

**Regional Day School Program for the Deaf**  
**Department of Special Education**  
**Prepared for Board of Trustees Meeting**  
**May 22, 2012**

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**Purpose of Report**

To inform the Board of the status of the feeder system for the Regional Day School Program for the Deaf (RDSPD).

**Board Goal**

II. Teaching & Learning. . . In pursuit of excellence, the district will develop academic skills and interpersonal relationships necessary for student success in college, the workplace, and for life.

**Objectives**

- To provide data to the Board regarding the current status of the Regional Day School Program for the Deaf (RDSPD)
- To provide data for Board consideration regarding the possible reestablishment of a feeder system for students served by the Regional Day School Program for the Deaf (RDSPD)

**History**

RDSPD provides services to students with hearing impairments from 26 school districts in Cooke, Denton, and Wise Counties. Services have been located on Denton ISD campuses historically in a manner that promoted socialization between students who are deaf/hard of hearing with their hearing peers and allowed them to transition together from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school. Redistricting for the 2008-09 school year resulted in the placement of all hearing students from McNair to Harpool Middle School. Students who are deaf/hard of hearing have continued to attend McMath MS and no longer have the opportunity to attend school with their hearing friends from elementary school. Currently the RDSPD provides services at Ann Windle School for Young Children, McNair Elementary, McMath Middle School and Denton High School. Each campus has lighted warning systems in every part inside and out of the building where a student who is deaf might be, including classrooms, restrooms, cafeteria, offices, hallways, gym/activity room, playground, etc.

**Status**

Projected enrollment for the 2012-2013 school year is as follows:

	<u>Denton</u>	<u>Cooke Cty.</u>	<u>Decatur</u>	<u>Denton Cty.</u>	<u>Gainesville</u>	<u>Lake Dallas</u>	<u>Lewisville</u>	<u>Little Elm</u>	<u>Northwest</u>	<u>Wise Cty.</u>	<u>Total by Location</u>
Infants	6		1								7
AWSYC	3		1				1		1	1	7
McNair	6		2	2	1		4		1		16
McMath	2	1		2	1	1	1	3	3		14
DHS	4		1				5	1			11
Totals	21	1	5	4	2	1	11	4	5	1	55
Percent	38%	2%	9%	7%	4%	2%	20%	7%	9%	2%	100%

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		<i>Gainesville</i>	<i>Cooke Cty.</i>
		4%	2%
		<i>Denton Cty.</i>	<i>Little Elm</i>
		7%	7%
<i>Wise Cty.</i>	<i>Decatur</i>	<i>Denton</i>	<i>Lake Dallas</i>
2%	9%	38%	2%
			<i>Lewisville</i>
<i>Northwest</i>			20%
9%			

**Options**

A – Move elem. program to school in MMS zone

Advantages

Feeder system reestablished; 5<sup>th</sup> grade students (about 2-5 students annually) would transition with hearing friends to MMS

Disadvantages

Elimination of years of training of staff (gen. ed., nurse, counselor, admin., cafeteria, custodial, LSSP, SLP, diagnostician) in communicating in signed English, accommodating classrooms, modifying curriculum, using interpreters, etc.; new building retrofitted to be ADA compliant

B – Rezone a small section of McNair to McMath

Feeder system reestablished; no impact to deaf ed. program

Hearing students from re-zoned area would be relocated to McMath; deaf ed. students divided from hearing friends; no guarantee that deaf ed. and hearing friends would attend same middle school

C – Relocate RDSPD from McMath to Harpool and from DHS to GHS

Feeder system reestablished; transitioning deaf ed. students would be with hearing friends

Relocation of two RDSPD programs; receiving campuses retrofitted to be ADA compliant (lighted alarms; reinstall video phones; begin training building staff on working and communicating with the deaf)

D – Take no action

Deaf ed. students remain at ADA Campuses w/trained staff

Deaf ed. students & hearing friends separated for MS & HS

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**Operational Impact**

Relocation of any level of the RDSPD goes beyond just moving people and boxes of materials to new classrooms. The receiving campus would need to be retrofitted with lighted warning systems in every part inside and out of the building where a student who is deaf might be, including classrooms, restrooms, cafeteria, offices, hallways, gym/activity room, playground, etc. This would likely require a bid process. In addition, technology staff would need to work with installers from Sorenson Communications to move and reinstall the video phone equipment. The costs, if any, are undetermined at this time. Training for the receiving staff members will take many years to replicate. There are numerous staff members who have attended workshops, such as the week-long sign language training each summer. These include general education teachers, paraprofessionals, nurses, a school counselor, diagnostician, LSSP, SLPs, etc. Staff members at current campuses have many years of knowledge about the impact of deafness on language development and social/emotional growth, in working with students who are deaf, and in using sign interpreters in class. Training new staff members will take years to regain that level of expertise.

**Summary**

The opportunity to address the feeder system of the RDSPD is greatly appreciated! The system has been fractured for the past four years, but there are no easy or obvious solutions. Over and above the monetary costs involved in any relocation is the negative impact to students from the loss of staff members who are knowledgeable and experienced at meeting their needs. Deafness is an invisible handicap that results in a devastating impact on language and speech development as well as social/emotional development and interpersonal relationships. As a community, adults who are D/deaf/hard of hearing view themselves as a cultural group, not a disability group. However, reality reminds us daily that this is a hearing world. And in our part of that world, success is highly affected by both English literacy and diplomacy in interpersonal relationships. The difficulty arises when one is deemed more important and necessary for success than the other. Your insight into this dilemma is needed and valued.