

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS OF THE DEAF

There are four counselors plus the Coordinator of the Deaf Unit, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Utah State Board of Education. These five individuals work exclusively with deaf clients. Three of the five responded to my invitation to make recommendations, and their comments are summarized in the following paragraphs:

Proper parent counseling is necessary during the early stages of parental acceptance of the child's disability. At present, the ongoing counseling program is primarily educational in nature. This needs to be augmented to help parents understand and to accept the child's disability. Parents need accurate information in deafness, family counseling, etc.

Social skills are vital to the success of every person, including the Deaf. A comprehensive social skills program would be extremely valuable.

A concentrated, coordinated program for the multiple-handicapped students at the School is needed.

An intensive training program in sign language is needed. Many young students have a very limited vocabulary and also have difficulty understanding finger-spelling.

Graduates of the School who continue their education at Weber State College are very limited in reading and writing skills. A strong program in these areas is badly needed.

As long as the policy of the Board requires a dual track educational program at the School, the administration cannot favor one side over the other. An unbiased administration is needed.

The sign language proficiency of the educational staff concerned with those students who use it as part of their instructional media should be continually upgraded. There is also a need for consistency in the kind of sign language being used.

At present, the emphasis appears to be on how the subject matter is presented rather than what subject matter is presented. Teachers should be required to have specific knowledge of subject matter which would enhance the teaching process and strengthen the program.

In our educational system, very little trust is exhibited by educators in their products - the students. Deaf people -- graduates of the School -- are not trusted by parents and teachers to govern themselves. There are many deaf "children" between the ages of 21 and 30 who are still home with mother. It is incredible how educators and parents of deaf children discriminate against the Deaf. Educators refuse to listen to the adult deaf, who themselves were educated just a few years ago, and hearing parents of deaf children still promote and preach the idea that their deaf child is different and can marry a hearing person and doesn't need to socialize with other deaf people. The remedy is to put control of programs for the deaf in the hands of the deaf. Our deaf children's reading and writing levels are among the lowest in the country, and the school spirit is extremely low. Give the deaf children a deaf model to follow. Putting a deaf person in as superintendent of the Utah School for the Deaf would show proof of Utah's trust in their own system--permitting their deaf products to govern themselves.

A multiple option, dual system of education encompassing the two major philosophies, is workable only if several conditions are met:

- a. There are two principals, each firm in his belief in his own system, each knowledgeable about deafness and education modalities within his philosophy.
- b. There are separate campuses, and a corps of teachers dedicated to their own system on these separate campuses.
- c. The State Education Agency set up an evaluation and monitoring team independent of either system, composed of various disciplines but specifically excluding special education and speech specialists.
- d. The State Education Agency establish a parent orientation team and program designed to give parents a fair exposure to deafness and to the philosophical problems. This would be for incoming parents, new to the system and deafness.
- e. Parents have the option of placing their children into either system only after proper orientation; and, after placing the child, they may switch into the other system only after full consultation with the evaluation and monitoring team.

An Alumni Advisory Council should be established for the purpose of obtaining the viewpoint of the alumni.