

**WORKING PAPER ON THE  
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE  
MINNESOTA ACADEMY FOR THE DEAF AND  
THE MINNESOTA ACADEMY FOR THE BLIND**

**Prepared for the State Planning Agency  
by the Management Analysis Division  
in the Department of Administration**

**January 1986**



**Department of  
Administration**

**MANAGEMENT  
ANALYSIS  
DIVISION**

January 24, 1986

Lani Kawamura, Director  
State Planning Agency  
Capitol Square Building  
550 Cedar Street  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101

Dear Ms. Kawamura:

I am transmitting our report on the Organizational Structure of the Minnesota Academy for the Deaf and Minnesota Academy for the Blind with this letter. As you know, the State Planning Agency directed the Management Analysis Division to prepare this report as part of a larger study required by Minnesota Laws 1985, Chapter 240, Section 8. The intent of the report is to provide the Academies with constructive recommendations that will improve their operations.

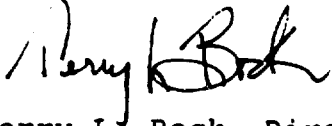
Overall, we found the staff at the Academies to be dedicated and hardworking. Everyone is actively committed to providing quality services for their clients, the students. Given the stress this organization has experienced recently as a result of studies and proposals to close the Academies, their continued commitment is especially noteworthy.

I feel it is necessary to make two comments about our recommendations. First, the report recommends altering the functions of several positions. It should be emphasized that the changes in position scope and reportability were made to enhance programming for students and are not comments on current performance of individuals at the Academies. Second, though we believe the operational recommendations are feasible, they will not be easy to implement. Most of the recommendations require allocation of staff time to address the concerns cited. While we recognize that it will be difficult to create time to allow participative planning and collaboration between groups of staff, it will be critical for the Academies to do so.

We hope this report will assist you in developing a comprehensive set of recommendations to improve the services provided by the Academies. As the various

components of the study are completed, we look forward to continuing our discussions with your staff and the staff at the Academies.

Sincerely,



Terry L. Bock, Director  
Management Analysis Division

BL:TLB:ml

cc: Colleen Wieck, State Planning Agency  
Ruth Myers, State Board of Education  
Robert Wedl, Assistant Commissioner  
Department of Education  
Carl Johnson, Superintendent, Faribault Academies

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## INTRODUCTION

This report addresses the organizational structure of the Minnesota Academy for the Deaf and the Minnesota Academy for the Blind. It is one part of a multi-faceted study of the Academies mandated in Laws 1985, Chapter 240, Section 8. (See Appendix A.) As coordinator for the entire study, the State Planning Agency directed the Management Analysis Division in the Department of Administration to review the current organizational structure of both Academies, propose alternatives and make recommendations for change where appropriate.

It must be emphasized that the purpose of this portion of the study is to examine the structure or mechanism by which educational services are delivered at the Academies. It does not attempt to evaluate the appropriateness of the service itself. Readers are encouraged to review the reports of the educational consultants employed for this study for an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the instructional and residential programs at the Academies.

The report contains five sections:

- o Methodology - a brief description of the materials and information compiled for the study.
- o Strengths of the Current Organization - a brief description of some of the strengths in the current organization.
- o Organizational Structure of the Academies - a description of the existing organizational structure of the two academies and recommended changes to that structure.

- o Operational Issues and Recommendations - a description of operational concerns raised during the course of the study and recommendations to address those concerns.
  
- o Future Options - a brief discussion of two service options based on different assumptions of the Academies' future mission.

## METHODOLOGY

The report is based on several sources of information:

- o A review of written documents. These include previous evaluations and studies concerning the Academies, budgetary and enrollment information, staffing rosters, and classification specifications for employees at the Academies.
- o Interviews with 62 employees at the Academies. The interviews included all managerial and supervisory positions and approximately one-fourth of the line employees (teachers, educational assistants and other instructional staff, houseparents, health professionals, accounting, personnel, food service and maintenance staff). The interviews focused on job responsibilities, working relationships and related operational concerns of the employees.
- o Observation of classes and residential programs at both Academies.
- o Interviews with the State Board of Education Sub-committee for the Academies, the Assistant Commissioner for System Effectiveness and the Director of Special Education at the State Department of Education, and the Director of the Special Education Cooperative serving the Faribault Academies.

## STRENGTHS OF THE CURRENT ORGANIZATION

The Faribault Academies have recently been the subject of several studies. Such studies generally focus on weaknesses of organizations rather than their strengths. This report is no different in that respect. However, before addressing some operational concerns, certain strengths should at least be acknowledged if not fully discussed:

- o The staff at the Faribault Academies are clearly dedicated to the students and the organization. This enthusiasm and sense of purpose is evident at all levels of the organization, from the instructional and residential staff to the business and plant management personnel.
- o The physical facilities are very good. Students are educated and housed in settings that are attractive and exceptionally well maintained.
- o The Academies have responded to a great deal of change in the last decade. They have experienced enrollment declines and seen changes in the type of students they serve. They have moved from jurisdiction of the Department of Public Welfare (now Human Services) to the Department of Education and the State Board of Education. In response they have consolidated management structures, reduced staff size and added several specialized staff functions to address the needs of their student population. Some critics may argue that the changes have been too few or too slow, but the improvements they have made should be acknowledged.



## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE ACADEMIES

### Background

The campuses of the Minnesota Academy for the Deaf (MSAD) and the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind (MSAB) are separated by a distance of 1 and 1/2 miles. This physical separation, along with differences in the student population served on each campus have a significant effect on the structure under which the two Academies operate.

