

June 23, 2011

Dear Parents:

I'm writing with very important news about the LICA programs for deaf and hard of hearing students. This letter will provide you with some background for upcoming changes to our organization and, I hope, answer questions you may have. Please free to contact me at LICA if you have additional questions or concerns.

Background

For some time now, LICA has been faced with declining enrollment in most of its programs. That's happening for three major reasons: significant hearing losses are diagnosed and intervention is provided much earlier than in past generations of children. Modern amplification technology, including cochlear implants, provides much better access to language for most students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Also, our member districts can and do serve many more children with hearing disabilities in their home schools. Therefore, the number of students who receive services in our classroom programs at Forest Elementary School, MacArthur Middle School, and Hersey High School is decreasing.

Over the past several months, LICA has been working with its member districts to identify ways to maintain the quality of our programs and services while reducing costs and duplication of administrative structures. After much consideration, it appears that the best solution is to dissolve LICA and to fold the services into an existing organization, the NSSEO cooperative. LICA's Board has voted to dissolve LICA as of June 30, 2012. On July 1, 2012, NSSEO will begin providing services to the districts currently served by LICA.

Frequently-asked Questions

Q: Will my child still receive the services he or she needs?

A: Yes. NSSEO's deaf and hard of hearing program will offer the same services currently provided by LICA, including classrooms programs, itinerant services, diagnostic services, audiology, and supports to families and districts like sign classes and links to information on the internet through the NSSEO website.

Q: Will the LICA staff still be working with students?

A: In most cases, yes. The staff who serve your students now will become employees of NSSEO and will continue in their current roles. That includes classroom teachers, itinerants, therapists, diagnostics staff, supervisors, and in most cases, aides and interpreters.

Q: Are there advantages to being part of a larger cooperative?

A: Absolutely. A large percentage of LICA students live in NSSEO's districts, and we are excited about being able to provide services closer to where many of our students live. We are also excited to have access to NSSEO's excellent programs and services. And because LICA will not have to duplicate business and personnel tasks already done by NSSEO, program leaders will have more opportunity to focus on continuing to improve student achievement.

Q: What will the program be called?

A: It will be called the NSSEO Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program. The name LICA will not be used any longer.

Q: Will programs be housed in the same locations as they are now?

A: The high school and junior high programs will remain at Hersey and MacArthur, which are currently located within NSSEO. We are considering a number of options for the Forest program. ALL programs will remain in their current location for the 2011-2012 school year.

Q: How will I know what's going on as LICA dissolves and NSSEO starts up its programs?

A: We'll be posting regular updates to the LICA website (www.lica.k12.il.us) in both English and Spanish. We will also forward updates via mail or in student backpacks. Once the school year starts, we will schedule one/several open houses so that parents can meet NSSEO staff.

Q: Is there any downside?

A: We know that change can be hard, and uncertainty is harder. It will take time and the efforts of many people to accomplish the transition. Over the summer we'll be working hard to identify all of the tasks involved. As the school year starts, we'll be focused on making the decisions that will help accomplish a smooth transition for families, staff, and districts. It's a complicated process with many parts; we'll be communicating regularly with staff, parents, and districts so you have the information you need to feel comfortable as we move forward.

The LICA and NSSEO staff are looking forward to working together to serve your children. We believe that the upcoming process will allow us to preserve LICA's tradition of quality programs and services. Your feedback is important to us; please feel free to call or email me or other LICA staff members with suggestions, questions, or concerns.

Sincerely,

Becki Streit
Executive Director, LICA