

## House Bill: 2755

March 8, 2013

Written Testimony by: Dr. Dean O. Stenehjem, Superintendent, Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB)

Representative Gelser and committee members:

Over the past few years, a great working relationship has developed between ODE and WSSB in helping to provide for a full continuum of services for Oregon students in need of educational services as determined by their LEAs, parents and students in regard to an appropriate placement. Ms. Julie York, ODE and Mr. Scott McCallum, BVI Coordinator, NWESD have been excellent to work with as has staff at the Oregon Commission for the Blind (OCB). Oregon students in need of a residential option and/or accessible/usable online learning classes are thriving thanks to the cooperative work that improves with each passing year between our two states. I am so pleased that a little over three years ago Senator Craig Pridemore (WA), House Speaker Doug Hunt, Representative Sara Gelser and I had the opportunity to talk about potential partnerships among our states and explore new possibilities that could help all blind and visually impaired (BVI) children succeed. At this time, I would like to report that this partnership has resulted in excellent outcomes for students and wonderful successes. Below is a small sample of some of the successes that are occurring for students (these numbers include both Oregon and Washington students):

Oregon LEAs have begun to tap into a number of services provided by WSSB:

- Curriculum in a wide range of Expanded CORE areas (blindness specific training), which are available on our web ([www.wssb.wa.gov](http://www.wssb.wa.gov)). We continue to gather input from Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs) throughout the country as to the types of Video Clip lessons that would be useful in their districts.
- Accessible/Usable Online Learning options: This has been a pilot year and currently one Oregon deaf/blind student is receiving functional math from WSSB. The district, parents, student, and TVI are all very pleased with the program and progress made by this student. Numerous TVIs in Oregon are interested in tapping into these highly specialized classes for students that have been struggling to gain necessary skills in mathematics in a way that makes sense to BVI students. [Courses offered this year run from functional math to pre-calculus.] We have students from Washington (LEA's and on-campus), Montana, Idaho and Oregon involved in the pilot project with more courses to be offered next school year. Microsoft has shown an interest in how we are using LYNC Technology in the area of synchronous online learning. WSSB's team received a 2<sup>nd</sup> place in a Global Competition in Prague in December 2012, for this research and pilot program and is now a "Microsoft's Partners in Learning".
- WSSB On-campus services for Oregon students (current data 3-6-2013):
  - 4 students from Oregon enrolled (student grades 6-12).

- 4 students from Oregon in our LIFTT (Learning Independence for Today and Tomorrow-5<sup>th</sup> year) program: This program is a one year intensive program designed to help students gain a whole new level of independence that opens up the work place and success in college programs. Students are either involved in work and or community college during this time. [The OCB is also a partner in this program.] Success rate for students in this program (work and or college) is in the 80+ percentile.
- Summer school programs (open to Oregon students):
  - Summer school options (one week).
  - Youth Employment Solutions (YES) I (career awareness – 2 week program).
  - Variety of recreation/sports/leisure programs.
- Numerous workshops and trainings have continued to be made available to TVIs and paraprofessionals working with BVI students.

NOTE: Last year and this year student on-campus results:

- 13 graduates from WSSB: 9 enrolled in college (69%), 1 student will be moving into employment, 1 student in supported employment, 1 day activity, and 1 at home. This represents a 92% success rate for appropriate placement options based upon developmental/skill levels.
- 14 anticipated graduates from WSSB, June 2013: 10 are scheduled to go onto college; remaining students also working with Vocational Rehabilitation Services for placement options (college placement highly likely – 71%).

IMPORTANT:

- Most of the students that moved into college programs were students that had all but given up on school when they arrived at WSSB. The change that has occurred in these students has been tremendous.

In closing, WSSB has enjoyed being a partner for success for students in need of the full continuum of services and we are honored that Oregon has entrusted us with helping make a difference in the lives of students in need of more intensive services.

As Helen Keller said, “Alone we can do so little, Together we can do so much”! The Oregon/ Washington Partnership for BVI children is a great example of what can occur with a solid partnership.

Thank you for your time.