Dr. Wayne G. Sanstead, North Dakota State Superintendent of Public Instruction, for assistance “regarding data involving residential schools for the deaf in the upper Midwest.” Dr. Sanstead stated that the “North Dakota Legislative Council has a study directive for the current interim of the North Dakota Legislative Assembly” that related to

The provision of services to children and adults who are deaf or hearing-impaired, including the role of the North Dakota School for the Deaf in the provision of educational and rehabilitative services, the short-term and long-term viability of existing state facilities, and alternative approaches that might enhance the scope and health of service availability; the feasibility of combining the administration and delivery of services of the School for the Deaf with other area school districts, educational associations governed by joint powers agreements, special education units, and North Dakota Vision Services-School for the Blind, and examination of alternative uses for the buildings on the School for the Deaf’s campus beyond the scope of the school’s present mission.

After discussions with Dr. Gary Gronberg, Assistant Superintendent, and Robert Rutten, Direction of Special Education, NCSSD embarked on a fact-finding search to determine national population and enrollment trends at schools for the deaf and to explore responses to some of the concerns raised by Superintendent Sanstead and the North Dakota Legislative Council. Some of the concerns raised by Superintendent Sanstead require more in-depth study and are outside the scope of this report.

For nearly 120 years, the North Dakota School for the Deaf (NDS) has served children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Currently, NDS offers children who are deaf or hard of hearing comprehensive pre-school through secondary educational programming. This comprehensive programming includes a residential option that enables students to be educated in a language-enriched environment that promotes academic learning through the core curriculum, extracurricular activities for social development, and expanded curriculum and community

experiences that facilitate post-school success. In addition, NDSB sponsors an outreach program providing comprehensive assessment services, professional consultation, direct services, and professional training to public schools throughout the state.

As the educational landscape across the United States (US) continues to evolve, schools such as NDSB find themselves exploring the efficiency and effectiveness of their programs and evaluating how to best provide students a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). While clearly NDSB is a successful institution, external factors continue to impact the school's enrollment, operating costs, and ability to sustain a viable program.

In general, NCSSD found a dearth of comprehensive and/or reliable resources to answer some of the questions asked by the Superintendent and North Dakota Legislative Council. The most comprehensive resource located was a study conducted by Pennucci and Lidman (2002) regarding restructuring efforts of the Washington School for the Deaf. Without conducting a formal study itself, NCSSD gathered some basic information regarding pertinent legislative issues, enrollment trends, changing demographics, and service requirements. Based on this information, and following the lead of Pennucci and Lidman, NCSSD conceptualized various options available to North Dakota as it considers re-structuring existing programs and potentially creating new and innovative programs. NCSSD's findings were limited by the availability and quality of information accessible through electronic and print media. Interviews were conducted with leaders in deaf education, but these, too, were limited by our desire to maintain the anonymity of North Dakota School for the Deaf and to respect the confidentiality of our informants, who requested anonymity. The information presented in this report is best viewed as a complement to the extensive demographic data reports and study of services for individuals with sensory impairment already completed by the North Dakota Department of Instruction.

## **The Education of Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing**

Children who are deaf or hard of hearing experience both significant and unique learning needs in the areas of language and communication. If these learning needs go unmet, children who are deaf or hard of hearing may experience delays in language acquisition and communication development, as well as poor academic achievement, delays in critical thinking skills, difficulties with social and emotional development (Luckner, 2001; Stinson & Whitmire, 2001), and ultimately poor postschool outcomes (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Mohr, Feldman, Dunbar, McConky-Robbins, Niparko, Rittenhouse, & Skinner, 2000; Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, & Levine, 2005). Deaf education has historically established educational environments designed to immerse critical masses of children with deafness or hearing loss in language-enriched environments, such as the North Dakota School for the Deaf. These environments, known as residential or day schools for the deaf, are staffed by educators who possess the highly specialized skills necessary to meet the language, communication, academic, and social needs of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Research has shown that educational environments that provide youth with competence in communication result in (a) higher motivation to learn, (b) increased opportunity to enjoy positive peer relationships, (c) the ability for students to learn incidentally, (d) the formation of a positive identity, and (e) academic achievement commensurate to their hearing peers (Dasgrow, 1998; Stinson & Whitmire, 2001). These factors are important to the provision of FAPE for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

In addition to North Dakota, a majority of states within the US continue to host one or more schools for the deaf. There are approximately 62 state or private residential or day schools currently in operation (see Appendix A). However, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) have precipitated a national

decline of student enrollment at schools for the deaf. This impact is due to a statutory emphasis on inclusive education that promotes children receiving their education in local schools, as well as an emphasis on academic accountability, which holds schools responsible for demonstrating that students are progressing within the academic core curriculum, particularly in math, reading, and science (Holden-Pitt & Diaz, 1998). The annual count of children served under IDEA demonstrates a steady growth in the number of children who are deaf and hard of hearing attending local schools. Increased placements of students who are deaf or hard of hearing in local schools have resulted in a sharp rise in per student costs for schools for the deaf, because they must maintain the same level of services for fewer students while total operational costs remain the same.

A second phenomenon impacting student enrollment at schools for the deaf is the growth in the numbers of children with hearing loss who are receiving cochlear implants (Harrington, & Powers, 2004). Children with cochlear implants have different language and communication needs than deaf and hard-of-hearing children without implants (Teagle & Moore, 2002). Since sign language is the predominant mode of communication typically used at schools for the deaf across the country, Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams at local schools may determine that children with cochlear implants will receive greater educational benefit if they are educated in oral environments such as local schools. To recruit or retain this changing population of students and maintain enrollment, schools for the deaf will need to expand their language-enriched environments to include both manual and oral communication modes, as well as expand their services to include the specialized instruction and related services necessary for meeting the educational needs of children with cochlear implants.

