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Bureau of Special Education FY'08 Memo #27

DATE: February 22, 2008

TO: Superintendents of Schools
Special Education Directors

FROM: Lyonel B. Tracy
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Santina Thibedeau. State Director of Special Education
Administrator, Bureau of Special Education
NH Department of Education/Bureau of Special Education

RE: New Hampshire Vision/Hearing Network

As announced in NH DOE numbered memorandum #17 (11/20/2007), the NH Vision/Hearing Network is being redesigned, effective July 1, 2008. The overarching goal of the new program model design is to establish and maintain a central resource hub for districts and students in locating and providing key services needed by students with low incidence disabilities of low vision, blindness, hearing impairment, deafness, or deaf/blindness. The project will strive to support New Hampshire schools to implement best practices in vision education and deaf education in order to maximize positive outcomes for students with vision and/or hearing loss.

To that end, specific project goals have been established. The contract with the New Hampshire Department of Education will fund the project to:

1. Maintain an effective network to ensure collaboration among programs, agencies, and service providers.
2. Assist school districts in identifying students' needs and the appropriate providers for those services.
3. Provide introductory professional development and training for teachers, other school personnel, parents and other family members.
4. Operate a statewide Instructional Materials Center that will provide:
 - a. Support for the cost-effective purchase of low vision equipment, FM systems, and large print/Braille instructional materials.
 - b. Short term, emergency loan of available vision and hearing related assistive technology.
 - c. Loans of available large print/Braille books and related materials.
 - d. Assistance in identifying where districts can borrow or purchase needed large print and Braille materials for their students with vision loss.
 - e. National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) authorized user for the State of New Hampshire.

5. Provide administrative support of the statewide sensory impairment program, to include completion of the American Printing House for the Blind annual census and the Deaf/blind annual census.

In addition, in order to assure a smooth transition to this new model, the Department of Education will be monitoring the process to ensure positive educational outcomes for these students.

Educational consultation services that are currently being provided by the NH Vision Hearing Network (NHVHN) will continue to be available to school districts. However, the cost for these services will be the responsibility of the school district. Statewide consultants will be available to provide training and consultation to support the implementation of best practices at the school level for students with vision and/or hearing loss. Within the next few weeks, NHVHN will provide districts with detailed information about educational consulting and training services that will be available, including the costs associated with those services.

For further information, please contact Santina Thibedeau, Administrator of the Bureau of Special Education at the NH DOE at 271-6693 or Cate Weir, Director of the NH Vision/Hearing Network at 226-2900 x109.

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