

Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind

**Progress Report
2003**

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A. Financial Stability

Probably my greatest accomplishment in the 1 ½ years as superintendent of ISDB has been the fact that while public schools, state agencies, and postsecondary educational institutions have laid off employees and cut services, ISDB has avoided having to lay off employees and eliminate educational services. On the contrary, ISDB has been able to attract new, outstanding employees, expand its services and initiate new programs – while staying within the budget provided by the state.

This was made possible by two steps:

1. Convincing the SBE, Governor Kempthorne, and members of the JFAC, that ISDB should be recognized as a school for budgeting purposes and not as a state agency. If ISDB had been treated as a state agency during this fiscal crisis employees would have been laid off and educational services to the unique students we serve, their parents, and school districts throughout Idaho would have been reduced.
2. Keeping vacant positions unfilled so that any cuts to the budget would be accomplished by eliminating vacant positions, and not people currently employed at ISDB.

During this fiscal crisis, ISDB also had to overcome the illness and subsequent death of two individuals in the Finance Department, including our long-time Director of Finance, Mr. Gene Peterson. Despite the loss of two of our cherished employees, ISDB has managed to continue moving forward, initiating change while maintaining financial stability. Financial stability is the most important accomplishment of this administration, an accomplishment that has made it possible to implement new programs and policies that make ISDB a much stronger educational institution and one that is doing a better job of meeting the needs of deaf, hard of hearing, blind and visually impaired students, their parents, and local school districts throughout Idaho.

B. Campus Safety

Improving the safety of our campus, students and staff has been a primary goal of my tenure as superintendent, especially in light of the events of 9/11 and the war in Iraq. ISDB has taken the followed steps to improve campus safety:

1. Installed a light on the track field so that morning and evening joggers – students, staff, and community people – can see and feel safe.
2. Closed the campus to pedestrians from 11 pm to 7 am to prevent people from using our campus for drinking and loitering. This also allowed the Gooding police to question anyone on campus during these hours.

3. Moved an office specialist in the administration office to the front of the office, allowing the office specialist to see whomever is coming into the building and insuring that they sign-in upon entering. Before this step was taken individuals were coming into ISDB and walking throughout the building, including some undesirable people.
4. Purchased an inexpensive one-way pager system so that hearing and deaf employees could be alerted of an emergency immediately. Before this step, emergency notices were made over the intercom and hearing employees would look for employees who were deaf and relay the message. This is no longer necessary.
5. Invited the SWAT team to make a presentation to our students and staff so that everyone is now familiar with how the SWAT team operates and procedures to follow.
6. Developed a new Emergency Procedures Manual (copy attached) and installed plastic file holders near the doors to hold the Manual and other needed information in case of an emergency.
7. Designated four safety areas on campus to make it easier for administrators to check on students and staff in case of an emergency.
8. Installed plastic covers on all fire alarms to prevent small children from accidentally pulling the alarms.
9. Upgraded our fire alarm system throughout the main campus.

C. Parents Advisory Board

I strongly believe that ISDB needs to work with parents and involve them in the educational process. By doing so ISDB can better meet the needs of our students, their parents, and make ISDB a much stronger and responsive educational institution. In November 2002, I re-established the ISDB Parents Advisory Board (PAB). The PAB has met twice and made excellent recommendations to ISDB for improvement in our delivery of educational services. Some of the recommendations the PAB made, which ISDB adopted, are as follows:

1. Creation of a website so that parents can obtain information about laws pertaining to their children and other relevant information. This site will also contain a questionnaire for individuals to make suggestions for improvements which will be sent to all PAB members, as well as myself as superintendent. Stakeholders may also submit questions that the PAB and/or ISDB administration will answer and be stored in an FAQ. Although this website is still in the process of being completed, you may view the site (still in the development stages) at the following site: www.deafschoools.net/PAB.
2. Public forums were held throughout the seven regions served by ISDB to obtain information from stakeholders about the State of Idaho's services to deaf, hard of hearing, blind and visually impaired students. These public forums were held in the months of February and March and yielded valuable information. I attended

six out seven regional forums and had the opportunity to listen to stakeholders' recommendations and familiarize them with ISDB's services. ISDB will be reviewing the recommendations/concerns and taking whatever steps are necessary to help meet the requests of our stakeholders.

It must be noted that one of the concerns expressed by stakeholders was the difficulty in obtaining much needed information and learning sign language due to the distance from ISDB and limited services from ISDB's outreach staff. Every single stakeholder was very excited about the forthcoming OptiSchool and lesson modules that ISDB plans to deliver to rural areas via the Digital Instruction Support Center (DISC).

