

TEAM NEWS

(Together Everyone Achieves More)

November 2009

Dr. Wayne G. Sanstead, State Superintendent, 600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 201, Bismarck, ND 58505-0440

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ARRA Funds Will be Closely Monitored for Fraud and Abuse

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provides a significant amount of additional federal resources for state and local school districts.

To prevent fraud and abuse, support the most effective uses of ARRA funds, and accurately measure and track results, these funds will be heavily scrutinized and monitored. Due to the unprecedented scope and importance of this investment, ARRA funds are subject to additional and more rigorous reporting and monitoring requirements than normally applies to other federal grants.

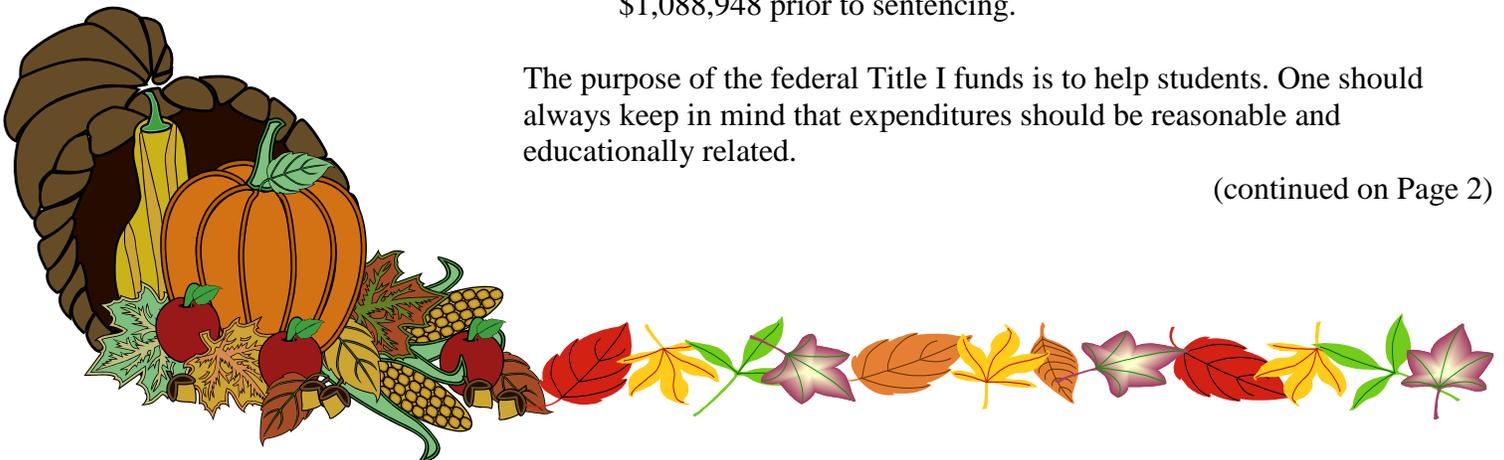
The USDE Office of Inspector General has released to states a PowerPoint presentation outlining information regarding their organization's mission, fraud indicators, and real world examples of the misuse of federal funds.

USDE Office of Inspector General Real World Examples of Fraud:

- A federal bookkeeper created a fraudulent vendor contract under his niece's name and deposited funds into a personal checking account. He embezzled approximately \$84,000 in Title I funds. He was sentenced to 10 months of incarceration and ordered to pay \$92,112 in restitution.
- A superintendent in Oklahoma embezzled approximately \$1 million over a 10-year period through a school account thought to be closed and used the funds to purchase lakefront property, farmland, farm equipment, and personal automobiles. This individual was sentenced to 24 months of incarceration and was required to repay \$1,088,948 prior to sentencing.

The purpose of the federal Title I funds is to help students. One should always keep in mind that expenditures should be reasonable and educationally related.

