



"The world has watched the deaf community come of age. Together we've overcome our own reluctance to stand up for our own rights."

Dr. I. King Jordan, President
Gallaudet University

www.ia deaf.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Friday, August 7, 2015

President

Corey Axelrod
president@ia deaf.org

Office of the Governor
Attn: Dr. Beth Purvis, Secretary of Education
100 W. Randolph
JRTC Ste 16-100
Chicago, IL 60601-3220

Vice President

Kevin Ryan
vicepresident@ia deaf.org

Dear Dr. Purvis:

Secretary

Shelley Williams
secretary@ia deaf.org

On behalf of the Illinois Association of the Deaf (IAD), I am writing to bring your attention to several issues at the Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD), issues of utmost importance to deaf individuals in this great state of Illinois as they negatively impact the quality of education for deaf children.

Treasurer

Lisa Roth
treasurer@ia deaf.org

IAD is pleased to hear an interim superintendent of ISD has been appointed, especially as ISD has been operating without a superintendent since Dr. Janice Smith-Warshaw's resignation. We understand Ms. Preston will be charged with overseeing ISD's vision, goals and objectives, as well as responding to the demands of all constituencies and interest groups, including teachers, students, parents, staff, advocates, and the community at large. However, as Ms. Preston's extensive experience as an educator in Illinois does not include the critical direct experience with bilingualism education, a core tenet of ISD's mission and philosophy, IAD is concerned the implementation of a bilingual environment conducive to successful learning will remain unavailable to the students of ISD until a permanent superintendent with necessary credentials is hired.

Membership Secretary

Susan Dramin-Weiss
membership@ia deaf.org

Chicago Chapter

CCIAD@ia deaf.org

As ISD has a rich history with more than 175 years of existence, the school has changed the lives of many, opening up new opportunities to access deaf educators and role models, as well as American Sign Language. However, as IAD has been contacted by parents of ISD students expressing concerns of their children's educational rights being violated during Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings and the implementation of such plans for individual students, this is reflective of an environment not contributing to effective learning. Instances of violations at ISD include students being forced to utilize cued speech as a means of receiving education or being placed in different classes where students are no longer with their peers. IAD is reminded of the issues addressed in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in which "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." While this issue does not align with racial separation, IEPs being violated foster an environment at ISD of exclusion and oppression, one IAD vehemently denounces.

Fox Valley Chapter

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Heartland Chapter

HIAD@ia deaf.org

Illini Chapter

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Jacksonville Chapter

JIAD@ia deaf.org

Additionally, IAD is optimistic the signing of SB220 into law is speeding up hiring process at the ISD especially as several educators have been hired by ISD since the bill was signed into law. Nevertheless, despite the signing of SB220 into law, we have yet to see any increase of deaf educators at ISD. Further, we understand the signing of HB2657 into law is intended to expand the pool of qualified deaf educators made available, however, we urge DHS and ISD to immediately reiterate its commitment to attracting and retaining qualified deaf educators.

Quad Cities Chapter

QCIAD@ia deaf.org

Springfield Chapter

SIAD@ia deaf.org

While stressing urgency to proceed quickly in finding a permanent superintendent for ISD, IAD requests the involvement of a representative from the IAD, Illinois School for the Deaf Alumni Association (ISDAA) and the Illinois School for the Deaf Advisory Council (ISDAC) on the search committee to ensure the appointment of a qualified Deaf Superintendent with the necessary experience with bilingual education to foster a successful environment at ISD.

Stephen Decatur Chapter

DIAD@ia deaf.org

Sincerely,

Corey Axelrod
President
Illinois Association of the Deaf

Cc: Bruce Rauner, Governor
Evelyn Sanguinetti, Lieutenant Governor
James Dimas, DHS Secretary
Kris Smith, Director of DHS-DRS
Dr. Tony Smith, State Superintendent

IAD strives to promote the advancement of the social, educational, and economic well-being of the deaf & hard of hearing citizens of Illinois