3. Face to face meetings with ISDB administrators to review concerns and recommendations for improvements. We have accepted this recommendation and all administrators attended the latest PAB meeting on April 5th to discuss the concerns and recommendations addressed by stakeholders during the PAB open forums.
4. Increased library resources by creating a section in the library reserved just for parents. We have ordered books and other materials at the request of parents that will be available in the new "Parents Library."

D. ISDB Educational Interpreter Sign Communication Assessment Council (IEISCAC)

One of the needs expressed by stakeholders in the education of deaf and hard of hearing children was the need to improve the skills of educational interpreters throughout Idaho. Research shows there is a direct relationship between educational interpreters interpreting skills and the academic achievements of deaf/hard of hearing. With implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, which requires all children to meet educational proficiency standards by the year 2012, the need to improve the skills of educational interpreters throughout Idaho has become even more critical. To meet this need, ISDB submitted a proposal to the State Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education (BSE), for ISDB to take the lead in testing and training educational interpreters throughout Idaho. With Dr. Marilyn Howard's full support, in March of 2003 ISDB received a \$120,000 contract from the BSE to test and train 80 educational interpreters over the next three years.

On March 28, 29, and 30, 2003, the first cohort of 30 interpreters was tested. We expect to receive the results of these tests in May. The results of the test will be used to develop appropriate training for these educational interpreters this summer and throughout the year. We are very excited about this project especially because it is a joint effort between ISDB, BSE, ISU, the Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and the Idaho Registry of Interpreter for the Deaf.

E. Braille Transcription Center

Several years ago, the private prison in Boise, operated by the Corrections Corp, established a Braille Transcription Center (BTC) with the assistance of the Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ICBVI). The BTC produces Braille books and other materials for the blind and visually impaired students not only at ISDB's main campus but also throughout Idaho.

When Dr. Paul Ajuwon, our Director of Blind/VI Programs, and myself visited the BTC we were appalled to learn that the BTC was using a Braille embosser and P166 computers that were old and inadequate. ISDB purchased a new state of the art Braille embosser that will be loaned to the BTC. The ISDB Foundation donated \$5,000 for the purchase of new computers to be loaned to the BTC. The ICBVI will be providing the software for Braille encoding.

As a result of the equipment ISDB is loaning the Braille Transcription Center, the Center will be able to do ten times, or more, the amount of work they are currently producing. The BTC will save ISDB over \$70,000 a year. First, we do not have to hire a certified individual to operate the new Braille embosser (saving approximately \$40,000 in salary and benefits) and secondly, ISDB will not need to send Braille transcription requests out-of-state (saving approximately \$30,000 per year). The savings will be experienced not just by ISDB but other public schools as the Braille books and materials produced at the Center are for ALL blind and visually impaired students at ISDB AND public schools throughout Idaho.

This is another excellent example of how ISDB continues to work with other agencies (ICBVI, Corrections Corp, ISDB Foundation) during these difficult fiscal times to make things happen and improve the delivery of educational services to our students.

F. Collaborative Effort with ISU Audiology Department

Another concern raised by stakeholders is related to the lack of coordination and availability of audiological services in Idaho. It is well documented that those public schools with an audiologists have a higher detection rate of students with a hearing loss than those public schools that do not have an audiologist. ISDB will be working with the Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Bureau of Special Education, and ISU's Audiology Department to meet this need.

Although we are still in the "draft" stage, we expect the following steps to be taken: (1) ISDB will provide the coordination and expertise via our audiologist on campus, (2) ISU will provide ISDB with a Clinical Year Practicum student to allow our audiologist to pursue this new responsibility while meeting the needs of our students on campus, and (3) the cost of this program will be shared by ISDB, CDHH, and BSE. This is just another example of how ISDB is working with other agencies to improve the delivery of services to the unique student population we serve.