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ARRA Funds Will be Closely Monitored for Fraud and Abuse (continued)

North Dakota is no exception to misuse of funds. The following is just a sample of some of the actual abuses of federal funds in ND:

- ✓ A rural district requested to purchase 18 computers when they have only 9 Title I students served in the building. It is not reasonable to purchase more computers than the total number of students served.
- ✓ A district purchased a Nintendo Wii and games with federal funds. This expense was not educationally related.
- ✓ A district requested to purchase TV's to give away as door prizes for a parent meeting. This expense is not educationally related nor is it reasonable to give a TV as a door prize.
- ✓ A district used federal funds to purchase flowers for graduation. This expense was not educationally related.
- ✓ A district using multiple federal sources sent three-fourths of their entire staff to an out-of-state technology conference. Out-of-state trips are very costly (especially for numerous staff to attend) and are not considered high quality professional development as defined by the NCLB Act. It is not reasonable to send three-fourths of your staff to an out-of-state conference.
- ✓ A district used federal funds to give their entire staff Christmas bonuses. Federal regulations only allow districts to provide signing bonuses to attract highly qualified personnel under certain circumstances. It is not allowable to give Christmas bonuses.

In North Dakota, most historical compliance issues have not risen to this level and are typically honest mistakes and oversights. However, with the addition of the ARRA funds, there have been more requests than usual for non-allowable activities. Just as concerning is the reaction from school personnel when told something is not allowable under federal regulations. Several have become argumentative and have stated that the strict rules they need to adhere to make the funds not worth the effort.

The answer to the dilemma of not using funds appropriately or the inability to comply with federal regulations is simple. If the district feels that the regulations are too stringent, the funds cannot be spent legitimately, or there is too much reporting, paperwork, or oversight, simply do not apply for federal dollars. This is a local decision. Several districts chose not to apply for the ARRA funds. Any federal funds not applied for go into a pool for reallocation to North Dakota districts. There are numerous ND districts that desperately need and want the additional funds. We have never been able to fully fund reallocated requests.

The department is proud of our historically clean monitoring reviews and audits. The ARRA funds are providing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to implement innovative strategies to raise student achievement. However, it is equally important that these funds be used legitimately for the program's intent.

2008-2009 School District Profile Notification

The state Title I office would like to inform you of the upcoming release of the 2008-2009 School District Profile (also known as the School District Report Card) around mid-December.

Information will include statewide school plant performance data and statewide district performance data, as well as information on the district's assessment, demographics, and the statewide district performance summary.

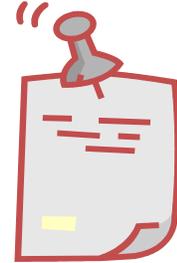
This serves as a prime opportunity to remind school districts that they are required to inform parents that this information is available to them. A sample letter regarding this requirement is available at www.dpi.state.nd.us/title1/springwkshp/profileletter.pdf. Most districts choose to inform parents of the availability of this information through their school newsletter. Remember, in addition to providing a website address for the document, you must also inform parents as to how they can review a written copy made available by the district (i.e., copy in school office, library, etc.).

Self-Monitoring Process for the 2009-2010 School Year

During the 2009-2010 school year, fifty-three school districts were selected for Title I monitoring. Of these, forty school districts will participate in the Title I 2009-2010 Self-Monitoring process and the remaining districts will receive on-site visits. Title I Self-Monitoring guides have been created for large districts, Title I schoolwide, Title I targeted assistance, Title I cooperative agreements, and Title I private schools. A list of the chosen districts and copies of the guides are available online at www.dpi.state.nd.us/title1/targeted/resource/monitor/index.shtm.

The self-monitoring guide and corresponding documentation are due on or before January 15, 2010 and should be submitted to:

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Department of Public Instruction
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Directors' Reports

Projected Title I Funding for the 2010-2011 School Year

By: Laurie Matzke, North Dakota Director of Title I

The Obama Administration, the House, and the Senate have begun the process of determining appropriations for the 2010-2011 school year. Below, I have highlighted a timeline of how events occur in a typical year.

