



A SCHOOL BOARD FOR ISDB

It's been a wild ride for Idaho families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing. While educational services for our children are the responsibility of local school districts under federal law, the Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind held these responsibilities long before federal law mandating services for children with disabilities went into effect. Enrolling a child in ISDB's residential program remains an option for families and many local school districts, especially smaller ones, rely on ISDB Outreach services to help them educate deaf or hard of hearing students. ISDB Outreach also provided support to families with very young children before the federal mandate for those services was established, and now works with Idaho Infant-Toddler to help provide services to children under the age of three and their families.

The State Board of Education is currently directly responsible for oversight of all ISDB's programs. A few years ago, the Board decided to look into restructuring deaf and blind education in Idaho. Could more options be provided? Should the ISDB campus be moved? Do we still need a residential program? How could we better support local school districts? All these questions and more were on the table. Study groups and committees were formed, but the process was unsatisfactory to many of the stakeholders, and the final recommendations did not have enough support from parents or local school districts. With a new executive director at the helm, the State Board decided to start over.

The first step was to convene a Deaf and Blind Education Summit during the summer of 2008. Parents, professionals and other stakeholders from all over the state gathered in Boise for a few days of learning from each other and discussing needs. (We reported on the Summit in the September and November issues of "Wavelengths," and Shanille Moosman's excellent first-person story was reprinted in the Winter 2009 "Communicator.")

The first recommendation was that an Advisory Council be formed. This has been done, and the Council has been meeting since January. It consists of 22 members, all of whom attended the Summit and thus have had prior exposure to the broad range of issues involved. Its primary responsibility is to come up with ways in which the recommendations of the Summit can be implemented. The State Board website at www.boardofed.idaho.gov now has a section devoted to the Council; look for the link to "Deaf/Blind Advisory Council."

For reasons having less to do with deaf/blind education and more to do with other problems, this spring the State Legislature and Governor's office moved to relieve the State Board of Education of some of its direct oversight responsibilities. One outcome of this was the passage of a bill (now signed into law) to create the Idaho Bureau of Educational Services for the Deaf and the Blind (IBESDB) with its own Board of Directors. This eight member board will operate much like a local school board to oversee both ISDB and its outreach services, leaving the State Board of Education in charge of rules and policies. Its members will be appointed by the Governor and most of the seats on the board are designated for particular stakeholders.

Where does this leave the Advisory Council? Still part of the process. It was established by a State Board rule, and is intended to continue to provide advice and work with both the State Board and the new IBESDB board. Some members of the current Advisory Council may be recommended for positions on the IBESDB board, which cannot be formed until July at the earliest. In the meantime the Advisory Council is expected to continue to work on the assignment it has been given.



Here's an ASL-based website for kids, from Canada: www.deafplanet.com. Science, sports, and lots else with voice and closed captions as well as sign language.

IS YOUR CHILD'S INTERPRETER OR TRANSLITERATOR QUALIFIED?

Many children who are deaf or hard of hearing and attending public school rely on an interpreter or transliterater (sign language, Cued Speech or oral) to help them access communication in the classroom. The Idaho Educational Interpreter Act goes into full effect this summer. Starting next fall, classroom interpreters will have to pass either the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment or hold equivalent certification from a national organization in order to work in Idaho schools. There are a couple of loopholes—interpreters who have not worked in Idaho schools before can apply for up to three years of emergency certification, and graduates of interpreter training programs can work for one year before acquiring certification.

What does this mean for parents? If your child currently uses an interpreter, make sure that interpreter services (not language aide or other aide services) are specified in his IEP. Let your school district know that you are familiar with this law by inquiring about the certification of his interpreter or transliterater. Small school districts in particular may find themselves scrambling to find interpreters. A couple of factors may make it difficult for districts to afford interpreters: school budgets are suffering from the economic downturn and funding cuts, and video relay services have increased the demand for (and pay scale of) interpreters. Stand your ground. An unqualified interpreter working under emergency certification can mean up to three years of less than adequate access for your child, which can do a lot of harm to his education.

Idaho families have often been faced with hard choices when it comes to finding educational opportunities for their children who are deaf or hard of hearing. The impact of this new legal requirement is still uncertain.