G. Cottage Program

Prior to becoming superintendent, the after-school program resembled a country club, where most of the time students played, and played and played. Students were required to study only thirty minutes each evening. Three major steps were taken to change this country club atmosphere into an educational experience for our students:

1. Two-hour study time. A policy was initiated requiring a minimum of two hours study time each evening. This was not a popular policy to enact and several students met with me threatening to transfer to another school. I offered to help them transfer. Today this is an accepted policy at the school and students are studying more today than ever.
2. Homework Academy (HA). Last year we implemented a Homework Academy where students could receive assistance with their homework from three to five-thirty, Monday through Thursday. Most of the students who attended HA originally were required to attend since they did not complete their homework. Today, the vast majority of students attending the HA do so because they want to be there, they want the homework assistance provided by the HA staff. Again, we were able to meet this need by staying within ISDB's budget.
3. Electives Program. Several cottage supervisors, including the Director of Student Services and Dean of Students, visited the Washington School for the Deaf and observed their outstanding elective programs whereby students can partake of different educational activities after school. With this first-hand knowledge, the cottage staff implemented an electives program at ISDB which has proven to be very successful. The elective program has proven to be even more successful for our blind and visually impaired students who typically do not participate in athletic activities. These students now can participate in piano instructions, bowling, and other educational events that were not available to them.

H. A Stronger Blind/VI Program

Prior to my arrival as superintendent, the Deaf/HOH program received more financial assistance and support than the Blind/VI program. Several steps have been taken to make the distribution of resources more equitable:

1. Additional financial support for Blind/VI staff. Whereas staff working with deaf and hard of hearing students can attend local postsecondary institutions in Idaho for additional education in their field of expertise, at \$5 per credit hour, this option was not available to staff who work with blind/visually impaired. Additionally, each year ISDB helped sponsor the ISSI program at ISU with a contribution of \$32,500. This sponsorship enable ISU to host the program and allow ten teachers in the area of education of the deaf or interpreters, to attend

- ISSI at no cost. Today, ISDB has made an additional \$2,500 available to teachers in blind/visually-impaired program so that they, too, can obtain additional education in their area of expertise. This was made because the educational programs that these teachers attend are usually out-of-state and cost much more than if they could attend in-state universities.
2. Additional equipment/library books for Blind/VI students. Equipment purchases and library purchases are more equitable today than ever before. New equipment has been purchased specifically for blind/visually-impaired students and a room in the library specifically designed for blind/visually-impaired students. The library for the blind/visually-impaired students contains almost \$2,000 of new books in Braille/large print made possible by donations from the Snake River Bros through the ISDB Foundation.
 3. Director of Blind/VI Program office moved to Boise. The task force on education of the blind had recommended that the Outreach Program for the Blind/VI be located in Boise. With sixteen blind/visually impaired students at the main campus, and 350 blind/visually-impaired students throughout the state, it made logical sense for this office to be in Boise. Moving the office to Boise made even more sense because the new Director, Dr. Paul Ajuwon, being blind himself and the City of Gooding being unable to provide public transportation. Dr. Ajuwon is currently housed at the Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ICBVI). Again, this is an excellent example of how ISDB has improved its collaboration with other agencies.
 4. Transition Program. Prior to my tenure as superintendent, a Transition Program was established whereby graduates of ISDB and throughout the state could receive assistance with employment or postsecondary attendance/ aspirations. This program, however, was available only to deaf and hard of hearing students. Today, the transition program is open to ALL students – deaf, hard of hearing, blind and visually impaired.

I. ISDB Foundation

Prior to my arrival as superintendent, the ISDB Foundation had raised a little over \$7,000 in seven years. The ISDB Foundation was not a fundraising foundation – it was established to distribute the yearly interest received from the Idaho Community Foundation as a result of a donation we had deposited with them. I saw the Foundation as playing a much greater role, especially in the area of raising funds for ISDB especially during this fiscal crisis. As a result, the focus of the Foundation was changed so that it became a fund raising organization. New members were elected and a fundraiser hired. Since it's new beginning less than two years ago, the Foundation has raised over \$100,000 for ISDB. The fund have been used to:

1. \$1,000 to purchase library books for the blind/visually-impaired students;
2. \$500 to purchase a CCTV for the blind/visually impaired students in the cottage;
3. \$48,000 to continue the Lindamood Bell Instructional program at ISDB;
4. \$5,000 to purchase computers for loan to the Braille Transcription Center in Boise;
5. \$1,500 to support students' skiing instructions/activities during the month of February;
6. \$5,000 to help purchase hearing aids for those students who need financial assistance to purchase one;
7. \$500 to ISDB's Faculty Health Program.

These are just some examples of how the Foundation has assisted ISDB students, families and employees. The Foundation has also applied for two grants to assist ISDB – a \$280,000 grant from the J.A. and Kathryn Foundation to continue the work of the Digital Instruction Support Center, and a \$200,000 grant to the Beaumont Foundation to purchase laptops for parents unable to afford a computer necessary to access OptiSchool and lesson modules. Finally, the ISDB Foundation also provides assistance in giving tours to visitors and prospective donors.