- Congress typically passes the appropriations bill for the subsequent year's funding in December.
- The U.S. Department of Education typically generates an estimated state Title I allocation in January or February. We generally receive our estimated state Title I allocation at the National Title I Conference.
- The Department of Public Instruction then needs to determine eligibility status for Title I funding. This typically occurs in February.

Eligibility for a Title I grant requires a district to have a minimum formula count of TEN. The formula count must exceed 2% of the district's age 5 through 17 population. The formula count is a weighted unit consisting of 15.5% of the census poor count, 15.5% of the foster child count, 46% of the eligible free meal count, and 23% of the eligible reduced meal count.

The census poor count is the count of children ages 5-17 who were reported below poverty on the updated federal census. The foster child count is a count of children ages 5-17 living in the foster homes during October 2009. The free meal count is a count of children eligible for free meals. The reduced meal count is a count of children eligible for reduced meal prices. A child must have an approved free or reduced meal application on file at their school district office for October 2009 to be counted. The department's Child Nutrition and Food Distribution unit verifies the free and reduced meal counts. If your total weighted unit drops below ten, the district does not meet the eligibility requirement and your subsequent year's Title I grant would be zero.

Several administrators have questioned the accuracy of the census poor count listed for their district. The state Title I office receives a chart showing the census poor count for every district in the state each January. We have been informed that there is no way to change these numbers. The numbers on the chart are final. Keep in mind that the census data is always a few years behind; therefore, 2007 income year data will be used to calculate the 2010-2011 Title I allocations.

- After eligibility has been determined, we can then use each district's aggregate units for funding purposes.

In February 2010, the state Title I office will send correspondence to all Title I authorized representatives informing them of the status of their aggregate units. Each district will receive a chart comparing last year's aggregate units to the current totals. If the aggregate units increase from the prior year, the allocation will probably increase. If the aggregate units go down, the allocation will most likely also decrease. If the numbers do not change much, the allocation will most likely remain steady.

District: Sample					
	Census (15.5%)	Free Meals (46%)	Reduced Meals (23%)	Foster (15.5%)	Aggregate Units
2008 Data	782	1496	691	64	978.220
2009 Data	933	1724	720	64	1113.175

- If the aggregate units decreased and you receive a decrease in Title I funding for the 2010-2011 school year, there are provisions in place to lessen the impact. The “hold harmless” provision guarantees that an eligible school district receives, at a minimum, a certain percentage of last year’s Title I allocation. However, the hold harmless provision is calculated individually for each of the four categories.

In order to benefit from the hold harmless provision, your district must be eligible for each category separately.

95% Hold Harmless – LEAs with 30% and higher poverty

90% Hold Harmless – LEAs with 15% to 30% poverty

85% Hold Harmless – LEAs with 0% to 15% poverty

- The department will then generate **estimated** federal Title allocations. We hope to have these amounts available by March 2010.

The department will post **estimated** federal Title I program allocations for school districts on our website. To access this allocation information, log on to www.dpi.state.nd.us/grants/allocap.shtm. No written correspondence will be mailed to school districts.

- The department will generate and post **final** federal title allocations when we receive final amounts from the U.S. Department of Education. This typically occurs in May.

We are currently under a continuing resolution at the federal level. Hopefully, Congress will provide an appropriation for the 2010-2011 school year before they adjourn for the holiday break in December. In that event, the timeline listed above will be fairly accurate.

It is also a possibility that Congress will approve another continuing resolution and address the appropriations when they reconvene in January 2010. In that case, everything could be significantly delayed.

We will keep you updated on the allocation process in future issues of this newsletter.

