



February 15, 2018

Superintendent Julee Nist
Illinois School for the Deaf
125 Webster Ave.
Jacksonville, IL 62650

Dear Superintendent Nist,

This is a letter expressing great support and admiration from the National Cued Speech Association (NCSA) for you, the dedicated staff at the Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD), and a large contingency of ISD parents who are making history in being the first residential school for the deaf in the United States to establish a truly bilingual program providing full access to and immersion in both American Sign Language and English through cued English using the system of Cued Speech. We are reaching out as a result of ISD parent requests for NCSA support to respond to efforts by the IAD who are opposed to the use of cued English in a bilingual educational program, but also due to the sincere desire on the part of the NCSA board to let you know the National Cued Speech Association stands ready to offer support and materials in any way it would be helpful.

We are aware of the excellent work and efforts of a very dedicated staff of ISD professionals leading ISD children towards higher levels of educational achievement, self-identity, and growth while enduring enormous challenges and hurdles including unwarranted hostility from groups opposing the use of Cued Speech. ISD is progressive and courageous in implementing its bilingual model, which is based on results of research by linguistic experts throughout the world who continue to show that cued languages are an effective means to facilitate language and literacy development for children who are deaf and hard of hearing. The NCSA believes ISD has implemented the only effective bilingual model which gives full visual access to both English and ASL through direct communication interaction in both languages and is serving as a shining example of forward-thinking educators who have made the paradigm shift of using a visual path towards the acquisition of two critically important languages instead of one.

Members of the NCSA board come from diverse backgrounds, use various modalities and represent the entire continuum of deafness and hearing. The NCSA board includes deaf adults, parents, siblings and professionals in deaf education. One of the NCSA's core values is to be respectful of all modes of communication. A majority of cued English users use ASL. NCSA has made it a core organizational goal to understand and alleviate the fears of those who feel threatened by the use of Cued Speech through education and collaboration. The NCSA would like to offer whatever assistance and support would be helpful in calming the fears of those ISD parents, staff or students who feel Deaf culture is threatened by the use of Cued Speech in the school through respectful presentation of information about cueing and its use among bilingual families.

In 1979 the program for children who are deaf and hard of hearing in Montgomery County, MD began the first Cued Speech program in the country in a setting which also provided sign language and oral

instructional options. Students who graduated from that program, still in existence today, are included in today's leaders in the Deaf community. The forward thinking of that program's superintendent set an example for other programs to begin using Cued Speech around the nation, which has occurred in several public school and day programs since that time.

It is groundbreaking and thrilling that the Illinois School for the Deaf is the first residential school for the deaf to implement a bilingual model using cued English with ASL, which the NCSA finds truly exciting for the future of children who are deaf and hard of hearing nationwide. The Illinois School for the Deaf is to be greatly commended for setting a national example in the education of children who are deaf and hard of hearing and should be revered as a model for inclusion and an example of bilingual education in practice.

Again, we are poised to support ISD's efforts in any way it would be helpful. Please reach out with any questions to Anne Huffman, NCSA President, at ahuffman@cuedspeech.org, Sarina Roffe, NCSA Executive Director, at sroffe@cuedspeech.org, or Ben Lachman, NCSA Vice President, at blachman@cuedspeech.org.

Best Regards,



Anne Huffman
President



Ben Lachman
Vice President



Sarina Roffé
Executive Director