

Report to the Public  
Arkansas School for the Blind  
September 14, 2009  
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# Arkansas School for the Blind Report to the Public 2009

As required by the Arkansas Standards for Accreditation, the Arkansas School for the Blind presents the following annual report to the public. Additional information is available by calling, Jim Hill 501-296-1810 or by sending a request to, 2600 W. Markham St. Little Rock, AR 72205.

## **Introduction**

On behalf of the students, faculty, and staff we would like to share with you the annual presentation of our report to the public. We are very excited about the accomplishments of our students this past year and look forward to the continuation of their success this year.

## **Enrollment**

Our beginning enrollment has shown a nice increase once again this year. Our present enrollment stands at ninety five, an increase of eight percent. Last year we had a graduating class of one student. This student is presently attending college. We have had to add an additional Pre School classroom to accommodate the increase in this age group.

Our annual summer camp was once again well received. This past summer we had an average of thirty eight students per week participating in the camp and seventeen students participating in the jump start program.

## **Birth to Three Year old Program**

We are extremely proud of the continued strength of the Birth to Three year old program and accompanying parent resource center. This program began four years ago and has experienced great growth. We continue to employ two staff members working full time in this program. Through this program we are able to offer programming and training to students who are blind or visually impaired and their parents. At this time we serve more than sixty three students statewide. Staff members have performed in-home visits and continue to develop programming at ASB. Each Tuesday and Thursday numerous parents come to ASB for additional training. The state Department of Special Education currently

refers children in this age group to ASB. The annual kiddie camp was held once again with seventeen children and families attending.

## **Achievement**

We are very pleased with the achievement results of our student body. There has been a marked improvement in all academic areas. We recognize that there is, however, still room for improvement especially in the area of Math. We do feel very strongly that our program is moving in the right direction. We will continue to monitor and adjust our programming to ensure growth and accomplishment on the part of our students. It is still early, but it appears that the curricular changes we made continue to have a positive impact on achievement.

As a qualifying statement, we do want to point out that due to the low number of our students taking the test statistical validity is a concern when analyzing test results. We have made statistical inferences based on an exhaustive attempt to minimize these test validity concerns. These results are reported below.

On the End of Course Literacy Exam students 10 students were assessed. The scores were not as good as we would have expected. They were in line with previous years with 20% being proficient or above. Two additional student were within five points of being proficient. We would like to see these numbers much higher in the future. The content area was identified as a weakness across the board and will be targeted this year.

On the end of course Math assessments overall the students perform well compared to previous years. There is however a continued need for improvement. The results showed two students scoring proficient or above. This compares to none last year. It should again be noted that statistical validity cannot be shown due to low numbers. We are continuing to analyze results to assist us in improving scores. This year we plan to go even further in are attempts to improve scores on open response items. This area has been identified as the greatest problem area.

On the Benchmark math assessment the elementary average student scale score increased by 8.79%. This is short of the goal identified in our ACSIP plan of 10% improvement per year. There were however large gains made compared to previous years. We still do not feel that this is an acceptable gain, we expect more from our students. We are continuing to implement a number of changes to help improve test scores in this area. These changes include, but are not limited to, a continued expansion of our new curricular approach in elementary and junior high with increased emphasis on the use of released items. We have also expanded the use of ACTAAP study skills courses. We do feel that these changes are making a positive impact but we are not where we want to be yet.

On the Benchmark literacy assessment the elementary average student scale score increased by 13.41%. We are pleased with the gain, but plan to continue to assist our student growth in this area as well. On the secondary level the number of students tested was too small to report results. We can say, however, that we were pleased with the overall results.

All elementary students continue to actively participate in the Accelerated Reader program. This program combined with other efforts has resulted in excellent reading performances. Reading assessment results continue to be among the highest for all areas of achievement at ASB. The content area was identified as a weakness across the board however, and will be targeted this year.

Another area we continue to monitor is that of Body Mass Index results. This assessment is now optional; however, most students still participate. We have identified Health and Wellness as a target area in our ACSIP plan. The information gained from this assessment will provide vital information in ascertaining the overall fitness level of our students. Due to numbers results can only be reported district wide and we cannot provide a break down by Elementary and Secondary. We can say that 34.5% of male students and 45.5% of female students are either overweight or obese. This represents a decrease of 4.4% for the males and 4.5% for the females. We feel these numbers are way too high and our Health and Wellness committee will actively pursue options to improve these numbers. Once again it must be mentioned that due to our small numbers, even minor enrollment changes can have a large impact on this data.

