

History of SD School for the Deaf

(Obtained from South Dakota Services for the Deaf webpage)

Since its beginning in 1880, South Dakota School for the Deaf has supported families with children who are deaf and hard of hearing.

In November of 1880, Reverend Thomas Berry founded the South Dakota School for the Deaf (SDSD). He was responsible for the school's administration which included the hiring of the first teacher at SDSD, Miss Jennie Wright. Reverend Berry was able to rent a private dwelling known as the Thomas Lodging House located on Main Avenue. Reverend Berry's tenure lasted less than one year; he returned to Buffalo, New York shortly after the death of his wife. The school depended upon donations of the founders, Rev. Thomas Berry and public citizens for its financial support.

Upon Berry's departure in the fall of 1881, Miss Wright assumed the position of superintendent. By this time, the school was located on its current property on Eighth Street in Sioux Falls. Miss Wright served in the role of superintendent/teacher for a very short time, and then relinquished her position to marry.

In 1881, Mr. James Simpson, Miss Wright's deaf brother-in-law, became the third superintendent serving for the next 22 years from 1881 to 1903. In 1883, the Territorial Legislature provided for a Board of Trustees of five members to be appointed by the Governor for a period of two years. Under Simpson's administration, the school grew from one building with seven students to a well-equipped institution with a total enrollment of 54 (35 boys and 19 girls) and operated a farm that provided all of the food needed for students and staff.

In 1889, South Dakota achieved statehood, and the school was placed under the governance of the Board of Charities and Corrections. At the time, the school owned 30 acres of land, a girls' dormitory was added and electric lights were installed.

Miss Dora Donald, superintendent of the school for the blind, succeeded Mr. James Simpson as superintendent in 1903 becoming the fourth administrator and second woman to hold the position.

In 1908 Mr. J. D. McLaughlin led the school and held the position of superintendent until 1910 when Howard Simpson, the son of James Simpson, assumed the position of superintendent. Under Howard Simpson's leadership, SDSD's student population grew to 100 by 1916. In 1920, Mr. Simpson resigned after 12 years of service.

From 1920 to 1925 Harry Welty served as SDSD's superintendent. During his administration, ten acres of the school's farmland was given to the South Dakota State College to experiment with fruits and roses. And in 1925, Mr. E.S. Tillinghast assumed the superintendent position and under his guidance, a primary hall, new gymnasium, and farm and school building additions occurred.

In 1939, Mr. Arthur S. Myklebust began his 34 year tenure that brought many changes and improvements to South Dakota School for the Deaf. During his term, a Speech-Reading, Speech and Hearing Aid clinic (1942) gave no cost services to Sioux Falls residents. It was the only one of its kind in the United States at that time. In 1944 a new dormitory was constructed, the school was placed under the Board of Regents governance (1945); the SDSD farm was sold (1949), a kitchen renovation occurred and an infirmary was built (1963). In November of 1966, The Hearing and Speech Center was established to serve children and adults who were deaf and hard of hearing and their families, as well as educators and medical staff in the state and a swimming pool was added in 1971. Myklebust retired in 1973 and Mr. John Hudson Jr. assumed the position of superintendent. Hudson's most significant contribution was the initiation and completion of the new SDSD school building. On October 3, 1979, 98 years and 288 days after the Dakota Territorial School for the Deaf started, the Berry Wright Educational Facility opened. In his final year, John Hudson's hired Gordon Kaufman as the first principal of the new school. Kaufman was appointed acting superintendent and became the eleventh superintendent in 1979. He is remembered as the superintendent during SDSD's centennial, which was celebrated in 1980.

In January, 1983, during Kelly W. Boesen's tenure as superintendent, SDSD witnessed the largest enrollment in its history and some of the largest graduating classes (14 in 1983 and 17 in 1984). SDSD also held the first Family Learning Workshop (FLW) on the campus. Barb Dowling coordinated the first two FLW and then Fran Noteboom took over responsibilities for the next 15 years.

In August of 1989, Dr. Frank R. Turk, from Gallaudet University, was selected as superintendent. Turk was the second deaf superintendent of the school. Frank Turk was one of the most prominent deaf leaders in the nation and emphasized the concept of a total educational environment as stated in the book entitled, "The Transcendent Territory," by Communication Services for the Deaf. Dr. Turk fervently believed the schools role and mission was to foster both intellectual and personal growth and development-not as separate entities but as one indivisible whole. Dr Turk's goal was to make SDSD a model that would be followed nationwide. He was outstanding in the area of public relations and brought national recognition to SDSD through the school's sponsorship of the first national conference on deafness bringing in well-known national leaders such as I. King Jordan, president of Gallaudet University, and Bernard Bragg, a world-class deaf actor. Turk was also instrumental in the establishment of the interagency agreement between SDSD, South Dakota Sensory Visually Handicapped School (SDSVH), and the Department of Education and Cultural Affairs (DECA) working with Dr. Dean Myers, DECA director, and Marjorie Kaiser, SDSVH superintendent.