#### **A. Student Population and Programs on Each Campus**

A summary of enrollment at the Academies for school years 1977-78 to 1985-86 is found in Figure 1. It shows that the number of students at the Academy for the Deaf has decreased over the last decade while the number of students at the Academy for the Blind has remained relatively constant. Enrollment at each Academy has fluctuated significantly from year to year.

The total enrollment at the Academies is currently 192. Approximately one-fourth of these students are educated and housed at the Academy for the Blind and three-fourths at the Academy for the Deaf. (For a more complete discussion of programs and enrollment trends at the Academies, please refer to "Evaluation of Minnesota School for the Deaf and the Minnesota Braille and Sight-Saving School, January 4, 1984" by the Program Evaluation Division of the Office of the Legislative Auditor.)

Students at the Academy for the Deaf can generally be described as having a single handicap, i.e., deafness or

FIGURE 1

STUDENT ENROLLMENT  
1977-78 through 1985-86

ACADEMY FOR THE DEAF			ACADEMY FOR THE BLIND		BOTH ACADEMIES	
SCHOOL YEAR	Enrollment	Change from previous yr.	Enrollment	Change from previous yr.	Enrollment	Change from previous yr.
1977-78	188		50		238	
1978-79	179	-9	47	-3	226	-12
1979-80	161	-18	43	-4	204	-22
1980-81	174	13	45	2	219	15
1981-82	185	11	55	10	240	21
1982-83	189	4	48	-7	237	-3
1983-84	173	-16	50	2	223	-14
1984-85	150	-23	46	-4	196	-27
1985-86	140	-10	52	6	192	-4
High	189		55		240	
Low	140		43		191	
Difference	49		12		49	

PROJECTED AND ACTUAL ENROLLMENT  
1984-85 through 1986-87

ACADEMY FOR THE DEAF				ACADEMY FOR THE BLIND			BOTH ACADEMIES		
SCHOOL YEAR	Projection	Actual	Diff.	Projection	Actual	Diff.	Projection	Actual	Diff.
1984-85	155	150	-5	52	46	-6	207	196	-11
1985-86	158	140	-18	60	52	-8	218	192	-26
1986-87	179	n/a	n/a	65	n/a	n/a	244	n/a	n/a

hearing impairment. All 140 students receive instruction through graded programs. One hundred twenty-four of the students are hearing impaired and sixteen of the students are multiply handicapped in addition to being hearing impaired. Figure 2 displays this information graphically.

The students and programs at the Academy for the Blind are more diverse. The majority of the 52 students have other handicaps in addition to sensory impairments and are educated in ungraded programs. The blind multi-handicapped program has twenty students (17 ungraded, 3 graded), the deaf multi-handicapped program has twelve students (all ungraded), and the deaf-blind program has eight students (all ungraded). There are twelve students with a single handicap of blindness or visual impairment, all of whom are served in a graded program. Figure 2 displays this information graphically.

In February 1985, the Faribault Academies prepared enrollment projections for the 1984-85 through 1986-87 school year. A comparison of their projections to actual experience for 1984-85 and 1985-86 indicates the Academies have been optimistic about the demand for residential placement for sensory impaired children. (See Figure 1.)

#### **B. Administration on Each Campus**

The state has operated residential schools for the blind and deaf since the 1860's. For 90 years, the facilities had separate administrators, faculties, and related support staff. In 1975, one administrator was named to oversee both facilities.

FIGURE 2

STUDENT ENROLLMENT BY ACADEMY  
1985-86

BY TYPE OF PROGRAM:	ACADEMY FOR THE DEAF		ACADEMY FOR THE BLIND		COMBINED TOTAL	
		%		%		%
Graded Programs	140	100%	15	29%	155	81%
Ungraded Programs	0	0%	37	71%	37	19%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140</b>		<b>52</b>		<b>192</b>	

BY TYPE OF IMPAIRMENT:	ACADEMY FOR THE DEAF		ACADEMY FOR THE BLIND		COMBINED TOTAL	
		%		%		%
<b>Single Impairment</b>						
Deaf	124				124	
Blind			12		12	
sub-total	124	89%	12	23%	136	71%
<b>Multi-Handicapped</b>						
Deaf-multi-handicapped	16		12		28	
Blind-multi-handicapped			20		20	
Deaf-blind			8		8	
sub-total	16	11%	40	77%	56	29%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140</b>		<b>52</b>		<b>192</b>	