We continue to have representation on a number of committees that will assist the state in the development of non-biased assessments. These committee appointments included membership in the Test Bias committee, the Science Frameworks committee, and the Family and Consumer Science Frameworks committee. Although not directly related to testing we have had two other appointments this year that bear mentioning. One staff member; Teresa Doan, has been appointed to the committee that develops the assessment for Teachers to become certified nationally. Another staff member; Sharon Berry, has been appointed to the board of the Division of Services for the Blind.

### **Curricular Enrichment Activities**

One area that we continue to work on is providing curricular enhancement activities to our students. We feel these activities are of vital importance to our students' educational attainment. Due to the sensory impairments of our students there is an even greater need for them to be exposed to activities outside of the school. These activities included trips to the Toltec Mounds, The Big Dam Bridge, the Central High Museum, Pecan Orchards, Apple Orchards, Christmas tree farms, and State Parks, to name a few. Our elementary students performed Cheerleading routines at a number of area locations.

Our students were also offered enrichment activities within the classroom. Some of these included; cooking simple dishes, planting a Garden on the school grounds, and participating in a mock trial. High School Students also participated in a number of conferences related to specific study areas. These included the FBLA Spring conference and the State FCCLA convention to name a few.

## **Curriculum**

The School for the Blind continues to make available to all students those courses necessary to complete the Smart Core curriculum. Students are afforded the opportunity to attend Hall High School, the Metropolitan Vocational technical School, or take a variety of courses through the Distance Learning lab. A complete copy of the schools Smart Core policy is found in the student handbook and is available upon request. All students are required to participate in the Smart Core curriculum unless the parents sign a waiver form. The complete policy continues to be reviewed annual with all incoming 7<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents.

## **Update on programs**

We would like to take a few minutes to discuss our progress on programs that were begun or expanded recently. These programs were mentioned in last years report. We have continued to expand our technology programs. We continue to update our adaptive technology offerings focusing on technologies necessary for students to function in an academic setting as well as in their daily lives.

Our early childhood special needs program continues to thrive. This program continues to allow us to better serve this special population of students presently enrolled at ASB. These students receive specialized instruction in the expanded core curriculum as well as experience integration into regular classroom settings where appropriate.

Our Distance Learning Lab is fully functional and continues to allow us to expand course offerings to our students. The National Association for Parents of Visually Impaired Arkansas chapter is beginning to flourish. Meetings were held and widely attended at ASB as well as in Northwest Arkansas. “Baby Camp” was held this past summer for the third year and was quite successful. We look forward to a continued good relationship with our parents and members of this organization.

The Gifted and Talented program is now providing services. Our GT coordinator has developed a policy and procedures manual, with the assistance of members of the State GT staff and university officials. He continues to work with the teachers at ASB on identifying students who qualify for these services.

## **Accreditation Status**

Both the elementary and secondary programs at ASB were fully accredited by the state Department of Education last year. Members of the Standards and Assurance unit of ADE completed a monitoring visit and determined that all programs at ASB were in compliance with ADE standards.

The ASB Arkansas Consolidated School Improvement Plan (ACSIP) was updated and reviewed last year and was also approved, by the department of education.

A complete copy of the state accreditation report and the ACSIP plan is available upon request

## **State Textbook Program**

The staff of ASB continues to acquire Large Print and Braille textbooks for students in the public schools of Arkansas. This program now has the capability of providing Large Print textbooks in-house in color. The production of these books in-house saves ASB as well as the public schools large sums of money. The Braille prison unit continues to produce Braille textbooks. These textbooks often are not commercially available and would not be for long periods of time if not for them producing the books.

## **Discipline Data**

During the 08-09 school year discipline referrals continued to be almost non-existent. The use of the behavioral matrix combined with the stop and think program continued to be very successful. As of the date this report was written there have been only minimal office referrals for discipline this school year. These referrals were for minor infractions like not doing homework or tardies. The student handbook was updated last year to reflect new laws. Updates were minimal with no policy changes being made. We did maintain the same discipline structure as in the past. Copies of this handbook were passed out to the parents at registration as required by law.