Evolving Disability Terminology

By: Bob Rutten, North Dakota Director of Special Education

If you’re above a certain age, you probably remember that it was common practice to refer to the people who were living in North America in 1492 when Columbus arrived as “Indians.” With the passage of time and the emergence of new sensibilities, new terms arose. In the United States people began using the terms “American Indian” or “Native American.” In Canada the terms “First Peoples” or “First Nation” became the official interchangeable identification for indigenous people.

A similar movement to update our language is now occurring in the United States regarding the terms used to describe people who have certain disabilities. Spurred by parents, advocacy organizations, special educators, and the general public, there’s growing support for doing away with terms that may be inaccurate or offensive to many people. The single term that’s targeted most visibly for replacement is “mental retardation.” Too many persons have experienced or witnessed teasing or bullying in association with this term and they’ve become passionate proponents of using new language. Perhaps you’ve heard about the campaign to “Spread the Word to Stop the Word,” an organized effort to halt use of the term retardation.

The ND IDEA State Advisory Committee discussed this topic at our fall meeting. During the past year, two citizens contacted committee members to inquire about the continuing use of the term “mental retardation.” In response to those inquiries, Mr. John Copenhaver, Director of *Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education* based at Utah State University, was invited to facilitate a discussion on this sensitive issue. He gave background information about previously used terms that were once in standard usage, including imbecile, idiot, and moron. Just as those terms became outdated, Copenhaver suggested that certain terms still in common use may be due for replacement.

It’s interesting that the U.S. Department of Education considered changing some of its disability terms during the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 2004. Public comments were submitted by both proponents and opponents of changing the descriptions of the disability categories in IDEA. Upon completion of the reauthorization, no changes were made to these categories. However, as John Copenhaver reminded the ND IDEA State Advisory Committee, it’s important to be sensitive to the issues in our own state. If people here would like to see something different, we can make recommendations to the U.S. Department of Education about changes that we believe are necessary.

With increasing numbers of children being identified in our state with a primary disability of autism, the term “autism spectrum disorder” has been suggested as a more valid description of the broad range of children that are currently included in the term autism. It is felt that updating the category would more clearly reflect a spectrum that extends from high-functioning to profoundly disabling.

As our state responds to these concerns and considers new terminology, it will be necessary to coordinate this process with other partners. No matter what terms are eventually adopted, either through the next reauthorization of the IDEA or through action in our own state, it’s imperative that the terms be both respectful and appropriate. As John Copenhaver reminded the members of the State IDEA Advisory Committee, *“Individuals who have a disability are moms, dad, sons, daughters, employees, employers, scientists, friends, neighbors, movie stars, leaders, followers, students, and teachers. They are people. They are people, first.”*

ARRA Reporting

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), signed by President Obama in February 2009, provides a significant amount of additional resources for local school districts. To prevent fraud and abuse, support the most effective uses of ARRA funds, and accurately measure and track results, recipients must publicly report how these funds are used. Due to the unprecedented scope and importance of this investment, ARRA funds, also known as stimulus funds, are subject to additional and more rigorous reporting requirements than normally applies to other federal grants.

One of the reporting mandates under the ARRA requires each recipient that receives ARRA funds to submit a quarterly report. The first quarterly report required by Section 1512 of the ARRA for North Dakota school districts was due on October 2, 2009. We are happy to report that ND had 100% of the districts complete and submit the quarterly reports.

To date, there are about eight Title I ARRA applications that still need to be approved. The two most commonly requested expenditures on the Title I ARRA applications are equipment and extended programs (i.e., summer school, after school program). Once the first round of quarterly ARRA reports were compiled, a total of 161 new FTEs were hired due to ARRA funding. The breakdown is as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ○ 52.18 Title I Classroom Teachers | ○ 3.0 Parent Liaisons |
| ○ 48.14 Paraprofessionals | ○ 2.03 Parent Coordinators |
| ○ 22.33 Title I Reading Teachers | ○ 1.0 School Improvement Coordinator |
| ○ 15.35 Title I Math Teachers | ○ 1.0 Reading Coach |
| ○ 6.4 Intervention Specialists | ○ 0.5 ELL Teacher |
| ○ 5.97 Preschool Teachers | ○ 0.63 Title I Coordinator |
| ○ 3.2 Data Coordinators | |

Information regarding ARRA reporting can be accessed at www.recovery.gov for every state. **The second quarterly ARRA report is due to your Title I contact person by December 15, 2009.**

Mark Your Calendars!**× 2010 Private School Audio Conference**

All private schools, please mark your calendars for the 2010 Private School Audio Conference, being held on Thursday, February 25, 2010. We will keep you posted on the progress of this event in future issues of this newsletter.