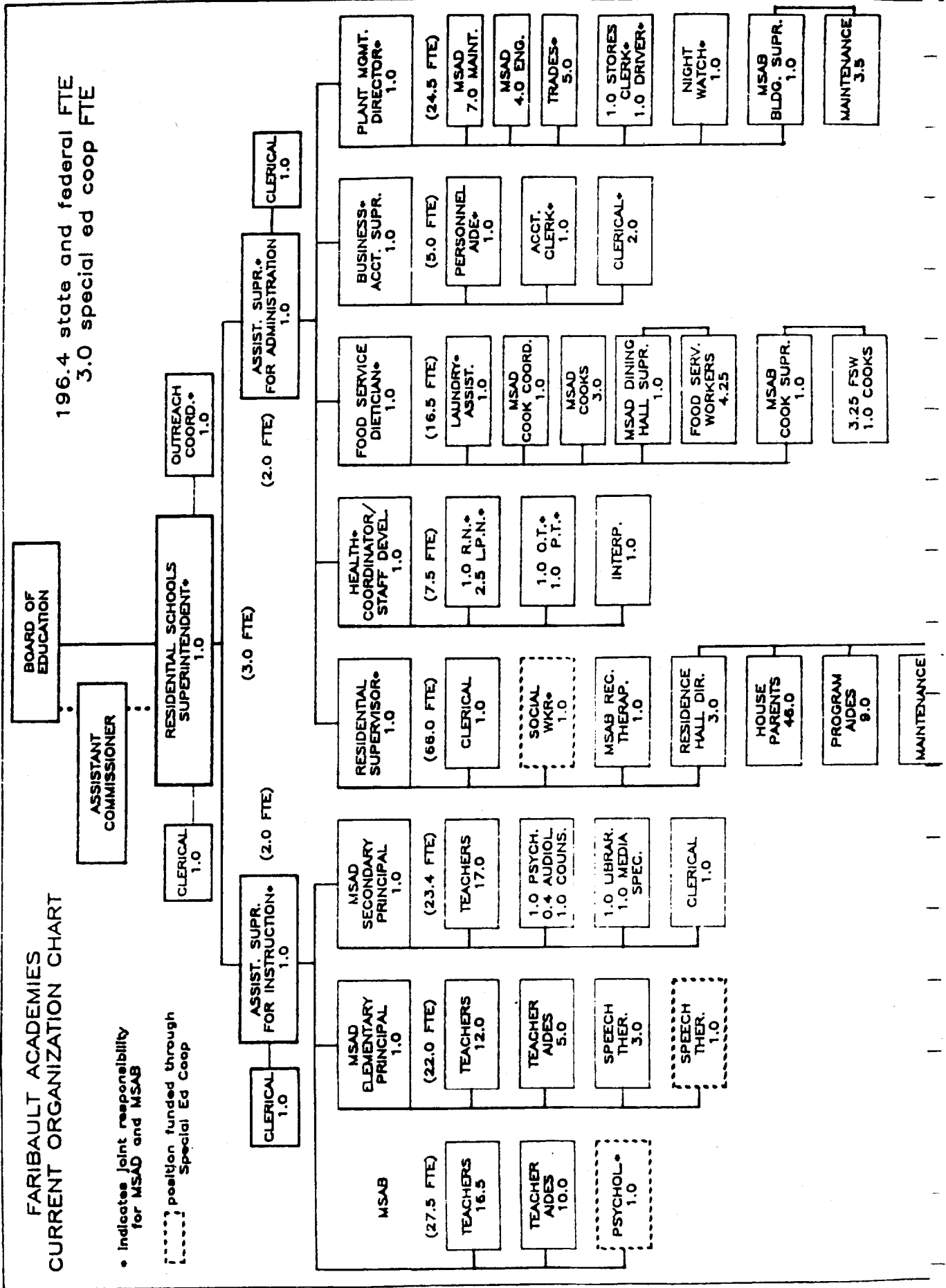
In the 1980's the Academies made further changes in the structure of their instructional and residential programs. In FY 1982, the Academies had four educational units: blind programs, deaf-elementary program, deaf-secondary program and deaf-vocational program. Each unit was led by a principal who reported to the superintendent. The deaf-secondary and vocational programs were combined under one principal in FY 1983. In FY 1984 an Assistant Superintendent for Instruction was appointed to oversee the three educational units. In FY 1983, the residential programs for both campuses were combined under one residential program supervisor.

### Current Organizational Structure

There are two basic components in the current organizational structure, instructional programs and shared support services. Each area has an assistant superintendent to oversee operations. The organization chart, found in Figure 3, is largely self explanatory, but several items should be noted:

- o The instructional programs on each campus are largely self-contained and operate independently of one another. While this is a logical and natural outcome of the differences in students and programming, it underscores the separateness of the two Academies.
- o The assistant superintendent for instruction (also known as Educational Administrator), supervises two principals at the Academy for the Deaf and also functions as a principal for the Academy for the Blind. As a result, the assistant superintendent has responsibility for directly

Figure 3



supervising all instructional staff at the Academy for the Blind (25 positions) in addition to providing leadership and coordination for the educational programs at both Academies.

- o The assistant superintendent for support services (also known as Program Coordinator) supervises five program areas: residential programs, health services, food service, plant management, and business services. Staff in these departments have similar programmatic responsibilities on both campuses. While most of these staff are permanently assigned to one campus, several split their time between the two Academies.
- o There are sixteen supervisory positions in the organization. There are no supervisory positions in the instructional program beyond the principal level and there are a limited number of supervisory positions in the support services program beyond the coordinator level. The residential program has three residence hall director positions to supervise the houseparents and program assistants. The food service and plant management supervisors have each established one supervisory/lead worker position to coordinate their operations at the campus for the Academy for the Blind.
- o Professionals with specialized expertise related to the instructional and residential programs are scattered throughout the organization:

	<u>Position</u>	<u>Reporting Relationship</u>
*1	Psychologist	Assistant Superintendent for Instruction
1	Psychologist	MSAD-Secondary Principal
1	Counselor	MSAD-Secondary Principal
*1	Social Worker	Residential Services Supervisor
.4	Audiologist	MSAD-Secondary Principal
4	Speech Pathologists	MSAD-Elementary Supervisor
1	Interpreter	Health Services Supervisor
*1	Occupational Therapist	Health Services Supervisor
*1	Physical Therapist	Health Services Supervisor
1	Recreational Therapist	Residential Services Supervisor
<u>12.4</u>		

\* indicates designated responsibility for students on both campuses

o The Academies have 14.1 authorized state and federal complement positions in addition to the 196.4 FTE shown in Figure 3. More than four of these additional complement (3.1 state and 1.0 federal) are unfunded for FY 86 due to legislative reductions in the Academies' and SDE's biennial budget. The salary savings accrued from other positions have been used to cover a variety of costs including substitute teacher and houseparent pay, pay for staffing extracurricular activities, overtime pay for maintenance activities such as snow removal, and partial funding for summer school programs and the special education cooperative fee. The Academies must make 8-10 further complement reductions in FY 87 to meet the reductions mandated by the legislature during the 1985 legislative session. In addition, the Academies may be required to make other staff cuts in response to a projected general fund shortfall.

o The Academies have been members of the Cannon Valley Special Education Cooperative since 1982. The coop employs specialists who serve as liaisons for students attending classes in the Faribault school district. In



addition, the Academies employ three full-time specialists through the cooperative, a psychologist, a speech therapist, and a social worker. These positions are shown on the organization chart as "Special Ed Coop FTE."

