

**Department of Special Education - Denton Regional Day School Program for the Deaf
(RDSPD)**

Prepared for the Board of Trustees Meeting

September 27, 2022

Purpose of Report

To present the Board with an update of Denton Regional Day School Program for the Deaf.

Board Goal

II. Teaching & Learning. In pursuit of excellence, the district will advocate, and practice true accountability based on measurement of individual student progress over time, regardless of external mandates.

History

The Denton RDSPD Shared Services Arrangement (“RDSPD SSA”) is a cooperative established by and through a Shared Services Agreement of school districts to operate certain aspects of their special education program for students with disabilities. Members of the RDSPD SSA include Alvord ISD, Argyle ISD, Aubrey ISD, Boyd ISD, Bridgeport ISD, Callisburg ISD, Chico ISD, Decatur ISD, Denton ISD, Era ISD, Gainesville ISD, Krum ISD, Lake Dallas ISD, Lewisville ISD, Lindsay ISD, Little Elm ISD, Muenster ISD, Northwest ISD, Paradise ISD, Pilot Point ISD, Ponder ISD, Sanger ISD, Sivells Bend ISD, Slidell ISD, Valley View ISD, and Walnut Bend ISD. Denton ISD has served and will continue to serve as the fiscal agent for the RDSPD SSA.

The Denton Regional Day School Program for the Deaf (RDSPD) provides a continuum of services to students who are Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (DHH) from birth through age 21 from 26 school districts in Cooke, Denton, and Wise Counties. RDSPD services have historically been located on Denton ISD campuses in a manner that promoted socialization between students who are DHH and their peers who are hearing. Currently, these campuses include Ann Windle, McNair ES, McMath MS, and Denton HS. In the past, services were provided to students at the ATC (now known as LaGrone Academy). Denton provides a Parent Infant Trainer who collaborates with the Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program to ensure that children who are identified as deaf and hard of hearing, ages 0-3, are served in their natural environment. The RDSPD stresses English acquisition for language development, listening skills or oral speech development using a total communication approach.

Status

As the fiscal agent, Denton RDSPD currently serves more than 217 students from three counties. Denton’s cost to participate in the RDSPD is \$515,400; an amount that continues to increase as students are eligible to receive services from the RDSPD. Currently Denton employs 12 certified Teachers of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (TODHH) (eight classroom teachers and four itinerant teachers), seven certified Educational Interpreters, five Instructional Paraprofessionals, six Communication Facilitators and a Parent Infant Trainer. Although the state requires that all Educational Interpreters be certified; due to certified interpreter shortages, when certified interpreters are not available Denton hires non-certified communication facilitators whose sign and interpreting skills are adequate. As in the past, Denton ISD is at risk of losing certified interpreters and communication facilitators to outside agencies and districts for various reasons, including compensation. Other special professionals (speech language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapists, assistive technology specialist and an audiologist) provide direct and indirect services to students in the RDSPD as well. As the fiscal agent, Denton ISD contracts with UNT for the RDSPD audiologist.

After much consideration and planning, beginning the 2024-2025 school year, Newton Rayzor ES will serve as the Pre-k - 5th grade RDSPD campus and Calhoun MS will serve as the 6th-8th grade RDSPD campus. At that time, Ann Windle, McNair and McMath will no longer host the RDSPD program, the current campuses are not in the same feeder pattern which separates our students from their peers, preventing consistency among the peer groups developed over the years. Denton HS will remain the cluster site campus for grades 9th-12th. The realignment has been a goal of the Board as well as the Department of Special Education for years. The realignment is due largely in part to the practice of elementary and middle school students transitioning to the same campuses as their hearing peers.

The RDSPD stresses English acquisition for language development, listening skills or oral speech development using a total communication approach. In this communication approach, students may utilize some type of hearing technology, a signing system, gestures, and lip reading to communicate and receive instruction.

Summary

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Denton ISD continues to serve as the fiscal agent of the RDSPD. The Denton ISD Regional Day School Program for the Deaf (RDSPD) continues to provide quality education and services to students. Denton ISD will continue to serve students from surrounding districts who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing at Ann Windle, McNair, McMath, Denton HS, and the Lagrone Academy thru May 2024. Beginning 2022-2023, to prepare for 2024-2025, the two new cluster site campuses, Newton Rayzor ES and Calhoun MS, will receive thorough training to prepare them for serving students with hearing differences. The special education and general education staff, support staff, campus leadership, and special education supervisor have dedicated their time and energy to create and maintain a quality program.