× 2010 Targeting Audio Workshop

Please mark your calendars now for the 2010 Targeting Audio Workshop, being held on Tuesday, March 30, 2010.

× 2010 Program Improvement Workshop

The 2010 Title I Program Improvement Workshop will be held on Wednesday, April 21, 2010. This meeting is specifically for those schools and districts that have been identified for program improvement through not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

We will keep you posted on the progress of this event in future issues of this newsletter.

× 2010 Summer Symposium

Please mark your calendars for the 2010 Summer Symposium, being held on June 17-24 in Bismarck. Details for this excellent opportunity for professional development are still being finalized. Information will be available in the spring of 2010 at www.dpi.stat.nd.us/title1/events.shtm.

× 2010 Title I/Special Education Fall Conference

Dates have been set for October 6-8, 2010 for the 2010 Title I/Special Education Fall Conference at the Bismarck Civic Center. Please save the date for this conference as we are always striving to find ways to meet the needs of all schools in North Dakota. Your feedback from the last Fall Conference was a great way to begin planning for a better and more improved Title I/Special Education Fall Conference in 2010. Information will be available at www.dpi.state.nd.us/title1/events.shtm.

RTI: Who's On First?

By Linda Jenkins, North Dakota RTI-PBS Field-based Coordinator [Email address: Linda.Jenkins@gfschools.org]

Many, if not most, North Dakota elementary schools are now implementing some form of Response to Intervention (RTI). Some middle and high schools are also getting on board. The RTI initiative gives us all a chance to re-examine our roles in educating the students in our school.

Since RTI is site-based and resources are different at each school, you will see different roles and responsibilities developing at each building. Here are some of the most common structures you will encounter:

Administrator: The administrator is an essential part of implementing RTI and is also an integral part of the RTI problem-solving team. As the instructional leader of the school, the administrator paves the way for staff development, planning for implementation and maintaining the fidelity of interventions, and data collection.

Classroom Teacher: The classroom is the foundation of RTI and so the classroom teacher is always part of the RTI process. Some classroom teachers are part of the RTI problem-solving team, others implement RTI interventions, and all collect data and make decisions based on that data.

Title I Teacher: The Title I teacher is often part of the RTI problem solving team. Their expertise in reading and math instruction and intervention is very helpful to the team. They are often leaders in data-based decision making and are able to share data-collection methods that are classroom-friendly. Many Title I teachers are able to carve out a block of time to help provide some of the interventions that the school decides to use.

Special Education Teacher: A special education teacher is also often part of the RTI problem solving team. Their special skills in remedial instruction and in creating adaptations and modifications can be extremely beneficial to the problem solving process. They are also skilled in data collection and data-based decision making and are able to share those skills with the group. Special education teachers are often part of the resources that are provided in one or more of the RTI Tiers.

Other Resources: Some schools incorporate physical education teachers, music teachers, librarians, etc. as either a part of the problem solving team or a guest to the team when needed. These teachers have a special perspective as they see several grades of students, see target students over a number of years, and see students in a different environment than the academic classroom. They can often provide insight to the team in selecting strategies that will reach a student. Counselors, social workers, and school nurses, where available, also can provide valuable information to the RTI problem solving team and may be a regular part of the team or an invited guest as needed.

Whatever your role, everyone is important to the success of RTI. Every adult has a part to play in supporting the education of every student.