- o The Academies have reduced their complement through attrition by 32.6 FTE from FY 1982-FY 1986. Six FTE were supervisory or managerial and 26.6 were line employees. (See Figure 4.)
- o At the same time the 32.6 FTE were deleted, the Academies converted other existing FTE to positions with specialized skills that support the instructional and residential programs. A counselor, psychologist, physical therapist, occupational therapist, interpreter and four speech therapists have been added to the staff.

### Recommended Organizational Structure

Changes in the organizational structure of the Academies will facilitate programming for students. A recommended organizational structure for the Academies, shown in Figure 5, modifies reporting relationships and changes functional responsibilities in several cases. It does not affect the total number of FTE in the organization, but it does significantly alter the scope of several positions. The recommended structure provides four basic units, all reporting to the superintendent:

- an instructional unit for MSAD
- an instructional unit for MSAB
- a program unit for clinical services, residential programs, and outreach activities.

FIGURE 4

FARIBAUT ACADEMIES  
STAFF REDUCTIONS FY82-87

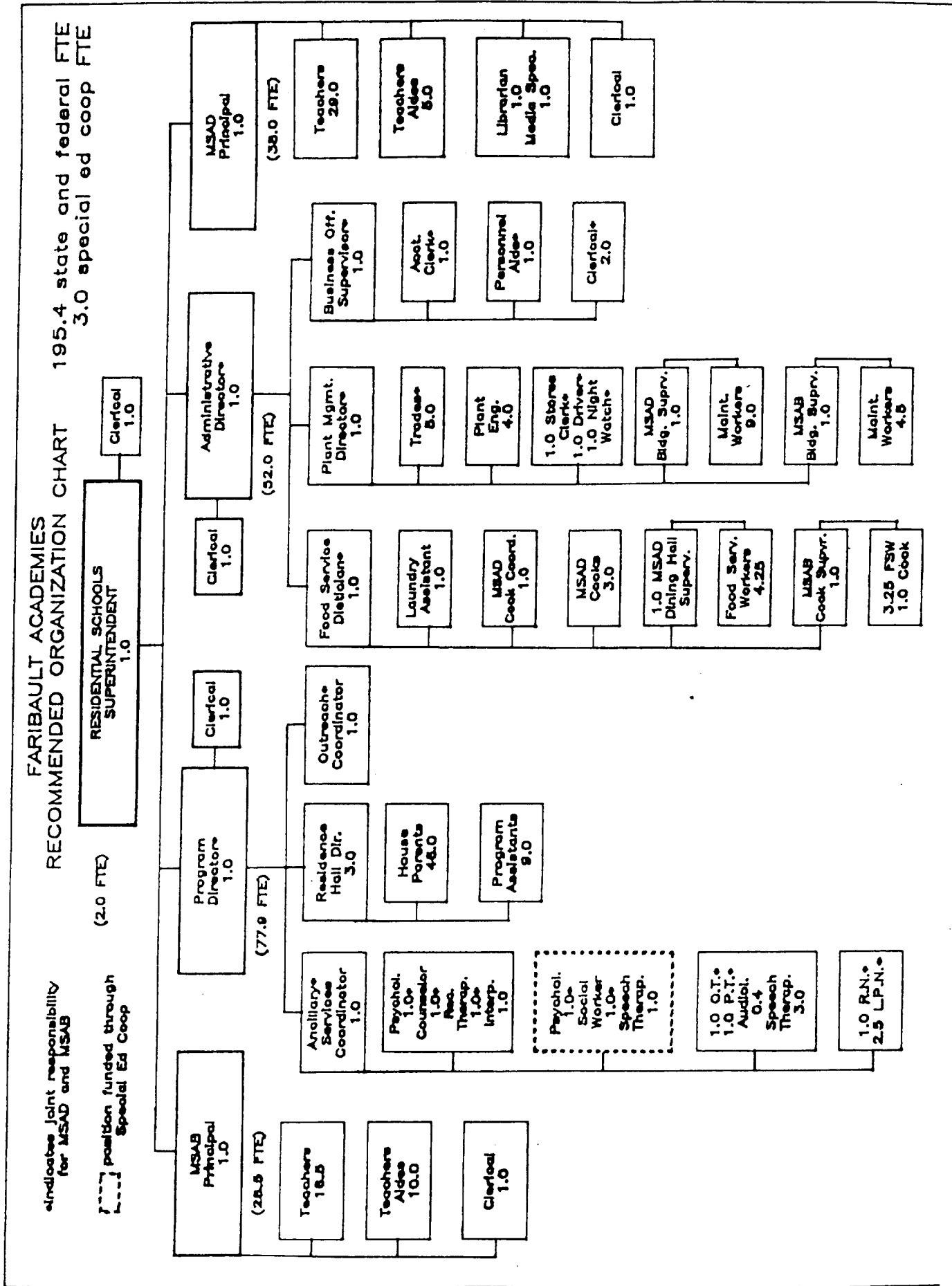
	FY82	FY83	FY84	FY85	FY86**	TOTAL	CURRENT STATE AND FEDERAL FTE***
MANAGEMENT STAFF						0.0	3.0
INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF							
Principals		1.0			1.0	2.0	
Teachers	2.0		2.0		2.5	6.5	
						8.5	69.9
HEALTH STAFF						0.0	7.5
RESIDENTIAL STAFF							
Residence Hall Directors	1.0					1.0	
Houseparents			1.0	2.0	1.5	4.5	
Program Assistants					1.0	1.0	
Social Worker			1.0			1.0	
Child care Supervisor	1.0					1.0	
						8.5	65.0
FOOD SERVICE STAFF							
Cook	1.5					1.5	
Food Service Worker	1.0	1.5			0.5	3.0	
Sewing Machine Operator	1.0					1.0	
						5.5	16.5
PLANT MANAGEMENT STAFF							
Building Supervisor				1.0		1.0	
Maintenance Workers	2.0	0.5	1.1			3.6	
Delivery Van Driver					1.0	1.0	
Tradespeople			1.0			1.0	
Plant Engineers		1.0			1.0	2.0	
						8.6	24.5
BUSINESS STAFF							
Business Manager			1.0			1.0	5.0
CLERICAL STAFF*	0.5					0.5	5.0
Total	10.0	4.0	7.1	3.0	8.5	32.6	196.4
supervisory positions	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	6.0	16.0
line positions	8.0	3.0	6.1	2.0	7.5	26.6	180.4