On a national level, these demographic and educational changes have required state legislatures to ask tough questions about the viability and future of schools for the deaf. In fact, Idaho, Washington, and Wisconsin have already initiated efforts to examine the role and function of schools for the deaf. Some service delivery changes that have either been implemented or that are currently being explored by schools for the deaf include providing increased statewide outreach services (see Appendix B for a list of possible outreach services), consultation, and technical assistance (Mueller, 2005). At the extreme, some schools with exceptionally low enrollment numbers have closed (see Appendix C), while other schools are faced with the possibility of eliminating their residential programs. Currently, the majority of schools for the deaf appear to have sustained their residential services. This is likely due to individual schools' efforts to maintain a continuum of services to ensure the provision of FAPE, as well as to preserve the rich language and cultural traditions of schools for the deaf.

### **Federal Legislation**

As acknowledged by the Superintendent and the Legislative Council, and on behalf of the educational system as a whole, meeting the unique communication and related service needs of children who are deaf or hard of hearing is essential for the provision of FAPE. This is recognized within the federal education law, IDEA (2004), which states that Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams must

consider the communication needs of [each individual] child, and in the case of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, consider the child's language and communication needs, opportunities for direct communications with peers and professional personnel in the child's language and communication mode, academic level, and full range of needs, including opportunities for direct instruction in the child's language and communication mode (§614(d)(3)(B)(iv)).

Nationally, the school-age population of students who are deaf and hard of hearing is approximately 1.1 per 1,000 students (Mitchell, 2006). Research shows that children's experience with hearing loss can be inherently isolating when communication is hampered among them, their family members, hearing peers, and educators (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Levine, & Garza, 2006). The risk of children who are deaf or hard of hearing experiencing isolation is compounded by this low-prevalence nature of deafness. Children receiving education at their local schools often find themselves the sole student with hearing loss (Luckner, 2001) in environments where few other students or teachers have the ability to interact with them in their language and communication mode. This is even more true in rural states such as North Dakota. For children, isolation limits the opportunities to acquire, develop and practice using language. Stinson and Whitmore (2001) emphasized that isolation can negatively impact children's identities, learning, motivation, peer relationships, and ultimately their future success as adults.

Despite the legislative emphasis in IDEA (2004) that requires consideration of children's language and communication needs, the law also emphasizes that all children with disabilities must be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (§612(a)(5)).

In a notice of policy guidance issued by the US Department of Education, the Secretary of Education expressed concern that the above provision may be interpreted in a way that places children who are deaf or hard of hearing in educational environments that do not account for their language and communication needs, and therefore, do not meet their educational needs. As a result, the Secretary issued policy guidance that states, "Any setting, including a regular

classroom, that prevents a child who is deaf from receiving an appropriate education that meets his or her needs including communication needs is not the LRE [least restrictive environment] for that individual child” (Department of Education, 1992). Supporting the Secretary’s guidance is an IDEA (2004) regulation that clearly specifies that public agencies must provide a continuum of alternative placements that encompass regular classes, special classes, special schools, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions (34 CFR 300.115).

It is possible that IEP teams and school administrators misinterpret federal legislation and view schools for the deaf as restrictive environments. This impression will continue to suppress student placement and enrollment. It seems imperative that families and educational personnel across the state directly address the benefits and limitations of *all* placement options for students who are deaf and hard-of-hearing, including specialized schools. Decisions about the future, which are ultimately about the lives of North Dakota citizens with hearing loss, are inherently subjective and will no doubt create much discourse.

## **Enrollment Trends**

National enrollment trends for schools for the deaf are available through multiple sources. One of these sources is provided by the US Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), which collects an annual count of children receiving special education and related services under IDEA in different educational environments. A second source is the Gallaudet Research Institute’s (GRI) Annual Survey of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children and Youth, which also collects information about student’s educational environments. The GRI Annual Survey is based on a sample population of students who are deaf and hard of hearing (Mitchell, 2004, 2006). While some believe that the IDEA Child Count and the GRI Annual Survey data sources are nearly parallel (Mohr et al., 2000), disagreement exists concerning which is the most

reliable source of demographic data for children who are deaf or hard of hearing (Mitchell, 2004; Mohr et al., 2000). Regardless of which source is preferred, both sources document a decline in enrollment across the nation for children who are deaf or hard of hearing generally and for those attending state or private specialized schools for the deaf.

The IDEA Child Count data (see Table 1) indicate that the overwhelming majority of students with hearing impairments served under IDEA received special education and related services in general education classrooms. (Note that the Department of Education's method of reporting educational environments changed with the 2006-07 school year; instead of referring to the amount of time spent *outside* the regular classroom, data for 2006-07 are reported according to how much time is spent *inside* the regular classroom.) The remaining students who are deaf and hard of hearing receive services in the following educational environments listed from most to least: (a) public residential schools for the deaf, (b) public separate schools for the deaf, (c) private separate schools for the deaf, (d) private residential schools for the deaf, and finally, (e) home or hospital-based settings. The IDEA Child Count data show a notable increase in the number of students receiving services inside regular education classrooms the majority of their school day and a simultaneous decline in the number of students provided services outside regular education classrooms. For the last four years, however, the proportion served in regular classrooms for at least part of the school day has hovered around 86%, with only negligible increases and decreases. The number of students attending public separate schools for the deaf has fluctuated. Declines are evident in the number of students attending public residential, private residential, and separate schools for the deaf. The number of students with hearing

**Table 1. Number of Students with Hearing Impairments (ages 6-21) Served in Different Educational Environments Nationwide.**