Larry Puthoff became the third deaf individual to serve as superintendent from 1991-1995. He graduated from SDSD and achieved his post-secondary degree from Gallaudet University. He also received a Master's degree from Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota and another Master's degree from California State University, Northridge (CSUN) in the area of Administration and Supervision. Puthoff made history by being the first alumnus from a school for the deaf to become superintendent of the same school. In 1992 under his tenure, the state legislature approved a request from the Board of Regents to build a new dormitory which opened in 1994. The Board of Regents stipulated that a portion of the campus be sold to raise money for the facility. December 1993, South Dakota Association for the Deaf (SDAD) and Communication Services for the Deaf (CSD) purchased the land and four buildings. In 2000, while working at Communication Services for the Deaf, Larry Puthoff also researched and developed the book, "The

Transcendent Territory: The Minds, Hearts and Hands Behind the Unique Deaf and Hard of Hearing Culture of South Dakota.

On July 31, 1995, SDSD welcomed Dr. Jon C. Green as the 15th superintendent. While he served at SDSD, a playground was constructed, repairs were made to the Myklebust Recreation Center roof, eight garages built in the 1940's were torn down, and a new front entrance was completed. In the nine years he was at superintendent, Dr. Green made substantial changes in the educational programs available at the school implementing a Bilingual Education program and an Auditory/Oral program. In the fall of 1997, a foundation, named "Friends of SDSD" was established with the help of Bernie Christianson of the South Dakota Community Foundation and Jim Shekleton of the South Dakota Board of Regents. The purpose of the Foundation was to establish private funding to support the mission of SDSD. In 2004, Dr. Green accepted a position as a Research Fellow for the South Dakota Board of Regents.

In the fall of 2004, Dr. Maureen Schloss served as the interim superintendent and by December, 2004 was appointed superintendent of the South Dakota School for the Deaf. Dr. Schloss was certified in elementary education, special education, and deaf and hard of hearing education and completed a doctorate in special education at the State University of New York. Dr. Schloss remained in her position until 2007. The dormitories at SDSD were closed in May of 2005.

From 2007 to 2010, Mr. Terry Gregersen served as the SDSD superintendent. Mr. Gregersen's background included a Master's degree in Deaf Education and experience as the Director of Instruction at the California School for the Deaf.

Dr. Marjorie Kaiser, served for 27 years as the Superintendent of the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SDSBVI) in Aberdeen and assumed responsibility for administration of SDSD in July of 2010. She previously directed the deaf-blind program at SDSBVI for ten years. Dr. Kaiser assumed the dual roles of superintendent of SDSBVI and SDSD consolidating administrative functions of the state's two special schools in an effort to direct more resources to student services. In 2010, SDSD celebrated 130 years of service.

In July 2008 SDSD, through a contractual agreement with the Brandon Valley School District, established an Auditory Oral educational program for students who are deaf and hard of hearing from pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. In July 2009 SDSD, through a contractual agreement with the Harrisburg School District, established a Bilingual, American Sign Language and English, educational program for students who are deaf and hard of hearing from pre-kindergarten through high school.

SDSD's Outreach program began in the late 1970's providing direct and non-direct services across the state. The Outreach program has worked under a consultative model for the past 30 years with offices in Rapid City, Pierre, Aberdeen, and Sioux Falls. The Outreach program is an important link in the education of rural South Dakota children who are deaf and hard of hearing. SDSD currently employs consultants who provide early intervention services for children and their families along with information shared with public and private schools on hearing loss, assistive technology, language development, communication options, social opportunities, and support in development of Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP) and Individual Education Plans (IEP).

SDSD employs licensed audiologists who perform diagnostic audiological evaluations at no cost for South Dakota children ages birth to 21 or until they graduate from high school. The SDSD mobile lab also brings audiological screening and evaluation services to children throughout the state and is available to assist in school screenings.

SDSD superintendents in conjunction with teachers and staff have worked tirelessly to provide appropriate programs and services to meet the needs of South Dakota children and families. Today our focus remains the same: To provide quality resources and support adapted to individual needs of children who are deaf or hard of hearing to help them become active, productive citizens.

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