\* all clerical positions for the two Academies are shown in this category

\*\* the Academies will make 8-10 further reductions to meet the cuts required by the budget enacted during the 1985 legislative session

\*\*\*the Academies also employ 3 FTE through the Cannon Valley Special Education Cooperative

Figure 5



- and an administrative unit for food service, plant management, and business services

The following explanations will assist the reader in understanding the recommended structure:

- o The position of assistant superintendent for instruction is eliminated. Overall coordination of the instructional programs at the two academies would be the responsibility of the superintendent, and directing the instructional programs at each academy becomes the responsibility of the principal for each Academy. This change flattens the organization by eliminating one level of management in the instructional programs.
- o A position of principal for the Academy for the Blind is reestablished while the positions of principal for the deaf elementary program and principal for the deaf secondary program are combined. This change will provide a single focal point for instructional programs at each Academy. While the number of instructional staff reporting to each principal will be disproportionate, (27.5 at MSAB and 36.0 at MSAD), the number of programmatic areas is more balanced:

<u>Programs at MSAB</u>	<u>Programs at MSAD</u>
Blind - graded	Deaf elementary-graded
Blind multi-handicapped - graded	Deaf secondary-graded
Blind multi-handicapped - ungraded	Deaf vocational-graded
Deaf multi-handicapped - ungraded	Deaf-ungraded
Deaf-blind - ungraded	

- o The position of assistant superintendent for administration is eliminated. In its place, two lower level positions are created; a program director to oversee the residential staff, clinical specialists, and outreach staff, and an administrative director to lead the business office, food service and plant management. These changes consolidate similar functions under one supervisor or manager.
  
- o The program director directly supervises five positions; these are the three residence hall directors, the outreach coordinator, and a new position of ancillary services coordinator. The existing positions of residential supervisor and health coordinator are eliminated. The program director should function as a single focal point for all non-instructional programs and services for students. It is expected that the program director would work closely with the principals on each campus to integrate classroom and dormitory activities.
  
- o The clinical specialists from the existing instructional, residential and health units are consolidated into one structural unit reporting to a ancillary services coordinator. These specialists provide assessment services, rehabilitative services, and health care for students on both campuses. They also support development and implementation development of the individualized education plan (IEP). Efforts to integrate the residential and instructional programs should be facilitated by creating this group of specialists whose purpose is to support and bridge both segments of student activity.

- o The residence hall directors, along with the houseparents and program assistants they supervise, report to the new position of program director. This placement should facilitate interaction with the clinical specialists and strengthen the residential program.
  
- o The outreach coordinator reports to the new position of program director. Outreach activities, as currently envisioned, rely heavily on the instructional, residential, and clinical specialists. Placement within the program unit will provide the most direct access to these staff groups.
  
- o The business office, food service and plant management supervisors report to the new position of administrative director.
  
- o There are several modifications in the plant management function. The four dormitory maintenance staff are moved from residential programs to plant management. A building supervisor position is created for the MSAD Campus to mirror the maintenance group on the MSAB Campus. A lead worker position is created for the trades positions, while the stores clerk, driver, night watchman, and plant engineers continue to report directly to the plant management supervisor. This reduces the number of people reporting directly to the plant management supervisor from a current level of twenty-two FTE down to twelve FTE. When the planned elimination of four plant engineer positions occurs, that number will be reduced to eight FTE.

## OPERATIONAL ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As described earlier, extensive staff interviews were conducted for this study. While their primary focus was on the structure of the organization, several operational concerns were noted. The concerns fall into six broad categories: IEP coordination, staff interaction regarding students, class scheduling and budgeting, internal communication, performance feedback and professional development, and leadership and long-range planning.

### A. Coordinating the Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

IEP's are central to the education of all handicapped children, including those who are sensory impaired. The IEP is a written statement of a child's educational plan that is developed by a public agency with consultation and approval by the child's parents. The IEP must contain a description of the child's present level of performance, the objectives of his/her educational program, a description of the specific services to be provided for the child, and objective criteria for determining when the educational goals have been met. It is to be reviewed annually to ensure its accuracy and appropriateness for the child.