Academic Year	Percentage of Time Spent <i>Outside</i> the Regular Classroom			Educational Environment					
	<21%	21%-60%	>60%	Public Separate School	Private Separate School	Public Residential School	Private Residential School	Home Hospital	All Environments
1989-1990	15,146	10,170	17,782	3,908	2,028	6,423	479	117	56,053
1994-1995	22,539	12,443	18,381	2,447	1,850	5,894	652	133	64,339
2000-2001	29,674	13,935	15,765	3,062	1,200	5,868	389	146	70,886
2003-2004	31,999	13,639	15,824	3,154	1,779	4,403	314	137	71,249
2004-2005	33,625	13,448	15,013	3,112	1,873	4,247	293	127	71,738
2005-2006	34,862	13,052	13,950	3,412	1,641	4,154	282	147	71,500
Academic Year	Percentage of Time Spent <i>Inside</i> the Regular Classroom			Educational Environment					
	>80%	40%-79%	<40%	Separate School (public and private)	Parentally placed in private school Schools	Residential School (public and private)	Correctional Facility	Home Hospital	All Environments
2006-2007	34,411	12,550	13,959	5,771	696	2,942	42	136	70,507

Source:

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS), OMB #1820-0517: "Part B, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Implementation of FAPE" (1998; 2000; 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006 ).

impairments receiving home or hospital-based educational services has remained

relatively stable.

In North Dakota (see Table 2), using the same sources as Table 1, the proportion of children ages 6-21 with hearing impairments served in regular classrooms has ranged from 76 to 79% since the 2000-01 school year, while nationally the proportion has ranged

from 84 to 86%. North Dakota appears to serve a smaller proportion of students with hearing loss in regular classrooms than the national norm.

**Table 2. Proportion of Students with Hearing Impairment Ages 6-21 Years Served in Regular Classes, Nationally and in North Dakota**

	Regular Class	
	National	North Dakota
2000-01	83.8%	76.2%
2003-04	86.3%	79.9%
2004-05	86.5%	77.1%
2005-06	86.5%	76.2%
2006-07	86.4%	79.6%

It should also be noted that the national population of children who are deaf and hard of hearing served under IDEA declined 1.4% from school year 2005-06 to 2006-07, a decline that was more than four times the decline (.3%) of the previous school year. The cause of this decline is unknown at this time, but may reflect that children with hearing loss are being counted in other categories, such as multiple disabilities.

### **National Cost to Educate Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing**

According to findings from the Special Education Expenditure Project (SEEP) during the 1999-2000 academic school year, per pupil education expenditures for public school programs were found to vary across disability category. Expenditures ranged from \$10,558 for students with specific learning disabilities to \$20,095 for students with multiple disabilities. Educating students who are deaf or hard of hearing averaged approximately \$15,992 per pupil per year. Overall, education expenditures were highest for students with disabilities who are placed outside of their local schools (Chambers,

Shkolnik, & Perez, 2003). Over five billion dollars was devoted to instruction and related services for deaf and hard of hearing students attending non-public school programs—programs operated by public agencies or institutions other than public school districts (Chambers, Parrish, & Harr, 2004). On average, it was reported that the \$25,580 cost per student covers tuition, fees, and other special services. This average is twice the amount of per pupil expenditures for students attending public schools and four times the amount for students without disabilities (Chambers, Shkolnik, & Perez, 2003).

In 2000, Mohr et al. (2000) provided insight into the costs of providing students with a continuum of placement options. By their estimates the annual cost to run a residential school is around \$53,200 per student. The cost of running a day school was significantly less at \$28,200 per student. These numbers are compared to the annual cost of a self-contained classroom (\$14,500), the cost of a resource room (\$6,100), and finally the cost of an inclusive program (\$5,030). This last estimate is much lower than the average cost per pupil reported by SEEP. SEEP concluded that students who were deaf or hard of hearing require relatively high expenditures for regular classroom services. Eighty percent of the total expenditure on students who are deaf or hard of hearing is attributable to special education services.

### **Cochlear Implants**

As of 2006, nearly 15,500 children had received cochlear implants nationally (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders May, 2007) (see Table 3). According to Teagle & Moore (2002), the numbers of children with cochlear implants in schools will continue to rise. In North Dakota, the GRI Annual Survey estimated a fivefold increase (from one to five students) within a four year time span.

**Table 3. Cochlear Implants in the United States during 2003-2007**

School Year	Students	North Dakota	Midwest	National
2003-2004	Total D/HH Students	138	9,973	38,744
	Total with a cochlear implant (proportion)	1 (.7%)	980 (10.2%)	3,575 (9.6%)
2004-2005	Total D/HH Students	139	9,272	37,500
	Total with a cochlear implant (proportion)	3 (2.2%)	1,024 (11.4%)	4,051 (11.2%)
2006-2007	Total D/HH Students	140	8,146	37,352
	Total with a cochlear implant (proportion)	5 (3.6%)	1,057 (13.2%)	4,609 (12.6%)

Sources:

Gallaudet Research Institute (January 2005) State Summary Report of Data from 2003-2004 Annual Survey of the Deaf and hard of Hearing Children and Youth. Washington, D.C.: GRI, Gallaudet University.

Gallaudet Research Institute (December 2005) State Summary Report of Data from 2004-2005 Annual Survey of the Deaf and hard of Hearing Children and Youth. Washington, D.C.: GRI, Gallaudet University.

Gallaudet Research Institute (December 2006) State Summary Report of Data from 2006-2007 Annual Survey of the Deaf and hard of Hearing Children and Youth. Washington, D.C.: GRI, Gallaudet University.