HANDS & VOICES ACTIVITIES

Magic Valley Hands & Voices is planning three (yes, three!) family get-togethers for the summer. June 6 we will meet for a picnic lunch and some crafts fun in Gooding (location to be determined; bring your own lunch and a goody to share.) July 15 we'll meet again for lunch at Dierke's Lake near Twin Falls. There are lifeguards, with swimming for older kids and a wading/sand castle-building beach for younger kids; Lorna will bring kayaks and lifejackets. August 22 we'll have our usual evening potluck picnic at Story Book Park in Burley. Mark the dates on your calendar, and we hope to see you at one or all. More details later....if you don't hear from us, call Lorna at 324-7544 for more information.

Stay tuned... for another Hands and Tales story hour in the Boise area. Accessible to kids using sign language, Cued Speech, and/or oral language. Susie Jones is working on a date. If you missed it the first time, let her know you are interested: (208) 489-4999 or sjones@ierh.org.

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The Idaho Project for Children and Youth with Deaf-Blindness has announced their 2009 Summer Institute, June 18-19, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm at the Ameritel Inn-Boise Spectrum, I-84 at Overland & Cole. The presenter is David Brown, an Educational Specialist, the topic "The Emotional Heart of the Child: Why 'Self-Regulation' Matters So Much." The cost is \$30, and scholarships are available for parents; registration deadline is June 13. Contact Cathy Hull (chull@uidaho.edu or 208-364-9915) for more information about the Institute and how to register.

THEATER LOVERS, TAKE NOTE

In order to make theater more accessible to patrons who are deaf or hard of hearing, the Deaf Center of Idaho is partnering with Music Theater of Idaho and the Idaho Shakespeare Festival to provide interpreted performances of their upcoming productions. Interpreters who are certified but inexperienced in theatrical interpreting will be partnered with experienced interpreters, thus increasing the pool of theatrical interpreters in Idaho. (The interpreters are providing their services without charge in exchange for season tickets, so you know they love theater, too!)

Dates for interpreted performances are as follows; assistive listening devices are available for any performance upon request. For the best view of the interpreters, be sure to mention that your party wishes to sit in the Deaf/hard of hearing section.

- *The King and I*, Friday, June 19 at 7:30 pm (Music Theater of Idaho)
- *The Seagull*, Tuesday, June 23 at 8 pm (Idaho Shakespeare Festival)
- *Comedy of Errors*, Tuesday, July 14 at 8 pm (Idaho Shakespeare Festival)
- *Twelfth Night*, Tuesday, August 25 at 8 pm (Idaho Shakespeare Festival)
- *Tuna Christmas*, Wednesday, September 23 at 7:30 pm (Idaho Shakespeare Festival)
- *Beauty and the Beast*, Saturday, October 24 at 1:30 pm (Music Theater of Idaho)
- *Annie*, Friday, December 11 at 7:30 pm (Music Theater of Idaho)

Music Theater of Idaho performances are at the Nampa Civic Center. Get tickets on line at www.mtionline.org or call 208 468-2385. Idaho Shakespeare Festival performances are at the Festival Amphitheater on Warm Springs Avenue in Boise. Get tickets on line at www.idahoshakespeare.org or call 208 336-9221.

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LETTER FROM ISDB

The Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind is sprouting growth everywhere I look. More students, families, and schools are participating in ISDB programs (numbers of students, variety of communication environments, regional preschool classes are all on the raise). Additional specialized services have been added on campus and in outreach (more SLP, audiology, and communication support); and ISDB staff become more highly qualified, gain additional endorsements, and contribute more creative and effective services to children and students with hearing and/or vision loss statewide.

The only thing that hasn't grown is our budget. We talked about the fiscal impacts in the last Hands and Voices issue, so I won't belabor that point. What I do want you to tell you is how amazed I am at what our staff, from every department, have done to balance the budget and ensure opportunities for Idaho's students. We have also received some very helpful donations recently from interested supporters.

We invite you to come see for yourselves and share your experiences. This fall, we are planning another Family Weekend on the Gooding campus. We need you to make it a success! Please save the dates September 25-26 (still under discussion but almost certain) and join us for the weekend. More information about informational and recreational activities will be forthcoming, but for now what we would like to secure is your commitment.

--Mary Dunne, Superintendent

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Do you have news of interest to other families? Have you read a useful book? Have you discovered a new trick for keeping hearing aids or CI processor in place? Has your kid done something utterly cute, funny or wonderful? Share it here! Send it to Lorna Irwin, 76 West 100 North, Jerome ID 83338 or niwri2@msn.com. The next "Wavelengths" will come out in early July.