The Foundation has been given an office in the main building to provide safety for the Director. Having an office in the main building also allows prospective donors to see the school and the students, and allows the Director to have easier access to secretarial and financial assistance provided by ISDB.

J. Increased Mainstreaming Opportunities

Prior to my arrival, only a few high school students attended the Gooding Joint District due to ISDB and the Gooding Joint District having different schedules. I strongly believe that our students need to have the experience of socializing, learning, and working with their hearing and sighted peers. ISDB took three steps to increase mainstreaming of our students in the Gooding Joint District:

1. Changed Schedule. Today, ISDB's daily schedule is the same as the Gooding Joint District (GJD), making it possible for more students to attend classes at the public school.
2. School-wide. Today, students in the elementary and middle school programs are allowed to take classes at GJD, not just high school students.

3. Additional Interpreter. ISDB has hired an additional full-time interpreter to meet the increasing needs for interpreting services.

As a result of the three steps taken above, more students are taking classes at GJD. These students have the best of both worlds – learning part of the day with their hearing/seeing peers and part of the day with their deaf/blind peers, while benefiting from the expertise at ISDB day program and after-school program.

K. Toddler Program (Pilot Program)

Due to needs expressed by parents who placed their deaf children in day care programs unable to communicate with their deaf/hard of hearing children, ISDB has initiated a three-month pilot program. The Toddler Program is for children aged 18 months to 36 months of age. These children receive educational instructions at the main campus three days a week in addition to regular services at home. We are hopeful that this three-month program will reveal increased language acquisition as a result to early language stimulation at ISDB.

L. Hearing Peers Program (Pilot Program)

In an effort to provide our deaf students with language role models, a three-month program has been initiated whereby hearing students can spend part of the day at ISDB with deaf students. These “hearing peers” are all excellent signers since one or both parents are deaf/hard of hearing. We are working closely with the Gooding Joint District on this program and we will evaluate the program together at the end of the school year to determine if it is beneficial to our students.

M. TV Production and Editing Program

Thanks to a grant from the Professional-Technical Education Program, ISDB was able to purchase professional television cameras, video editing equipment and software, that allows ISDB to being a TV Production and Editing Program. This is the first semester of a three-semester program of study and students have already completed their first production that is available on the internet. Log onto the following site to take a look: www.isdb.raptor.goodingidaho.org.

N. Digital Information Support Center (DISC)

Last, but not least, is the most innovative and central component to the success of my efforts to improve the delivery of services throughout Idaho – the creation of the DISC. This is critical to my vision of making ISDB a school without walls, where students, parents, and educators throughout the state will be able to receive valuable information and instructional lessons wherever a computer is located. This is such an important project that I have provided full, in-depth information in the next section.

MAJOR ISSUES FACING ISDB

There is still much that needs to be done to make ISDB the educational institution that will meet the needs of our stakeholders. These include:

A. Salary Equity

ISDB teachers receive less than their peers in the public schools. A recent study of salaries shows that ISDB teachers as a whole receive \$110,000 less in base salary than those in the public schools. We MUST pay our teachers and those on the teacher salary scale equitable salaries. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that state law requires teachers to receive an annual one-step increase – a law that does not apply to ISDB's teachers.

B. Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP)

The position of SLP is one of the most difficult positions to fill throughout Idaho, including ISDB. During the fiscal crisis we lost one position and the second position has gone unfilled. We have just recently been able to meet our SLP needs by contracting with SLP providers. Finding a full-time SLP will be ISDB's priority number one during the summer months.

C. Contingency Fund

Early this year Governor Kempthorne signed legislation providing a contingency fund for ISDB – the same contingency fund afforded public schools throughout Idaho. When ISDB returned \$300,000 last year to the state to be put in the contingency fund, only \$90,000 was approved, and that was specifically for teacher salary increases. As a result, ISDB is back to square one – we have no dollars available to meet unexpected emergencies. We MUST have dollars in our contingency fund and we are hopeful that at the end of this fiscal year funds remaining will be transferred to the contingency fund.

D. Maintenance

One area that is of huge concern is upkeep of the main campus. Bricks are missing on the sidewalks making it hazardous to our blind and visually impaired students. Cottage rugs are wearing out making it a hazard to these students. The Round Building is in need of \$200,000 in repairs to keep it running and usable by CSI and IU as well as the other tenants currently using the facility. The kitchen is in need of a new freezer. All of these needs cannot be met due to the budget cuts ISDB has experienced. These needs can only be met if the dollars remaining in our budget at the end of this fiscal year are placed in our contingency fund.

Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind

Digital Instruction Support Center (DISC)

A focused effort to enhance the quality of education for

Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Blind, and Visually Impaired Students Throughout Idaho

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Project background

ISDB's mandate, as stated by the State Board of Education and the law that established ISDB, is to serve ALL deaf, hard of hearing, blind, and visually impaired students throughout the state of Idaho, not just those students attending the main campus in Gooding. This is why ISDB has an extensive outreach program that provides for direct services to parents with children ages birth to 3, and direct/consultative services to parents and local school districts throughout Idaho for children aged three to twenty-one.

When I became Superintendent of ISDB in August 2001, it became apparent that ISDB was not fulfilling its mandate. The needs of these unique students were not being met - the academic achievements of blind, visually impaired, deaf and hard of hearing students comprise the bottom 25% of all students in Idaho. The needs of parents were not being met. The needs of school districts were not being met. It also became apparent that ISDB teachers and programs were not using technological advances to help meet the needs of the unique students ISDB serves at its main campus in Gooding.

The State Board of Education hired me as Superintendent with the goal of improving the delivery of educational services to these students, their parents, and local school districts. They were not looking for someone who would keep the status quo at ISDB – they wanted someone with a vision. My vision is to make ISDB an online school, a school without walls, where ISDB's services and expertise can be obtained wherever a student, parent, teacher, special education director, and others live – 24 hours a day, seven days a week. With this vision, in November of 2001, ISDB entered into a contract with Mr. Bob Sewell to help put in place a course delivery system for ISDB, from which instructions could be delivered to students and parents not only at ISDB's main campus but also throughout Idaho. After looking at several already developed systems available, including Blackboard, a decision was reached to go with a program called SchoolMation. This decision was based on two factors: cost and accessibility. We also contracted with Mr. Sewell to develop the unique Internet based instructions that we wanted to make available via the Internet to our unique students throughout Idaho.

Shortly after SchoolMation was installed and operational, we learned that SchoolMation was not accessible to blind students and did not meet international standards for accessibility. Contact was initiated with the author(s) of SchoolMation in Australia in attempt to rectify the problem. The authors conveyed that they would begin work in repairing the program to suit ISDB's needs. SchoolMation's authors attended a web accessibility seminar in the United States, and we were told that they were going to make the needed modifications to their program so that it was accessible to our blind and visually impaired students.

A beta program of SchoolMation and Internet Instructional Lessons were shown to parents who attended ISDB's Parents Weekend. The response from the parents was overwhelmingly positive. Parents were also informed of OptiSchool and Internet Instructional Lesson and they are eagerly awaiting implementation of this system. ISDB's Parents Advisory Board (PAB) was also strongly supportive of this project.

In May of 2002, Governor Kempthorne visited ISDB as our graduation day speaker. While he was here, Governor Kempthorne had the opportunity, along with Rep. Maxine Bell, Rep. Wendy Jacquet, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Marilyn Howard, and other dignitaries, to view the work of Mr. Sewell. They were all impressed with his work and supported my effort to make Mr. Sewell a permanent full time member of ISDB's staff. Governor Kempthorne and Rep. Maxine Bell received photos of their visit admiring our students working on the instructional lessons that Mr. Sewell had helped develop.

To bring Mr. Sewell onto the staff of ISDB, in June of 2002 I petitioned the Department of Fiscal Management to reclassify a vacant position of Therapy Technician to Project Coordinator. This request was approved on July 11, 2002 (Appendix A). The position was advertised through the Department of Human Resources and Mr. Sewell was the only person who met all of the job requirements (Appendix B). Two months later, in September of 2002, Mr. Sewell was offered the position of Projects Coordinator.

In August of 2002, the deadline for SchoolMation producers to provide ISDB with a final, repaired, version of SchoolMation that was accessible to blind/low vision students was not met. I terminated the contract with SchoolMation and asked for assistance from Internet Marketing Specialists, Inc., an Idahoan corporation, to help build the course delivery system that meets the needs of our blind/visually impaired students and deaf/hard of hearing students. We contracted with Mr. Rick Widmer to develop the program we needed to replace SchoolMation. At about the same time, Mr. Sewell accepted responsibility for the supervision of Mr. Sammy Taylor due to the inability of two of our administrators to communicate with Mr. Taylor in sign language. Four months later, with a vacant position available, we hired Mr. Widmer as a full-time temporary for the remainder of the school year. Thus was born the Digital Instruction Support Center (DISC). In January of 2002 we hired Dr. Jim Hutchinson as a temporary substitute teacher/Lab Technician to provide (1) substitute teaching, (2) assistance with the development of the instructional lessons, and (3) curriculum aspect of OptiSchool. Dr. Hutchinson resigned his position on April 3rd for reasons unrelated to the DISC.