The increasing number of children with cochlear implants impacts deaf education by making some students functionally hard of hearing. This results in different types of educational interventions and supports needed by children. Since the goal of cochlear implants is to improve children's access to auditory information, educational environments that are supportive of spoken language are important. Furthermore, it is critical that education personnel have the knowledge and skills to implement appropriate interventions and teaching techniques that develop and reinforce listening skills and auditory comprehension (Johnson, 2003). All schools must continue to explore how to provide students with cochlear implants with special and related services that meet their educational needs through both onsite or outreach services. It seems likely that increases in the number

of cochlear implants will continue to depress student enrollment in specialized schools, both nationally and in North Dakota, either by parent choice, or because the specialized environment does not provide adequate opportunities for spoken language.

### **Technology Applications**

According to the Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education (COPSSE, 2003)

This is a time of unprecedented technological opportunities for education. Virtual critical mass (e.g., computer-based, Internet-linked learning communities) is technically possible within the nation's schools. The field of deaf education could use such virtual learning communities: (a) to enable D/HH students, teachers, and parents to interact effectively and efficiently with peers, (b) to share resources, (c) to increase learning opportunities, and (d) to offer unique educational programs for subpopulations of D/HH students. (p. 3).

We were unable to find examples of any schools for the deaf that were capitalizing on the potential of technology to provide FAPE to children who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Some schools are exploring the creation of virtual shared classrooms (through teleconferencing or other means), but little attention seems to be focused on the potential of using cell phones, PDAs (personal digital assistants), and laptops to deliver instruction and interpreter services. Investments in such technology may effectively boost outreach efforts and allow greater numbers of children to receive services in their home communities. We recommend continuing to study this issue to gain a more accurate picture of the various educational models and technologies being used by schools for the deaf throughout the US.

At a minimum, NCSSD recommends specific technology strategies that could support the provision of FAPE for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, regardless of placement, including:

- a. Instant Messenger (IM) tools to keep students linked together in real time. IM provides a convenient, low bandwidth mechanism for students, teachers, and parents to communicate without relying on sound.
- b. Blogs /rss readers to create communities of learners linked by extended writing in text.
- c. Virtual spaces like Second Life, where residents communicate with text, images, and objects that can create a level playing field for students who are deaf or hard of hearing by requiring all participants to communicate using written language.

North Dakota may want to explore some of these technologies to boost outreach and educational services to students who are deaf and hard of hearing. These technologies have the potential to create common cultural backgrounds that are neither “hearing” nor “deaf,” but rather something forged in a computer mediated environment. These backgrounds permit the development of common language and can help deaf and hard of hearing students deal with communications and social obstacles by removing the issue of “hearing” from the social contract.

## **Conclusion**

This preliminary report documents that (a) deaf and hard of hearing children require intense, language-enriched environments if there is any hope for improved educational outcomes; (b) the proportion of deaf and hard of hearing students placed in regular classrooms has risen steadily over the last two decades, resulting in decreasing enrollments

and increasing costs at both public and private schools for the deaf; (c) demands on neighborhood or local schools to accommodate students who are deaf and hard of hearing will continue to rise; (d) the number of children receiving cochlear implants is likely to increase, necessitating new service delivery systems even if this has not yet had a substantial impact in North Dakota; (e) the power of technology has yet to be harnessed by educational systems providing services to students who are deaf and hard of hearing; and (f) states are faced with difficult decisions in the face of rising costs for all education systems.

The National Center suggests that the Department of Public Instruction has five primary options to consider:

1. Maintaining the status quo;
2. Reconfiguring the school by eliminating the residential program but (a) keeping the day program only, (b) providing outreach only, and/or (c) creating regional centers only;
3. Creating a center for technology that makes the delivery of services possible statewide, reconfiguring the current campus to serve as the base;
4. Collaborating with other state departments of education to serve students who are deaf and hard-of-hearing, either on the North Dakota campus or in a virtual environment; and
5. Closing the school and relying on local education agencies to deliver education and services to North Dakota's deaf and hard of hearing community.

With the first option, maintaining the status quo, the North Dakota School for the Deaf will probably continue to see declining enrollment and increased per student costs; however, it will maintain a continuum of placement options for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. It will also account for the educational, social, and postschool needs of K-12 deaf and hard of hearing students by providing them with enriched-language environments that support academic learning, opportunities for social development, and promotion of postschool preparedness.

With the three parts of the second option – which all include closing the residential program – the most expensive part of school operations will be eliminated immediately. To maintain the day-school only will likely result in further enrollment declines, since not all of the present students live in close enough proximity to attend the school each day. This could compromise the quality of the curriculum, since classes need a critical mass to be effective. To eliminate all on-campus instruction and provide outreach to local education agencies (i.e., public schools) would require that deaf and hard of hearing students attend their local schools or begin home schooling. This would shift the costs to the local school district; however, it would create further social disadvantages for students who are deaf or hard of hearing by limiting their opportunities for extracurricular participation with peers who speak their language or use their communication mode. Creating regional centers could expand support to individuals of all ages in the deaf and hard of hearing communities by locating centers in strategic parts of the state. This option would benefit teachers, offer support to additional deaf and hard of hearing individuals, but may decrease the current educational, social, and emotional support for deaf and hard of hearing students.

In the third option, the school would maintain its physical presence in the community but would change from a traditional teacher-led-classroom-learning-environment to a technology center for on-site learning and state-focused delivery support and services. NDSD could create virtual classrooms, on-line classes, computer-based or video-based curriculum that teachers and parents could purchase/rent/borrow, interpreter services delivered through personal digital assistants, and week-long subject-specific classes that deaf and hard of hearing students could attend. Additionally, state-wide technology services and support could be provided to educational agencies and expanded to all deaf and hard of hearing individuals, birth to elderly. The initial set up for this program could be costly, but would be maintained with fewer staff and might ultimately cost less at both the state and local level.