### Findings:

- o IEP development is seen as very time consuming by many staff. Some view the time commitment and paperwork as a burden, but staff generally acknowledge the need for accurate IEP's and careful attention to the process.

- o Each teacher, clinical specialist (e.g., occupational therapist, physical therapist) and houseparent develops their own IEP or IEP component for each child.
  
- o The student's primary teacher is designated as his/her case manager. While separate IEP's or IEP components are to be coordinated by the case manager, staff reported there is no central place for developing IEP's. They see a need for collaboration between the various staff groups writing separate IEP's for the same child.
  
- o Staff reported that guidelines for developing and writing IEP's seem to change continually.

**Recommendations:**

IEP development should be centralized so that all aspects of a child's educational program (classroom instruction, residential activities and various therapies) are coordinated. Specifically:

- o The IEP should be developed and written by a team consisting of the teachers, education assistants, houseparents, and clinical specialists involved with each child. This is required by special education rules and regulations.
  
- o One central point in the organization should have the responsibility for facilitating and coordinating IEP development to insure the team approach is implemented. Under the recommended structure in Figure 5, this would be the responsibility of the ancillary services coordinator.



- o The coordinator should be knowledgeable about trends or changes concerning IEP development and should coordinate inservice training for all staff on IEP writing.

**B. Staff Interaction Regarding Students**

The Faribault Academies provide programming on a 24-hour basis utilizing several groups of staff with specialized expertise. To provide an integrated program for students it is important that staff have the opportunity to share information with each other about the needs and progress of students.

**Findings:**

- o There is little opportunity for teaching and residential staff to share information and discuss student progress because their working hours do not overlap. Teachers do not participate in dorm life and houseparents are not involved with classroom activities.
- o Staff reported that teachers and houseparents may meet during the IEP development process, but there are no scheduled or periodic meetings between the staff groups.
- o Staff report that they usually talk only when a student is having a problem. Communication about students is frequently handled by leaving notes in mail boxes rather than by discussing issues face to face.

- o Staff perceive a division between instructional and residential programs and staff. While a desire to change this situation was cited more frequently by the residential staff, both teachers and houseparents feel there is a strong need to interact more frequently.

**Recommendations:**

Management at the Academies should create mechanisms that will encourage interaction between the teaching, houseparent and clinical staff, and will integrate academic and residential programming. Specifically:

- o Meetings between teaching staff, residential staff, and clinical specialists should be scheduled as part of the team approach to IEP development.
- o The above staff groups should also meet periodically throughout the school year to allow an integrated discussion on student status or progress to take place.
- o The schedules of teaching staff and residential staff should overlap for some portion of the school year to allow each group to participate in both aspects of student life. For example, residential staff could periodically rotate their schedules to allow one or two hours of time to observe classroom activities.

**C. Scheduling and Budgeting for Classroom Activities**

Several of the operational concerns of the teaching staff centered on scheduling and budgeting. The staff see this

area as critically affecting their ability to manage effectively and to provide quality programming to students.

**Findings:**

- o Some of the academic staff reported they do not know what classes they will be teaching until they arrive back on campus after a holiday or summer break. This prevents them from preparing lesson plans or conducting background research during the summer break. Teaching staff stated such advance preparation does occur when teaching assignments are known.
  
- o Academic staff also reported that advance knowledge of teaching assignments would allow early decisions on ordering instructional materials and special supplies. Orders made in May or June are then available for classes in September. Orders made in September may not arrive until the end of the fall semester long after they are needed for classroom activities.
  
- o Teachers reported they do not know how much they can spend, if anything, for supplies, equipment, and instructional materials. This contributes to a feeling that teachers are not given the tools they need to manage effectively.
  
- o The school counselor at MSAD is responsible for scheduling students and classes. This activity consumes the majority of his time in the spring semester and requires intense activity early in the fall semester as well.

## **Recommendations:**

The Academies should revise their procedure and time table for class scheduling and budgeting.

- o Teacher assignments should be made in the spring for the following school year to allow teachers to prepare lesson plans and order supplies before the school year begins, if possible.
- o Management should allocate supply, equipment, and materials dollars for instructional programs. Teachers should then be given a budget and the authority to manage their costs within that budget.
- o The responsibility for scheduling students and classes should be transferred from the school counselor to the instructional administrators. The counselor is a clinical specialist whose skills should be fully utilized in direct contact with students.

## **D. Internal Communication**

All organizations rely on formal and informal channels of communication to convey information about management decisions and events that affect the members of the organization. This type of communication is also problematic for most organizations. The Academies are no different in this respect. While the concerns cited are not unique to the Academies, they should take steps to address them. Administrative communication is closely related to concerns about staff interaction. Readers are encouraged to keep those

findings and recommendations in mind when reviewing this section.

**Findings:**

- o Staff reported that they do not receive formal communication from management in a timely fashion (e.g., inadequate notice of parent-teacher meetings, little information regarding management decisions affecting operation, incomplete description of outreach activities)
- o Staff perceive that when meetings are held, they are called to deal with a problem or crisis after it has happened rather than to discuss how to prevent the problem from occurring.

**Recommendations:**

The Academies should work to improve internal communication channels. Specifically:

- o Supervisors and managers should establish a mechanism to convey information about management decisions and activities in a consistent and timely manner. Regularly scheduled staff meetings or staff newsletters are two possibilities.
- o The Academies should develop forums which provide an opportunity for staff to discuss operational concerns with management personnel. Supervisory and line employees should jointly develop action plans to address those concerns.