Since then, the basic structure for OptiSchool has been created. The "user management" features have been defined. Remaining on the development board is the "course management" features.

One of the most important features of OptiSchool is it allows the unique lesson modules we are developing to be delivered throughout Idaho. **Without OptiSchool these lesson modules cannot be delivered to the students, parents, teachers and other individuals that we serve throughout Idaho.** Mr. Sewell is not only responsible for the development of OptiSchool but also responsible for the development of the software and platform for the lesson modules. He is also responsible for assisting teachers in developing the lesson modules that they will use with their students. The Times-News wrote a story about the technology we are using, developed by the DIS Center, and our goal of breaking down the walls of ISDB and bringing our services wherever parents, students and professionals have a computer (Appendix H). ISDB teachers are very supportive of this project (Appendix J).

Scope of the Project

OptiSchool is a modular online program that is intended to be operating system independent. It contains the following components:

1. **User Management:** The tracking of individuals and their program access rights.
2. **Course Management:** The tracking of assignments of each of the courses.
3. **Lesson Support Modules:** Lessons that may take various shapes based on their purpose. The VI will be utilizing more of the “text based” lessons, while the Deaf students will be using more of the “visual based” lesson modules.
4. **Quiz Generator:** Teachers will be able to create quizzes online that meet the needs of the classroom dynamics. The Quiz Generator will allow teachers to produce various types of questions, with the retake feature enabled or disabled. The program is written in PHP that uses the MySQL database system to store quizzes. These quizzes will communicate results of these quizzes back to the learning management system.
5. **Learning Management Systems:** An assessment program that will gather results from lesson modules and quizzes. These results will be helpful in the generation of assessment reports.
6. **Instant Messenger (IM)/Chat System:** With video and audio capabilities, the IM/Chat system will allow for video messages to be sent on or offline.
7. **Online Whiteboard System:** A whiteboard system that allows for several people to log into the same page to see drawing tools utilized with images, and classroom chat type environments.
8. **Maintenance Schedule:** Maintenance calendar on various items on campus
9. **Kitchen Schedule:** A program that would help the kitchen staff manage their dataflow

Features

1. Accessible via Internet.
2. Lesson modules available to ISDB’s outreach staff, parents and other constituents
3. Lesson modules compliment ISDB’s curriculum, which is compliant with the Idaho State Standards
4. Operating System independent.
5. Browser Compatible
6. Minimal size plug-in download.
7. Complies with Web Accessible Initiative (WAI) standards set forth by W3C and Section 508 statues.
8. Bandwidth friendly
9. Compliant with the Child Internet Privacy Act (CIPA)
10. Modular (for expandibility and meeting future needs).

Advantages of Lesson Modules Component of OptiSchool

The greatest advantage of the lesson modules, a key component of OptiSchool, is that these lessons can be accessed by anyone with a computer and ISP service throughout Idaho. Students do not need to attend ISDB to partake of our instructional lessons. Parents do not need to attend ISDB to receive support services and instructions on meeting the needs of their students. Students and teachers at the two pre-school programs that ISDB has in the Boise and Pocatello areas can use the same instructional lessons that are available on the main campus. In a nutshell, ISDB can do much more, more effectively, and at a cost that is within ISDB's budget. Following are additional advantages of these lesson modules:

1. Lesson modules will reside in a library for use year after year.
2. Students will become independent learners.
3. Teachers will gain additional time to provide "one on one" instruction with students who need it most.
4. Accessible in the most user-friendly format possible for Blind/VI visitors, be they students, parents or visitors.
5. The lesson modules allow for on-demand video streaming of American Sign Language (ASL) to support the lesson modules. This serves many purposes: language acquisition, preservation of a language's integrity, teaching of facial expression use in communication, parent's opportunity to learn a language that allows them to communicate with their child, etc.
6. OptiSchool's uses MySQL internally. Since it is written in the PHP scripting language it can communicate with most popular database systems. After a presentation to the Albertson's Foundation, and AdvanTech, LLC, there was a mutual belief that OptiSchool will be able to communicate with the upcoming Idaho Student Information Management System (ISIMS).

Examples of these lesson modules can be viewed online by logging onto the following site: www.deafschoools.net/lessons and selecting the Demo lesson module.