The fourth option, educating deaf and hard of hearing students on a regional basis, would require interstate compacts among states that are contiguous to North Dakota. This option, which might be named the North Central Consortium for Deaf Education, most likely requires the largest initial investment of time and resources, but it also has the potential to tap the resources and personnel of other states and to create a critical mass of students that would ultimately lower the per-pupil cost for every state. The result could ensure FAPE for a larger number of students who are deaf and hard of hearing, and establish North Dakota School for the Deaf as an innovative and national leader.

The fifth option, completely disbanding NDSD, would require that local educational agencies meet deaf and hard of hearing students' needs. Costs would be passed on to local educational programs, but could result in a significant gap in the provision of

FAPE for deaf and hard of hearing students’ as mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Table 4 presents a summary of the positive and negative aspects of each of these four options, modeled after the options originally considered by Pennucci and Lidman (2006).

**Table 4. Summary of Possible Options**

<b>Possible Course of Action</b>	<b>Possibilities</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
<p>(1) <b>Maintain Status Quo</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NDSB has already taken action to become more cost efficient.</li> <li>• NDSB contributes economic support for its surrounding community.</li> <li>• NDSB provides a continuum of placement options for students who are deaf or hard of hearing as required by IDEA (2004).</li> <li>• NDSB will continue to foster the development of Deaf culture in the state.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NDSB is likely to continue to experience declining enrollment.</li> <li>• NDSB is likely to continue to experience increasing operational costs.</li> </ul>
<p>(2) <b>Reconfigure School – Close residential program but maintain day student enrollment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The residential program is the most expensive component, thereby decreasing a large share of the costs.</li> <li>• Outreach services could continue.</li> <li>• Long term trends indicate declining residential placements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school would only be accessible to students who live nearby.</li> <li>• There may be too few students to sustain the secondary curriculum.</li> <li>• Instruction would be restricted to 6-hour days, leaving no time to teach curriculum other than the academic core.</li> </ul>
<p>(2) <b>Reconfigure School – Close on-campus instruction and provide outreach to local</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local education agencies would share costs and responsibility to provide a free and appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local education agencies would share costs and responsibility to provide a free and appropriate</li> </ul>

<b>Possible Course of Action</b>	<b>Possibilities</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
<b>education agencies</b>	education. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach services could be adjusted as the population changes.</li> <li>• High per capita costs may be reduced.</li> <li>• Support will be available to students and educators statewide.</li> </ul>	education. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A traditionally-defined continuum of services would not be available to students and families.</li> <li>• Students would experience fewer social, athletic, and recreational opportunities.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;">(2)  <b>Reconfigure School – Close on-campus instruction and create regional centers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long term trends indicate declining residential placements.</li> <li>• Regional services could be adjusted as the population changes.</li> <li>• High per capita costs may be reduced.</li> <li>• Support will be available to students and educators statewide.</li> <li>• Local education agencies would share costs and responsibility to provide a free and appropriate education.</li> <li>• Highly qualified teachers could be located in regional center supported by NDSB, providing educational services to students across the state.</li> <li>• NDSB maintains responsibility for professional development of teachers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A traditionally-defined continuum of services would not be available to students and families.</li> <li>• Students would experience fewer social, athletic, and recreational opportunities.</li> <li>• Local education agencies would share costs and responsibility to provide a free and appropriate education, but may not have the resources to attend to the individual needs of students with intense needs.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;">(3)  <b>Create Technology Center to deliver services state-wide (including instruction via online technologies)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long term trends indicate declining residential placements.</li> <li>• Regional services could be adjusted as the population changes.</li> <li>• Support will be available to students and educators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A traditionally-defined continuum of services would not be available to students and families.</li> <li>• Students would experience fewer social, athletic, and recreational opportunities.</li> </ul>

<b>Possible Course of Action</b>	<b>Possibilities</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
	<p>statewide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School could continue to educate larger groups of students when a critical mass exists.</li> <li>• School could capitalize on technology’s potential to bridge literacy gap.</li> <li>• Buildings and physical plant would be maintained.</li> <li>• A technology infrastructure would be created statewide that could sustain entire education system.</li> <li>• Local education agencies would share costs and responsibility to provide a free and appropriate education.</li> <li>• Highly qualified teachers could reside anywhere in the state and connect to individual students via technology.</li> <li>• NDSB maintains responsibility for professional development of teachers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local education agencies would share costs and responsibility to provide a free and appropriate education, but may not have the resources to interface with the technology infrastructure..</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;">(4)  <b>Create Interstate Regional Campus  (North Central Consortium for Deaf Education)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a critical mass of students across states may make services less susceptible to population changes.</li> <li>• Expenses are shared across several states; per pupil expenditures may actually decrease after initial start-up.</li> <li>• Support will be available to students and educators beyond North Dakota.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial investment is greatest in terms of negotiating interstate agreements.</li> <li>• Students from other states may live farther away from home, necessitating more travel time and potentially less class time.</li> <li>• Families may view out-of-state placement as undesirable.</li> <li>• Limits the ability to</li> </ul>