## **E. Performance Feedback and Professional Development**

Many of the staff at the Academies work very independently and with little day-to-day supervision. This is particularly true for the instructional staff and clinical specialists. While this is expected in an educational environment with highly professional staff, it can also make meaningful performance assessment and feedback difficult to achieve.

### **Findings:**

- o Most of the staff do not meet with their supervisor on a regular basis to discuss work plans and activities. (Notable exceptions to this process include the Food Service Units where weekly meetings are held to discuss staff needs and monthly feedback sessions are conducted with students.) Virtually all staff, however, feel their supervisor is accessible when a specific problem arises.
- o Most staff receive feedback on their performance only once a year at their annual performance review. They also stated more frequent feedback, both positive and negative, is needed to help them assess and improve their skills.
- o Instructional staff reported that classroom observation by the principals is minimal. Some teaching staff also questioned the ability of the educational supervisors and managers to evaluate their specialized skills.
- o The instructional, residential, and clinical staff rarely meet with their colleagues to share professional

experiences and related information. Any such sharing is accomplished on an informal and irregular basis. Inflexible work schedules were frequently cited as a barrier to this type of staff interaction.

- o The Academies are currently implementing an intensive effort to assess and develop the communication skills of their employees. The health coordinator has been given the responsibility to carry out this program and spends the majority of her time overseeing the effort. Most of the staff are also involved in the program by providing or receiving training in communication skills.
  
- o The instructional and clinical staff periodically participate in conferences, seminars, and workshops for special education professionals, but there does not appear to be an overall staff development plan for such activities. The State Board has requested that a staff development plan be prepared before the end of the 1985-86 school year.

**Recommendations:**

The Academies should reassess their performance cycle and develop a plan to meet the professional needs of their employees.

Specifically:

- o The instructional, residential, and clinical staff need to expand their opportunities for performance feedback beyond the traditional annual performance review. Any or all of the following methods could be used successfully:

- implement semi-annual or quarterly performance feedback review between the employee and his/her supervisor
  - establish a program of peer review and observation to supplement the supervisory assessments of performance
  - invite special education professionals across the state to observe instructional and residential programs and to review staff accomplishments
  - pursue internships and staff exchanges with special education programs at secondary and post-secondary facilities
- o The Academies should establish a comprehensive staff development plan for all staff groups, including the residential, instructional, and clinical staff. The Cannon Valley Special Education Cooperative could play an active role in the development and implementation of such a plan. While the Cooperative and the staff are in the best position to determine staff needs and establish specific components of the plan, interviews for this study indicated the following elements should be included:
- structured or scheduled opportunities for staff to share their knowledge and experience with each other
  - incentives (including allocation of time and budgetary resources) for continuing education



- continued and increased participation in the existing networks of special education professionals

F. Leadership and Long-range Planning

The Academies have been almost continuously examined and monitored over the last few years. While the studies have prompted many positive changes at the Academies, they have also been very stressful to the organization. This stress, along with declines in enrollment, leadership changes at the state level, and continued questions about the roles of residential schools in the special education service continuum, has placed the Academies in a reactive mode of operation.

Findings:

- o Though the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142), was enacted ten years ago, public agencies are still struggling to carry out its mandate to provide services to handicapped children in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Courts and hearing examiners nation-wide continue to challenge the states' interpretation of LRE and the role of residential programs. All residential schools will continue to adjust their programs and operations in light of the growing body of case law relating to this issue.
- o The Academies have experienced several changes in oversight and leadership.

In 1976, they were transferred from the Department of Public Welfare to the State Board of Education. From 1976 to 1984, the State Department of Education (SDE) assumed supervisory responsibility for the Academies. In 1984 the State Board of Education took a more active role and began functioning somewhat like a local school board with respect to the management and administration of the schools. As a result, oversight at the state level is now split between the Board and an administrative position within SDE. The reporting relationship at SDE has changed several times within the last four years, the most recent change occurring in September 1985. The current superintendent is resigning at the end of FY 1986 and a search for a replacement is currently underway.

- o Several professionals consulted during this study cited a need for strong leadership at the Academies. They feel top management need special education credentials and recent hands-on experience to effectively lead programs.
- o The Academies receive conflicting messages regarding outreach or marketing activities.

In 1984, the Academies established a position devoted to outreach. This reflected a decision by management to become more active in the area of public information and public relations. At the same time, the Governor was urging the Academies to increase their marketing efforts. In 1985, the Academies developed a marketing plan with broad time frames and performance objectives.

While these activities indicate support for outreach, some educational professionals see marketing closely allied with direct recruiting of students. Since they feel recruitment for a residential program is directly contrary to the purpose and spirit of Public Law 94-142, they question the motivation of the outreach activities in general.

**Recommendations:**

The Academies need consistent leadership and effective long-range planning. Specifically:

- o The position of superintendent should be filled by a professional with recent administrative experience in special education programs.
- o The process used to select the new superintendent should provide opportunities for input by staff at the Academies and special education professionals.
- o Oversight roles and reporting relationships between the State Board, SDE and the Academies should be clarified and stabilized. (The governance of the Academies is a subject of a separate section of this study.)
- o The Board, SDE, and the Academies should jointly develop a mission statement and set long-range goals (3 to 5 years) for programs. The Academies should then develop a long-range plan to reach those objectives with annual updates to reflect changing needs.

o As one part of the long-range plan, the Academies should develop an outreach or marketing program that can be actively supported and defended by SDE professionals and the Board. The existing outreach plan will serve as a strong basis for initiating this discussion.

## FUTURE OPTIONS FOR THE ACADEMIES

Educational professionals consulted during this study expressed widely divergent views on the future of the Academies. While all parties agree there is, and there will continue to be, a need for residential programs for the sensory impaired and other handicapped children, they do not agree about the type of student that is best served by that educational environment. This section of the report proposes two options which reflect different views about the populations to be served by the Academies.