Products Reviewed

The following products were tested before being ruled out for one reason or another. Accessibility was the number one criteria in our choice. The other criteria examined were cost and features.

Blackboard
adept

WebCT
Moodle

SchoolMation
bazaar

Manhattan
eLedge

Open LMS
SchoolGen

iLias
Claroline

Grants Applied For

ISDB, through the ISDB Foundation, has applied for two grants to support the development of the lesson modules (J.A. and Kathryn Foundation - \$280,000) and to provide laptops to parents who do not have a computer to access OptiSchool and the lesson modules (Beaumont Foundation - \$200,000).

DIGITAL INSTRUCTION SUPPORT CENTER (DISC)

A. Cost Analysis

1. Personnel (Appendix F)

Bob Sewell	Project Coordinator	Full-time Classified	70%	\$41,589.00	\$29,112.30
Rick Widmer	Ass't Project Coordinator	Temporary	90%	\$34,074.00	\$30,666.60
Sammy Taylor	Graphics/Publications Specialist	Temporary	20%	\$15,235.00	\$3,047.00
TOTAL PERSONNEL BUDGET					\$62,825.90

MR SEWELL

70% of Mr. Sewell's time is spent on development of the lesson modules and OptiSchool. The other 30% includes: Interpreting, assisting with various school projects needing technical assistance, videotaping, video editing, research, computer hardware and software purchases, supervises three employees, training a student employee on the use of media technology, provides assistance to those deaf teachers who need assistance via Sign Language (which tech department folks are not able to provide). Mr Sewell also provides direct assistance to various departments on campus such as: Parents Advisory Board, ISDB Foundation, TV Production Program, Elementary Department, Media Center, ISDB Museum.
(Resume: Appendix C)

MR. TAYLOR

20% of Mr. Taylor's time is spent on graphic design for OptiSchool and lesson modules. The other 80% includes: producing student and staff identification cards, assisting with various publications (such as Deaf President Now, Western States Basketball Classic (WSBC), etc.), identification badges for WSBC, presentations to elementary classes, school photographer/photo developer, videotapes school events, substitute teacher.

Mr. Taylor is under the supervision of Mr. Sewell, although his responsibilities is just 20% to the DIS Center, due to the fact the director of the technology department (where Mr. Taylor was first assigned) is unable to communicate effectively with Mr. Taylor in sign language, nor is our principal, Ms. Linda Rutledge, where he was placed next, able to effectively communicate with Mr. Taylor. Mr. Sewell volunteered to supervise Mr. Taylor.
(Resume: Appendix D)

MR. WIDMER:

90% of Mr. Widmer's time is spent developing OptiSchool and lesson modules. The other 10% includes: assisting the technology department with their Linux needs.
(Resume: Appendix E)

DIGITAL INSTRUCTION SUPPORT CENTER (DISC)

A. Cost Analysis

			*Yearly Value
2. Equipment (Appendix G)			20% of Cost
Computers	3 computers	\$3,621.00	\$724.20
Computers	1 multimedia computer	\$2,618.00	\$523.60
Misc Hardware	cd burner, video camera, etc.	\$3,000.00	\$600.00
Misc Software	Adobe Premiere, Flash MX, etc.	\$2,500.00	\$500.00
Furniture	Desks, chairs	\$1,500.00	\$300.00
TOTAL EQUIPMENT BUDGET		\$13,239.00	\$2,647.80
TOTAL PERSONNEL BUDGET			\$62,825.90
TOTAL EQUIPMENT BUDGET (20%)			\$2,647.80
TOTAL BUDGET			\$65,473.70
OptiSchool's impact on budget		30%	\$19,642.11
Lesson modules impact on budget		60%	\$39,284.22
Chat/IM impact on budget		10%	\$6,547.37

* NOTE: The life expectancy of the equipment is five years. We have thus calculated a 20% per year value.

DIGITAL INSTRUCTION SUPPORT CENTER (DISC)

B. Benefits

Less expensive and more efficient than Blackboard

1. Blackboard costs a minimum of \$5,000 year. OptiSchool, the course delivery system that ISDB is developing, is projected to cost approximately \$20,000. This is a one time expenditure that will pay for itself in four years or less. Purchasing Blackboard is more expensive in the long run than developing OptiSchool.
2. Blackboard charges extra for each course content. These course contents do not meet the needs of our deaf and hard of hearing students.
3. Blackboard is not compatible with ISIMS
4. Blackboard is not compatible with the lesson modules that ISDB is developing for our unique students.

