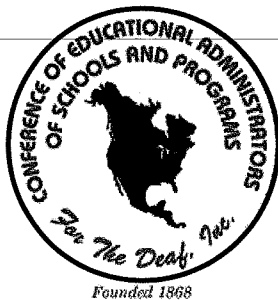


# CONFERENCE OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS of Schools and Programs for the Deaf, Inc.

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February 26, 2009

The Honorable Mike Rounds  
Office of the Governor  
500 E. Capitol Ave.  
Pierre, SD 57501

Dear Governor Rounds:

On behalf of the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf, I write regarding the education of deaf children at the South Dakota School for the Deaf (SDSD). We understand that you have proposed a very different service delivery model for these children than currently exists.

While we appreciate that budget realities have been forcing difficult decisions in every state, we are concerned about the quality of education for SDSD students if they are forced to enroll in another program.

Decisions about how to serve deaf children in any state are complicated. Deaf and hard of hearing students are extremely heterogeneous, yet they are relatively few in number, especially in a rural state like South Dakota. CEASD recommends that one option that should be considered is a multi-state, regional, center-based option. In such a plan several states would pool resources and expertise to serve students from several states on one campus. States near South Dakota are similarly situated and face the same challenges vis a vis the education of deaf children. Such a model could use states' resources efficiently while providing a high quality education with a critical mass of peers.

As you move through any decision making process regarding SDSD we offer the following.

- Put children and families first. Decisions about SDSD must keep the interests of SDSD students and families in the forefront. Saving money cannot come at the

expense of the education of deaf children and the support of their families. Family placement choices should be respected.

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- State programs serving deaf students should seek to optimize the use of each entity's resources. Center-based programs can offer a level of service quality that is difficult, if not impossible, for other programs to replicate and should always be an accessible and viable option for deaf students. South Dakota should support collaboration and cooperation among all programs serving deaf children.
- South Dakota should move slowly and engage in an open dialogue that allows all reasonable solutions to be considered. A one year time frame to review options seems reasonable. While monetary considerations never go away, today's economic climate is the worst that it has been in years. States should not make decisions today that they may regret later. States should ensure that all points of view are considered in any decision-making process. They should be able to provide reliable data for the decisions they propose. And they should be able to provide assurance that the decisions they make are optimum for families and citizens of the state.

Founded in 1868, CEASD is committed to the promotion of excellence within a continuum of equitable educational opportunities for all children and adults who are deaf or hard of hearing. CEASD advocates on behalf of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and supports the efficient and effective management of schools, programs, program service centers, and governmental units offering educational and related programs and services. CEASD's membership consists of over 100 member schools and programs serving over 12,000 deaf and hard of hearing children and their families.

CEASD stands ready to assist you and interested parties in your state as you consider how to best serve deaf and hard of hearing students. I was pleased and honored to be in South Dakota last week to testify on this matter and will be happy to again contribute in any way appropriate.

For your information, I have attached the CEASD Position Paper on The Full Continuum of Educational Placements for All Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

Thank you for consideration of our views.

Very truly yours,



Edward Bosso  
President

Attachment