## **Grants Update**

We continue to work to acquire additional funding through a variety of sources. ASB has once again been awarded funding through the federal e-rate program for the 09-10 school year. These funds will be used to offset the cost of telecommunications. ASB has also been awarded 3.5 million dollars of federal stimulus money.

## **School Facilities Improvement**

Drainage work around the main building was completed in the summer of '09. The west wing is in the process of being remodeled to provide additional space for the early childhood programs.

## **Food Services**

The director of the Child Nutrition department reports that they are continuing to increase the amount of fresh fruit and vegetables on the menu.

Whole grain product offerings have also been increased. Fried foods have been limited to 2-3 times per month. The department will receive its CRE (coordinated Review Effort) and SMI (School Meals Initiative) this school year. These are auditing procedures conducted by the Arkansas Department of Education Child Nutrition Section. This audit is conducted every five years.

## **Highly Qualified Teacher Status**

We are proud to announce that all teachers at ASB once again have met the federal requirements of the No Child Left behind Act as highly qualified teachers in the core academic subject areas. We are very proud of the professionalism shown by our teaching staff and we are confident in their abilities to provide a quality education to the students. We are also proud to report that all of our special education teachers also meet the requirements of highly qualified teachers. These requirements are now required by ADE standards.

## **Miscellaneous Employee related issues**

Minimal turnover occurred in the educational staff this past year. Two teachers and the counselor left to pursue other activities and they have both been replaced. One

teacher retired. Once again all staff members at ASB are fully certified in the core curricular areas in which they teach.

Some turnover has occurred in the non educational staff. There is a need for additional employees in the Food Services Department. Turnover in this area is a continuing concern. Employee retention in this area will continue to be a priority. A complete employee count is available upon request and has been included for the board.

## **Technology**

ASB continues to strive to be among the leaders in the area of adaptive technology. We continue to expand our curriculum in this area of study. We revamped our adaptive technology program last year and it appears to have been successful. A continued emphasis is being placed on the attainment of proficiency on devices used to obtain academic skills.

A complete assistive technology assessment is performed on all students. Students' grades seven through twelve who are Braille readers are enrolled in adaptive technology training. Other students are provided instruction on an as needed basis. We continue to acquire state of the art adaptive technology devices. All devices are evaluated for their usefulness to the students and their practicality in providing assistance to students. Through this program we expect to not only improve achievement but to also save the school and other agencies monies by more accurately determining the devices that are most appropriate for the individual students needs.

We have been told on many occasions that our computer network is among the best in the state. We are proud to say that our entire campus is wired for wireless access. Many students are utilizing laptop computers to do research, take notes, and complete class assignments. Internet filtering and security measures have been put into place to protect our students and staff from undesirable information. Improvements continue to be made to our computer network as needed. We also continue to strive to provide state of the art equipment.

This year we have been approved to participate in the new state program called TAC (Teacher Access Center) and HAC (Home Access Center). Through these programs, which are free of charge to the school and provided by ADE, the teachers will be able to enter attendance and grades directly into the computerized record keeping system thus streamlining the process and making it more efficient. As a result the parents will now have access on a daily basis to their student classroom records as well as attendance records.

The ASB Technology Plan has been updated and approved by both the Arkansas Department of Education, and The state Department of Information Systems. We have been found to be in full compliance with all state and federal requirements.

## **Public Relations and Awards**

Many good public relation occurrences happened this past school year. Numerous articles were written about the schools athletic programs in both local and national publications. Various community groups used ASB facilities for meetings and events. These included; The Arkansas Youth Symphony, the Community Theatre, The Top of the Rock vocal group, and various groups from ADE.

## **Conclusion**

As can be seen we have once again been very busy this past year. We feel we continue to be on track and are providing a quality educational experience for our students. We continue to offer our services to all students throughout the state that are blind or visually impaired. We are working hard to expand our programming and offerings statewide. We will continue to work toward our mission of offering “statewide quality educational programs and resources to students who are blind or visually impaired, birth through twenty-one, enabling them to become productive, self sufficient citizens through the involvement of all students, staff, parents and the community”.

A complete copy of this report is available upon request in either paper or electronic format.