C. Features

OptiSchool will include several facets:

1. Internet Instructional Lessons accessible to students throughout Idaho and their parents.
2. Quiz Generator to create quizzes for instructional lessons. Teachers will have the capability to create quizzes online, with a retake feature.
3. Learning Management System that will track students progress on the instructional lessons.
4. Chat/IM (Flash Communication Server)
 - a. Will provide WEBCAM capabilities so that students can SEE each other and communicate via Sign Language. This will also allow hard of hearing, blind and visually impaired students to hear each other.
 - b. Will provide an ACCESS LIST which will protect students from unwanted contacts on the internet - only those individuals that have been given permission to communicate with each student will be able to do so.
5. Virtual Whiteboard that will allow teachers to 'write' on the screen and transmit the writing to the other viewer, making it possible to send designs, math problems, etc. over the internet.
6. Compatibility and information sharing with ISIMS so that parents will have instant access to relevant information on their child, such as homework, test and quizzes.
7. Curriculum and daily activities will be accessible to parents.
8. School Calendar and announcements of activities.
9. Provide communication structure between parents and teachers/administrators.
10. **FULL CONTROL/OWNERSHIP OVER SOFTWARE USE AND MODIFICATIONS NECESSARY TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR STUDENTS. BLACKBOARD DOES NOT ALLOW OUTSIDE MODIFICATION OF ITS SOFTWARE NOR ACCESSORY PROGRAMS.**
11. **FULL CONTROL OF USER MANAGEMENT/ADMINISTRATION COMPONENTS.**
12. **FULL CONTROL/OWNERSHIP OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT.**
13. **FULL CONTROL/OWNERSHIP OF LESSON MODULES INCLUDING THE DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT, AND MODIFICATION.**

D. Accessibility

BLACKBOARD: At the time of development implementation, Blackboard was not completely accessible to our blind and low vision students. Blackboard now claims that they are fully accessible.

OptiSchool: 100% accessible to blind and low vision students.

Three popular browsers for the VI were used in the baseline of our research for Optischool: (1) JAWS, (2) Talking Browser, and (3) Homepage Reader. The three VI browsers combined share different rule sets for browsing methods. This makes coding a "happy medium" accessible web app quite difficult. The concept of OptiSchool allows for the same information to be extracted from a central location, but to be served as a straight text platform. This satisfies the lowest common denominator of the three differing VI browsers.

E. Risk Analysis

The risk to completion of this project are miniscule. The only obstacles to completion of this project are:

1. Resignation/death of Mr. Bob Sewell.
2. Resignation/death of Mr. Rick Widmer.
3. Resignation/death of Dr. Angel Ramos.
4. Termination by the State Board of Education.
5. Drastic Technology changes

It must be noted that Governor Dirk Kempthorn, Rep. Maxine Bell, Dr. Marilyn Howard, and the Albertson Foundation, among others, have seen the lesson modules being developed by the DISC and have been very impressed to the point where, when I mentioned to Rep. Bell that this project might end due to the possibility of not being able to keep Mr. Sewell on our staff, she commented that he "MUST" be kept on our staff to continue working on this project. With such strong support, the DFM and DHR agreed to reclassify a vacant position to a position that enabled ISDB to hire Mr. Sewell as Projects Coordinator - a permanent, full-time classified position (Appendix A).

F. Timeline

<u>OptiSchool Components</u>	<u>Begin</u>	<u>End</u>
Main Structure	Jul-02	Jul-03
Quiz Generator	Feb-03	Jul-03
Learning Management System	May-03	Jul-03
Chat/IM	Dec-02	Dec-03
Virtual Whiteboard	Mar-03	Jul-03

Lesson Modules

On-going development for the next 7-10 years

DIGITAL INSTRUCTION SUPPORT CENTER (DISC)

G. Feasibility

The following programs are capable of communicating with the OptiSchool database structure to insure that whatever ISIMS utilizes, OptiSchool will be able to communicate with it:

Access
dBase
DB2
DBM
db++
FrontBase
HyperWave
Informix
Interbase
Ingress II
LDAP
mSQL
MySQL
MS-SQL
ODBC
Oracle *
Oracle 9+
Ovrimos
PostgreSQL
SASAM
Sybase

Timeline

OptiSchool		Begin	Implemented
a.	Main Structure	Jul-02	Jul-03
b.	Quiz Generator	Feb-03	Jul-03
c.	Learning Management System	May-03	Jul-03
d.	Chat/IM	Dec-02	Dec-03
e.	Virtual Whiteboard	Mar-03	Jul-03
f.			

Internet Instructions

On-going development for the next 7-10 years