### OPTION ONE - Consolidated Services for Multiply Handicapped Children

Some educational professionals assume that implementation of Public Law 94-142 will require public agencies to increase the level of service provided to all handicapped students in their home districts and would therefore limit the number of students who will need a residential placement. They assume students requiring a residential placement will typically be multi-handicapped. They also see similarity in many of the educational needs of multi-handicapped children with and without sensory impairments.

At this time it is difficult to predict whether this view will prevail. It does, however, raise important questions that should be addressed by the two state agencies that provide residential programs for multi-handicapped children, the State Department of Education (SDE) and the Department of Human Services (DHS). In addition to the programs at MSAB, the State

provides educational programs for multiply-handicapped children at six state hospitals (Brainerd, Cambridge, Faribault, Fergus Falls, St. Peter, and Willmar) and the Minnesota Learning Center. Total enrollment in these programs is shown in Figure 6.

At the state hospitals, the number of students in each program is small and is expected to decrease under the mandates for deinstitutionalization and the stipulation in the Welch vs. Levine Consent Decree. Each site incurs costs for similar educational and residential services, related support services, and administration. Such repetition raises questions about the ability to provide comprehensive service at each site and to make optimal use of facilities. As the number of handicapped children requiring residential placements in hospitals decreases, it will become more difficult to both maintain quality of service and contain the cost of these services.

The use of federal funds to support program costs should also be examined. The state hospital programs receive Title XIX Medicaid funds to support their residential program costs. The Academies have not sought Medicaid reimbursement for any of their students although some children may be eligible under the definition of mental retardation used by the state hospitals. Administrations at both DHS and SDE indicated this issue has been raised in the past but it has never been seriously discussed. It should be noted that the MSAB would have to be certified as an intermediate care facility/mentally retarded (ICF/MR) in order to claim Medicaid reimbursement for any of its students. While this raises significant legal questions with respect to the Welch vs. Levine stipulation and the state-wide moratorium on establishing ICF/MR beds, the issue deserves exploration and resolution.

FIGURE 6

MULTIPLY-HANDICAPPED SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN  
 IN SDE AND DHS PROGRAMS  
 1985

	NUMBER
	-----
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	
MSAB	40
	-----
Total	40
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES	
Brainerd	22
Cambridge	23
Faribault	19
Fergus Falls	25
St. Peter	13
Willmar	6
Learning Center	15
	-----
Total	123
COMBINED TOTAL	163

## Recommendations:

The time and expertise required to fully address these issues are beyond the scope of this report. It is recommended that the State Board of Education, SDE and DHS create a joint task force to examine the implications for consolidating the educational programs for the multiply-handicapped at MSAB and the state hospitals. The task force should also determine what action is necessary to obtain Medicaid reimbursement for any eligible children at the Academies.

The task force should be headed by the Special Education Director at SDE and the Director of Mental Retardation Services at DHS. Membership should include the superintendent of the Faribault Academies, a director of a state hospital, and a director of a special education cooperative service unit serving a state hospital. Interest groups such as the Advisory Council to the Academies and the Council for the Handicapped could also serve as resources to the task force.

The task force should report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature by January 1987.

## OPTION TWO - Expanded Services for the Sensory Impaired

All educational professionals see a need for a residential facility for some sensory impaired children. Many also see a need for additional services that are not now being provided by the Academies. In contrast to the placements typically made at the Academies, these activities are all shorter term and would provide services to sensory impaired individuals or their parents who would otherwise not come in contact with the



Academies. While most of these services could be provided by other public or private organizations, the concentration of special education professionals at the Academies and the physical facilities themselves make the Academies a natural focal point. All of these services have been identified by the Academies and are currently part of their long-range marketing plan:

- o Short-term classes for sensory impaired children in sign language, orientation and mobility, and braille.
- o Expanded summer school programs for different age groups of sensory impaired children and adults, e.g., pre-school, adolescents, senior citizens.
- o Weekend workshops for sensory impaired children and their parents.
- o Conferences and workshops for parents of sensory impaired children on topics such as deaf and blind awareness, parenting sensory impaired children, and parent rights in obtaining special education for their child.
- o Resource and consultation services to local school districts including assessments, support service consultation, and referral services.
- o Comprehensive assessment center providing educational, psychological, vision, audiological, achievement and sociological evaluation of sensory impaired children.

Any or all of these services could be implemented at the Academies. Some, such as the resource service to local districts and a parent-child institute weekend, are presently being

carried out with existing staff and budget. Others, particularly the assessment center, would require additional funding or, modifications to existing facilities. The demand or need for these services is unclear and difficult to accurately predict.

**Recommendation:**

The State Board of Education and the Department of Education should determine if offering these services is consistent with their vision for the Academies. If so, it is recommended that these additional services should be financed through fees to participants or by billing a home school district for the service provided.

## APPENDIX A

Laws of Minnesota for 1985, Chapter 240, Section 8:

### MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE REPORT.

The state planning agency shall coordinate a study with the management analysis unit of the department of administration, the department of finance, the department of employee relations and the department of education of issues related to the academies. The study shall include but not be limited to the following:

- (1) the management organization structure;
- (2) the governance;
- (3) financing methods;
- (4) ratios;
- (5) student assessments;
- (6) admission and discharge criteria.

The state planning agency shall report to the senate and house education committees, the senate finance committee, and the house appropriations committee by January 1, 1986. The agency shall report to those committees by October 1, 1985, with a progress report. The actual cost of the study must be paid by the academies.