Possible Course of Action	Possibilities	Limitations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School would continue to educate larger groups of students and provide a language-enriched experience for all.</li> <li>• Buildings and physical plant are maintained and utilized efficiently.</li> <li>• Regional campus offers greater opportunities for social, recreational, and athletic experiences for students.</li> <li>• Education remains the primary function of NDSD.</li> <li>• Collaboration infuses NDSD with new resources and energy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• expand services to adult and senior North Dakota citizens.</li> <li>• Some states may not be able to participate for statutory and regulatory reasons, including violations of fiscal rules.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;">(4)  <b>Create Interstate <i>Virtual</i> Campus  (North Central Consortium for Deaf Education)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long term trends indicate declining residential placements.</li> <li>• Creating a critical mass of students across states may make services less susceptible to population changes.</li> <li>• The definition of a continuum of services changes for all collaborating states.</li> <li>• Expenses are shared across several states; per pupil expenditures may actually decrease after initial start-up.</li> <li>• Supports will be available to students and educators beyond North Dakota.</li> <li>• School would continue to educate larger groups of students and provide a language-enriched</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial investment is significant, in terms of personnel training, technology, and interstate agreements.</li> <li>• Students would experience fewer athletic and recreational opportunities.</li> </ul>

Possible Course of Action	Possibilities	Limitations
	<p>experience for all.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School would capitalize on technology’s potential to bridge literacy gap.</li> <li>• Buildings and physical plant might be maintained, in different configurations.</li> <li>• A technology infrastructure would be created state- and region-wide that could sustain entire North Dakota education system.</li> <li>• Highly qualified teachers could reside anywhere in collaborating states and connect to individual students via technology.</li> <li>• Professional development of teachers becomes a shared responsibility.</li> <li>• Students’ social experiences may increase in electronic modalities that today’s youth are most familiar with.</li> <li>• Social experiences in virtual environments may increase experiences of deaf culture and community.</li> <li>• Expertise is shared among the “best of the best” from each collaborating state.</li> <li>• Courses could be expanded to include offerings from community colleges, thus increasing post-school outcomes.</li> <li>• Allows students who are deaf and hard of hearing to remain at home.</li> </ul>	

Possible Course of Action	Possibilities	Limitations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional development for teachers utilizes the same network and potentially ramps up training for a greater number of teachers at shared expense.</li> </ul>	
<p style="text-align: center;">(5) <b>Close School and Defer to Local Education Agencies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NDSB buildings could be used by local education agency or leased for other purposes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A traditionally-defined continuum of services would not be available to students and families.</li> <li>Students would experience fewer social, athletic, and recreational opportunities.</li> <li>Local education agencies would bare all costs and responsibility to provide a free and appropriate education, but may not have the resources to attend to the individual needs of students with intense needs.</li> <li>Local educational agencies do not have a critical mass of students and are unlikely to have access to the level of expertise needed.</li> <li>Support to fill gaps is lacking.</li> </ul>

### Recommendations

NCSSD recommends the following actions to carry the discussion further:

1. Explore the relationships between available placements (i.e., NDSB and local schools) and postsecondary outcomes for citizens who are deaf and hard of

hearing in North Dakota. Decisions about the future education of children should reflect successful practices, but we have yet to determine which placements and other educational practices result in better post-school outcomes. Such data would greatly inform the discussion.

2. Conduct a cost efficiency study to determine costs of educating students who are deaf and hard of hearing in North Dakota in various service delivery methodologies, including both current options *and* projected costs for the five options presented in Table 4.
3. Consider a model of service delivery for the deaf citizens of North Dakota that is similar to the one now implemented by North Dakota Vision Services/Schools for the Blind (NDVSSB). During its investigation, NCSSD found a growing trend among schools for the blind to cease residential services and provide outreach to children with visual impairments in local schools. The most comprehensive of these center-based services was in North Dakota itself. NDVSSB, having faced financial and viability issues, has combined a number of the above options to create a viable, financially stable support system for the blind and visually impaired citizens of North Dakota. It provides short term residential programs and summer programs for blind students in grades 1-12, educational and assessment services across the state, and a full range of resource services and products for the persons with vision loss of all ages (see Appendix D).
4. Open a dialogue with stakeholders – parents of children who are deaf and hard of hearing, deaf adults, local school administrators, NDSB personnel, and

educators – to discuss the issues raised in this report. Change is difficult, but can be facilitated if stakeholders feel they have been given an opportunity to be heard.

5. Utilize the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to broker a conversation among superintendents in states contiguous to North Dakota (Minnesota, Montana, South Dakota, and Wyoming) to explore the collaborative approaches suggested in this report, particularly the concepts represented by the North Central Consortium for Deaf Education. In addition, involve the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), the Mountain Plans Regional Resource Center, North Central Comprehensive Center, and the Regional Parent Technical Assistance Centers for Regions 5 and 6. The National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities will join you in this effort.

As North Dakota continues to explore how best to provide FAPE for students who are deaf and hard of hearing and as you consider options for reorganization or innovative programming, the best interests of students and families must remain at the forefront. Some reports from other schools and state legislatures are available online and may be used as further resources. These reports may be found at:

- <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/ope/publications/reports/r0705f.pdf>;
- <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/06-01-2201-R.pdf>; and
- <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/LaB/reports/06-3highlights.htm>.

The National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities hopes that this report will assist Superintendent Sanstead and the North Dakota Legislative Council as it considers the provision of free, appropriate public education to deaf and hard of hearing citizens of North Dakota. Please let us know how we may be of further service to you in these efforts.

