



"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

Thursday, August 27, 2015

President

Corey Axelrod
president@ia deaf.org

Office of the Superintendent, Illinois School for the Deaf
Attn: Serena Preston, Interim Superintendent
125 Webster Avenue
Jacksonville, IL 62650

Vice President

Kevin Ryan
vicepresident@ia deaf.org

Dear Ms. Preston:

Secretary

Shelley Williams
secretary@ia deaf.org

On behalf of the Illinois Association of the Deaf (IAD), I would like to bring attention to information in the cued speech study/poster results recently released by the Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD); information that brings many concerns to the community. Our primary concern is in regards to ISD's stance in blatantly diminishing the value of ASL as a language, a support for the development of English and reinforcement for literacy.

Treasurer

Lisa Roth
treasurer@ia deaf.org

ASL is a visual language that should not be viewed as inferior to English (or any other language) as it meets the full criteria of linguistics: phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. This visual vernacular is classified as a fully developed language. The poster makes no attempt to recognize ASL as such and instead cites heavily biased sources in favor of cued speech. Along this line of thinking, the poster explicitly compares the 250,000 words in an English dictionary (with 50-75,000 words considered as basic) to an estimated 5,000 commonly used signs in ASL.

Membership Secretary

Susan Dramin-Weiss
membership@ia deaf.org

As we recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, it is alarming to us at IAD to see ISD's audist approach towards ASL. ASL fluency has been proven by numerous research studies - including that of a US Department of Education funded study - to be effective in supporting the development of English and literacy. Furthermore, there are numerous successful programs throughout the country using a bilingual approach to educate Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children, including the California School for the Deaf, Fremont (CSDF) and Maryland School for the Deaf (MSD).

Chicago Chapter

CCIAD@ia deaf.org

Fox Valley Chapter

FVIAD@ia deaf.org

Heartland Chapter

HIAD@ia deaf.org

Illini Chapter

Illini@ia deaf.org

Jacksonville Chapter

JIAD@ia deaf.org

Quad Cities Chapter

QCIAD@ia deaf.org

According to the California Department of Education, only 8% of all Deaf and Hard of Hearing students in the state of California pass California's High School Exit Exam (HSEE) while 50% of students at CSDF pass the HSEE. Furthermore, students who attended the Early Childhood Education at CSDF have a 90% to 100% chance of passing the HSEE. Students of MSD share similar success as more than 70 percent of MSD graduates go on to college. It is important, however, to note CSDF and MSD utilize a balanced bilingualism approach, one where English and ASL have equal value, and are successful without the utilization of cued speech.

Springfield Chapter

SIAD@ia deaf.org

All in all, IAD is concerned ISD has created a biased environment where cued speech is favored over ASL, an environment not conducive to bilingual learning. To begin to repair its fragmented relationship with the community, IAD recommends ISD take measures to eliminate audist attitudes at ISD. Additionally, IAD urges ISD to immediately reiterate its commitment to attracting and retaining qualified deaf educators, as well as expanding its American Sign Language Program with ASL specialists who are Deaf and fluent in ASL to foster a successful bilingual environment.

Stephen Decatur Chapter

DIAD@ia deaf.org

Sincerely,

Corey Axelrod

Corey Axelrod
President
Illinois Association of the Deaf

Cc: Kris Smith, Director of DHS-DRS
Angela Kuhn, Illinois School for the Deaf Principal
James Dimas, DHS Secretary
Dr. Tony Smith, State Superintendent
National Association of the Deaf

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