IDEA Update

This month's IDEA Update will focus on the new Technology Plan under development by the US Department of Education. The USDE intends for this plan to provide a framework for informing policymakers on how technology can be used to change American education. This plan will examine the integration of technology with Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL, a curriculum design process addressed in IDEA and the Higher Education Act, is seen as a critical tool for improving instruction to address the diversity of learners and learning styles within today's classrooms.

Dr. David Rose, one of the founders of the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), has been appointed to this panel. He has been instrumental in developing and promoting UDL as an instructional tool for providing access to the general education curriculum and expanded learning opportunities. As a member of the Technical Panel, he intends to represent the needs of all learners that have been marginalized by the general education curriculum. He hopes that the final plan will recognize diversity among learners, not the type of diversity (disability or linguistic difference), as a naturally occurring strength of our educational system. In addition to recognizing this diversity at the beginning of the instructional process, Dr. Rose is excited that the final plan will examine the impact of technology across the life span.

The new Technology Plan framework will address four areas: Learning, Assessment, Teaching, and Productivity. Within the areas of Learning and Teaching, the panel will examine what students need to learn in order to use information and what tools are available or needed to facilitate that learning. Technology's ability to provide access to the curriculum to a more diverse student population can lead to increased achievement for all students. In the area of Assessment, Dr. Rose believes technology has the potential to move education from using summative assessments, like end of course tests, to more formative assessments that inform instructional decisions.

Monthly Featured Articles

Departmentalization – At the Elementary Level?

It seems our high stakes testing and standards are influencing many aspects of how we instruct students. This may also be a reason behind pockets of schools across the nation examining the possibly to departmentalize, even at the early elementary levels.

Wikipedia defines departmentalization (in some districts it is also known as platooning) as the process of grouping activities into departments. What this translates to in a school setting is grouping students so that their daily instruction is provided from several different teachers where each teacher specializes in a particular subject.

Sometimes the specialized teacher has formal training in a particular content area, while other times the teaching is done by the teacher who is most able. Although the concept has been practiced for years, it is a relatively new concept being implemented at the elementary level.

Since the research and data on this issue is not clear, we thought we would outline several points to consider when questioning whether or not departmentalization is right for your school.

- Most elementary teachers are trained as “generalists” with a wide variety of knowledge in a range of subjects.
- Departmentalizing may mean that teachers have less time to provide individualized attention or to develop close relationships with students.
- Some argue that elementary level students benefit from the continuity and security of the same teacher through the year, every day, all day.
- Traditional classroom settings allow for more opportunities to teach a variety of subjects across all curricular areas.
- Departmentalization may allow for teachers to better collaborate with other educators who share their same enthusiasm.
- Departmentalization may allow teachers to share their subject passion with students.
- Departmentalization can assist schools to provide better focused and targeted professional development specific to content areas.
- Departmentalization has little to no cost as it uses the staff presently in place.
- Departmentalization can assist teachers in developing an area of expertise.
- Departmentalization can both allow teachers to “loop” with their students from one year to the next (teach second grade, teach third grade, etc.).
- Departmentalization requires joint planning time in which teachers of the same content area can gather to discuss instruction. Joint planning time is also needed for teachers across content areas to share teaching strategies and ideas that work best with particular students.
- In both departmentalization and traditional classroom structures, student success is a shared responsibility between all educators.

The Fourth Grade Slump

Jeanne Chall, a professor and educational psychologist at Harvard University’s graduate school of education, described two periods of learning. Children spend the first three years of school “learning to read” and then in fourth grade children begin “reading to learn”.

In the fourth grade, however, textbooks change. They become more complex and abstract. The language and concepts become more difficult and challenging. Children need to be reading fluently and they need to be good at comprehending what they are reading. Reading First programs can provide a child with a good base of reading skills. The five essential components within a Reading First program are “essential”. However, students that are reading at grade level by third grade, have a huge transition to make into fourth grade.

