



August 14, 2023

Board of Visitors  
The Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind  
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**Re: Importance of highly-qualified school leaders at deaf schools**

To Whom It May Concern:

As the premier national civil rights organization representing the interests of more than 48 million deaf and hard of hearing people in the United States, the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) has a vested interest in the success of deaf schools and of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and DeafDisabled (collectively, “deaf”) students who attend those schools.

The NAD reiterates its commitment to supporting states and their schools for the deaf in securing the best leaders to provide the high quality education that deaf students deserve. The NAD has posted “School Leader Search Process Recommendations” on its website (<https://www.nad.org/deaf-kids/school-leader-search-process-recommendations/>), within which the NAD emphasizes the importance of the criteria for school leaders set forth therein, with respect to any school leader choice.

School leaders in a deaf school hold a uniquely important position in education of deaf and hard of hearing students. As with all school leaders who lead any school or program, leaders of deaf schools need to be well-versed in matters of administration and governance. In addition, it is critical that leaders of deaf schools are fluent in both American Sign Language (ASL) and English, are knowledgeable about bilingual education, and have the skills to directly engage with teachers, staff, students, families, and the deaf community. As described in the NAD’s posting referenced above, fluency in both ASL and English helps promote direct and open communication within both the internal school community and the larger community. A working knowledge of bilingual education allows school leaders to promote best practices for education of deaf and hard of hearing students. Deaf and hard of hearing students deserve a role model with whom they can identify.



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NAD Letter re: VSDB Leadership

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We encourage leadership at the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind (VSDB), including the Board of Visitors (BOV) and within the Virginia Department of Education, to engage with the Virginia Deaf community to understand their needs for a thriving school for deaf students in VA. The deaf community, as direct consumers of the deaf education system, is the most experienced group of people who can support appropriate leadership and decision-making processes for VSDB and should be valued as such. We also encourage leadership at VSDB to consider how VSDB can exemplify in their leadership the points made by the NAD in the “School Leader Search Process Recommendations.”

We make this request fully aware that the task of leading a deaf school does not come easily. The NAD reiterates its commitment to supporting school leadership who embody the principles and qualifications that deaf children deserve.

We wish you success especially as we enter the 2023-2024 school year.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H.A. Rosenblum', is written over a white background.

Howard A. Rosenblum  
Chief Executive Officer