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## Appendix A: Schools for the Deaf in the United States in 2008

1. Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind
2. Alaska State School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
3. Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind
  - a. Tucson Campus
  - b. Phoenix Campus
4. Arkansas School for the Deaf
5. California School for the Deaf – Fremont
6. California School for the Deaf – Riverside
7. Marlton Charter School for the Deaf
8. Colorado School for the Deaf & Blind
9. American School for the Deaf
10. Delaware School for the Deaf
11. The Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center
  - a. Kendall Demonstration Elementary School
  - b. Model Secondary School for the Deaf
12. Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind
13. Georgia School for the Deaf
14. Atlanta Area School for the Deaf
15. Hawaii Center for the Deaf and Blind
16. Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind
17. Illinois School for the Deaf
18. Indiana School for the Deaf
19. Iowa School for the Deaf
20. Kansas School for the Deaf
21. Kentucky School for the Deaf
22. Governor Baxter School for the Deaf
23. Maryland School for the Deaf (Columbia)
24. Maryland School for the Deaf (Frederick)
25. Horace Mann School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
26. Learning Center for the Deaf
27. Michigan School for the Deaf and the Blind
28. Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf
29. Mississippi School for the Deaf
30. New Mexico School for the Deaf
31. St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf
32. St. Mary's School for the Deaf
33. Lexington School for the Deaf
34. Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf
35. Rochester School for the Deaf
36. Missouri School for the Deaf
37. Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind
38. Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf
39. New York State School for the Deaf
40. New York School for the Deaf
41. North Carolina School for the Deaf - Morganton
42. Eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf
43. North Dakota School for the Deaf
44. Ohio School for the Deaf/Ohio State School for the Blind
45. St. Rita School for the Deaf
46. Oklahoma School for the Deaf
47. Oregon School for the Deaf
48. Pennsylvania School for the Deaf
49. Scranton State School for the Deaf
50. Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf
51. Rhode Island School for the Deaf
52. South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind
53. South Dakota School for the Deaf
54. Tennessee School for the Deaf
55. West Tennessee School for the Deaf
56. Texas School for the Deaf
57. Utah School for the Deaf
58. Austine School for the Deaf
59. Virginia School for the Deaf, Blind and Multi-Disabled at Hampton
60. Virginia School for the Deaf & Blind – Staunton
61. Washington School for the Deaf and the Blind
62. West Virginia Schools for the Deaf & Blind
63. Wisconsin School for the Deaf

## Appendix B: Outreach Services

Outreach services may include:

- Conducting statewide infant hearing screenings
- Collaborating with school districts for child find
- Providing early intervention services including ongoing outreach, support or training to parents
- Providing diagnostic evaluations and assessments
- Developing and disseminating curriculum and instruction materials
- Mentoring educators in school districts
- Providing professional development to educators or other service personnel who work with students who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Offering consultation and technical assistance to school districts
  - Integrating services inside the general curriculum
  - Providing access to educational materials for students who are deaf or hard of hearing
  - Assisting with the monitoring of academic progress
- Renting or leasing technological materials and assistive technology devices to school districts and families
- Offering specialized materials and equipment (captioned media service, descriptive videos, etc.)
- Acting as a community representative
- Providing community audiological and speech services
- Providing community outreach and education
- Offering a Child Care Center: full-day care for children in the community
- Maintaining a resource library
- Serving as a clearinghouse for information about children who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Teaching American Sign Language
- Providing assistance to teacher certification programs for instructing students who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Providing summer programs for professionals, students and families
- Sponsoring Deaf Camps
- Housing an outpatient mental health center
- Offering vocational services (supported employment, job development)
- Providing Interpreter referral services/Interpreters

## Appendix C: School Closure Information

School	Status	Explanation
Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind	Significant decline in enrollment	The Idaho School for the Blind (ISDB) has experienced significant enrollment declines over the years. ISDB currently uses less than one-half of its facilities due to this decline in students and serves approximately 90% of its students through outreach programs. During the 2004-05 academic school year, the cost per residential student was about \$82,000 and \$59,000 for each day student.
Michigan School for the Deaf	Merged with the School for the Blind	In 1994, the Michigan School for the Blind campus was closed and merged with the Michigan School for the Deaf.
Nebraska School for the Deaf	Closed 1998	After the 1997-98 school year, the Nebraska School for the Deaf closed due to diminishing enrollment and increasing costs per-student. The year NSD closed; there were fewer than 40 students.
Nevada School for the Deaf	Charter School	Friends of the Las Vegas Charter School of the Deaf is a nonprofit organization formed in 2002 whose goal is to found a school to serve the estimated 500 local children and teens of school age who are hearing impaired. Informally, supporters have been researching the idea of a school since 1999.
New Hampshire School for the Deaf	Closed 2006	No information.
Wyoming School for the Deaf	Closed 2000	Only 1 student was enrolled at the school at the time of its closure.

## Appendix D: North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind (NDVSSB)

<p><b>North Dakota Vision Services/ School for the Blind (NDVSSB)</b>            500 Stanford Road            Grand Forks, ND 58203            701-795-2700            800-421-1181 - Toll Free            701-795-2727 - Fax            Email: gbornsen@nd.gov            Website:  <a href="http://www.ndvisionservices.com/">http://www.ndvisionservices.com/</a></p>	<p>Provides short term residential programs and summer programs for students in grades 1-12, educational and assessment services across state, and a full range of resource services and products for the vision impaired.</p> <hr/> <p>Mission: statewide comprehensive resource working cooperatively with rehabilitation professionals, educators, parents and other related agencies in providing a full range of services to persons of all ages (0-senior citizen) who are blind or visually impaired, including those with additional disabilities.</p> <p>Ensure that the specialized needs of persons of all ages who are blind or visually impaired are met through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statewide leadership</li> <li>Center based programming at Grand Forks</li> <li>Regionalized outreach services through 4 regional offices: a) Fargo, b) Jamestown, c) Minot and d) Bismarck</li> </ul> <p>Assesses individual strengths and needs to determine what service options are most appropriate at the specific time.</p> <p>Cost:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>North Dakota residents- free</li> <li>Safety &amp; Insurance, Vocational Rehabilitation, or the Veterans Administration may pay for some services for their ND clients.</li> <li>Nonresidents – pay for cost of services (can be paid by an agency or individual)</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Vision Resource Center</u></b></p>	<p>Provides ongoing communications between the school and other educational facilities, as well as other agencies serving visually impaired children and adults</p> <p>Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Depository for American Printing House materials for registered students</li> <li>Assessments</li> <li>Audio Books</li> <li>Braille Production</li> <li>Books in Large Print and Braille</li> <li>Descriptive Videos</li> <li>Textbooks in Large Print and Braille</li> <li>Professional Books and Videos</li> <li>The Store</li> <li>Talking Book Machine Lending Agency</li> <li>Toy/Switch Lending Library</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Braille Access Center</u></b></p>	<p>Transcription of literature</p>