As text becomes more and more abstract with more complex vocabulary words, students may find it more difficult to understand what they are reading. Students who struggle with the “fourth grade slump” may find themselves headed for the “eighth grade cliff”.

The Kennedy Krieger Institute is researching this “fourth grade slump”. Laurie E. Cutting, the associate director of the Kennedy Krieger Institute’s Center for the Study of Reading Development, explains that “It (reading) becomes a tool for learning, not a tool that you are learning.”

The reading-development center is conducting a variety of methods to research this difficulty. MRI (magnetic-resonance-imaging) scans look at the brain patterns of older children to determine how children respond to certain remedial efforts. The center is also checking out connections between attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and reading comprehension. Since reading is such a complex process, students often have not just one problem, but rather many problems within the reading process. Another speculation is that perhaps at the upper grades, teachers start to assume that students understand.

Some recommendations for helping students are:

- Continue providing systematic and explicit instruction for students in the earlier grades to provide students with a sound base of reading skills.
- Provide all teachers, even those in the upper grades, with training on how to teach students to read.
- Make sure your reading curriculum has both fiction and non-fiction reading. Reading skills for non-fiction are much different than those skills needed for fiction. It is essential that students have the skills for reading non-fiction text in the upper grades.
- Have a strong curriculum and assessment system in place.
- Continue using assessments to inform instruction.
- Provide students with text that is rich in vocabulary.
- Continue to develop good interventions for older students.
- Focus on vocabulary and comprehension instruction.

ND School for the Deaf Future Services Plan

During the past legislative session, House Bill 1013 was passed and signed by Governor Hoeven. Section 19 of the bill includes language related to a **Future Services Plan and Implementation – School for the Deaf.**

This legislation directed the ND Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) and the ND School for the Deaf (NDS) to develop a plan for future services to be offered by NDS. The Future Services Plan will be developed the first year of the biennium (July 1, 2009 - June 2010) and begin implementation the second year of the biennium (July 1, 2010 - June 2011).

As part of the Future Services Plan, the NDDPI and NDS shall:

1. Review the needs of all deaf and hearing-impaired persons throughout the state and develop a plan to provide comprehensive outreach services to all North Dakota citizens who are deaf or hearing-impaired.
2. Explore the development of partnerships with other states relating to the provision of residential and educational services to individuals who are deaf or hearing-impaired.
3. Review current research and national trends in the provision of services to students who are deaf or hearing-impaired.
4. Meet regularly with a transition team appointed by the superintendent of public instruction consisting of representation from the legislative assembly, parents of school for the deaf students, school for the deaf employees, members of the Devils Lake community, school for the deaf alumni, and others.
5. Explore the feasibility of implementing revenue-generating activities at the school for the deaf.
6. Develop a long-range site and facility plan for the school for the deaf campus.

In October, the NDS Future Services Plan Transition Team began monthly meetings focusing on the development of the Plan. Additional information relating to the Transition Team Members and Meeting Minutes can be found at www.nd.gov/nds/future/.



Upcoming Events

2010 National Title I Conference

- January 21– 24, 2010 in Washington, DC
Information is available at www.nationaltitleconference.com/index.html

2010 North Dakota Reading Association Spring Conference

- April 29 – May 1, 2010 in Grand Forks, North Dakota
Information is available at www.ndreadon.com/

2010 IRA Conference

- April 25– 28, 2010 in Chicago, Illinois
For more information go to
www.reading.org/General/Conferences/AnnualConvention/Registration.aspx



Title I To Do List

Administrators

- Request reimbursement of expenditures on a RFF form.
- Monitor expenditures and submit budget revisions to allow for changes.
- Submit Title I ARRA Quarterly Report. Due December 15, 2009.

Teachers

- Communicate supplemental instruction to support classroom to parents.
- Maintain portfolios for Title I students.
- Report assessment results to parents using Title I Progress Report.



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