	Braille materials available for purchase
<b><u>The Store</u></b>	<p>Sells vision-related adaptive aids and equipment for daily living and for enjoyment:</p> <p>Methods:</p> <p>Place a phone order,</p> <p>Visit The Store,</p> <p>Call for NCVSSB catalog or national vendors catalogs</p>
<b><u>In-service Training</u></b>	<p>For teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, and others working with persons with visual impairments. Training may focus on any aspect of service to individuals with visual impairments, with a particular emphasis on the expanded core curriculum</p> <p>Expanded Core Curriculum:</p> <p>Compensatory or functional academic skills such as braille reading and writing</p> <p>Orientation and mobility</p> <p>Social interaction skills</p> <p>Independent living skills</p> <p>Recreation and leisure skills</p> <p>Career education</p> <p>Technology</p> <p>Visual efficiency skills</p>
<b><u>Speakers' Bureau</u></b>	<p>Network of professionals and individuals with expertise in a number of areas pertaining to visual impairments.</p> <p>Presentation topics:</p> <p>Adjustment to Vision Loss</p> <p>Assistive Technology</p> <p>Braille</p> <p>Career Education</p> <p>Classroom Adaptations</p> <p>Diseases and Function of the Eye</p> <p>General Information and Resources</p> <p>Independent Living Skills</p> <p>Low Vision Aids and Adaptations</p> <p>Orientation and Mobility/Dog Guides</p> <p>Recreation and Leisure Skills</p> <p>Self-Determination and Advocacy</p>
<b><u>SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND FOUNDATION</u></b>	<p>Awards at least eight grants (up to \$500.00 each) to visually impaired ND students</p> <p>Goal: help meet educational, social, and recreational needs of students</p> <p>Equipment purchased through these grants becomes the property of the student: computer equipment, adaptive switches, talking dictionaries, Braille labelers, special Braille books, tuition for International Music Camp</p>
<b><u>ND Vision Services/School for the Blind</u></b>	<p>0-3 years old:</p> <p>In-home assessments of functional vision and learned-visual skills for</p>

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infants and toddlers.

Become part of the child's Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) team when necessary

Give ideas for appropriate activities to encourage visual-skill development and compensatory skills (in the absence of vision).

Ongoing consultation services,

Interpretation of eye reports

Resource for information about specific visual impairments

Available to provide family members with support, information and encouragement to help them make informed decisions regarding their child's educational plan.

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**Educational Program**

4-5 years old (in progress)

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**K-12 (ages 5-21)**

Braille

Daily Living Skills

Orientation and Mobility

Vocational/Career

Technology

Music

Functional Vision/Visual Efficiency

Recreation/Leisure

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Summer programming for visually impaired children:

Opportunity to socialize and build supportive connections with their visually impaired peers

Camping plus learning *Partially funded by the SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND FOUNDATION*

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Specific Skills Program: One-week residential instructional sessions grades 1-12 at Grand Forks

Topics:

Daily living skills

Technology

Braille

Braille music

Careers

Personal development

Orientation and mobility

Incorporated into topics: personal development

Homework

Study and organization skills.

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Compensatory Skills Program: One-week residential instructional sessions

Teaches and reinforces compensatory skills focusing on the unique classroom needs of low vision and blind students in grades 1-12.

Students may be integrated into the local public school program for appropriate subject areas and participation in extracurricular

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	activities
<b><u>In-service Training</u></b>	<p>Provided for parents, teachers, paraprofessionals, and other staff working with visually impaired persons.</p> <p>Training sessions are held at NDVSSB, in the home, school, job site, or workshop.</p>
<b><u>Adult Services</u></b>	<p>Individualized instruction from instructors who are certified and/or specialize in specific areas</p> <p>Adult Services: (fee for service basis)</p> <p>Adaptive skills training</p> <p>Adaptive technology</p> <p>Braille</p> <p>Daily living skills</p> <p>Orientation and mobility</p> <p>Recreation/leisure</p> <p>Personal adjustment</p> <p>Vocational/career education</p> <p>Comprehensive vocational evaluation</p> <p>Job development</p> <p><b>Follow-up services are provided as requested</b></p> <p><b>Adult Instructional Areas:</b></p> <p>Adaptive Aids (e.g., CCTV's, magnifiers, Talking Books)</p> <p>Adjustment with Vision Loss Discussions (social and psychological adjustment in a group and/or individual basis)</p> <p>Braille (reading and writing of the braille code and practical uses of braille in daily activities)</p> <p>Daily Living Skills (grooming, dressing, table etiquette, social graces, money and time, telephone skills, food preparation, clothing care, housekeeping, sewing, and home maintenance)</p> <p>Orientation and Mobility (body and spatial concepts, protective techniques, sighted guide techniques, travel in familiar and unfamiliar environments, cane instruction, travel in residential and business environments, public transportation, and electronic travel aids)</p> <p>Technology (computer access through magnification or screen readers; keyboarding, computer terminology and concepts, word processing, scanning and reading technology, note takers, and use of the Internet)</p> <p>Vocational/Career (intensive career exploration, job shadowing, and preparing for employment; Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation System{CVES})</p>