



Annual Report To the Public 2017

The Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

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Superintendent's Letter

October 15, 2017

Dear Stakeholders and Friends,

Since 1857 the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired has engaged in the mission of educating students to become productive and self-sufficient citizens. Our vision is for the school to continue to be the statewide center for the highest quality programs, opportunities and resources for blind and visually impaired students birth through twenty-one.

Our academic programs remain strong and continue to expand through distance learning and other innovative academic opportunities for our students. ASBVI remains on the cutting edge of adaptive technology for the blind and visually impaired. In addition, we continue to expand our vocational/career-readiness programs through skills assessments, work study, internships and partnerships with other organizations that serve the blind and visually impaired in the state. Our birth to 3, STAAC, Pre-K and K programs, as well, continue to grow and expand, providing greater opportunity for early intervention in the lives of our students and families throughout the state.

This report provides a brief overview of our programs and progress towards our mission and vision. Thank you for the opportunity to serve children with blindness and visual impairments in the state of Arkansas. Thank you to our dedicated Board and Staff that make these programs possible. Please come by and visit. At ASBVI, we remain, "All About the Kids".

Best Regards,
James Caton, Superintendent

ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND & VISUALLY IMPAIRED

2017 REPORT TO THE PUBLIC

Mission:

The Arkansas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired will offer 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.

Vision:

ASBVI will be a high performing school that is made up of life-long learners who are well equipped to succeed beyond high school and contribute actively to the community and be productive global citizens.

Current Enrollment:

ASBVI has a current STAAC, PK-12 enrollment of ninety-five (95) students. The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) does not include STAAC and PK counts for reporting purposes. The ADE count would be eighty-seven (87). ASBVI also serves many other children in the state through various outreach programs. Please see the “Reaching Out” section below. ASBVI works in tandem with local public school districts. In order to attend ASBVI, students must obtain a referral from their local public school district.

Achievement & School Performance:

Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), ASBVI’s performance status has been listed as “Needs Improvement”. This status was based only on student performance on the annual state assessment and did not reflect the many other areas of student growth and achievement through ASBVI’s programs. Currently, new federal legislation has replaced NCLB with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). On the state level, Act 930 – Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act and Act 744 – School Rating System replaces what we knew as ACTAAP. This year is a transition year over to the new legislation so currently we are not assigned a school performance status. The new legislation will continue to use grades 3-10 student performance data from the annual ACT Aspire state assessment as a factor in determining school performance. However, other factors and areas of growth will also count towards school performance. These other components will include a Growth Indicator for academic growth and English Language Progress, a Graduation Rate Indicator, and a School Quality and Student Success indicator. We are hopeful that this new flexibility under ESSA will provide a more accurate picture of ASBVI’s achievement and programs. Students in grade 11 continue to be assessed for college and career readiness using the national ACT exam. ASBVI also provides ACT prep as well as other opportunities besides grade 11 for students to take the ACT exam. K-2 assessments have also changed for students. Schools have several assessment options to choose

from. ASBVI is currently using the K-2 assessment from Renaissance. This is the same company that provides us with our Star Reading and Star Math assessment tools we use throughout the year for students in grades 3-10 to plan for student improvement. Regardless of the assessments used at ASBVI, our data is historically not published in ADE reports in order to prevent potential identification of students due to the size of our student groups and specialized population.

Moving forward, ASBVI is committed to excellence in student academic achievement as well as in college and career readiness. The areas below will highlight some of our programs that we believe prepare our students for both academic and career success.

Distance Learning Program:

At ASBVI, we believe students should embrace 21st century learning tools in addition to traditional instructional methods. ASBVI has continued to partner with Virtual Arkansas, a state approved online learning provider that hosts a variety of classes in many different subject areas. Virtual Arkansas provides our students with the opportunity to take classes based on interest and their specific educational needs. Distance learning also increases students' computer skills, time management, and responsibility which all contribute to a higher rate of success in a post-secondary setting. This program continues to grow year after year with many secondary students taking an online learning course. Online learning also gives students the opportunity to take concurrent credit classes where they earn both high school credit as well as college credit. Virtual Arkansas online teachers work extremely well with facilitators and our school's DL Coordinator in order to meet students' accommodations and modifications.

EAST Initiative:

ASBVI was honored to be a recipient of a prestigious EAST program grant offered through ADE. EAST stands for Environmental and Spatial Technology and provides students with a wide array of technology tools and resources. These in turn are used by students to help generate solutions to real world and community needs. So there is a strong community service emphasis within the EAST program. Students learn valuable technology skills that will go a long way toward helping them be prepared for the 21st century workforce. Students receive ADE course credit for EAST courses. Our EAST program is facilitated by a certified teacher of the visually impaired. However, students are largely responsible for operating the program. This leads to student ownership of their learning and rigorously develops their problem solving and team building skills which are very valuable in today's workforce.

Advanced Placement

ASBVI is developing Advance Placement (AP) course opportunities for our students. AP courses are currently available through our online course provider Virtual Arkansas as well as through agreements with nearby local school districts. While we will continue to use these providers, we want to develop these opportunities here on the ASBVI campus. To that end, we have sent several of our teaching staff to AP trainings in order for them to obtain certification to teach AP courses. We believe this will greatly add not only to our course offerings but to the overall rigor and excellence in our academic programs.

R.I.S.E:

ASBVI is designated as an Arkansas R.I.S.E. school. R.I.S.E. stands for Reading Initiative for Student Excellence and is a state program that develops a culture of reading. For some time now we have implemented in the Elementary school the Accelerated Reading program (AR) to develop students reading skills. The R.I.S.E. initiative and its resources will further develop reading skills and encourage students to become lifelong readers. One practice that has been recently implemented is a “pause and read” moment each day in the elementary school. We are looking at carrying this practice into the secondary school as well.

Elementary Program

The Elementary Program at ASBVI provides academic and developmental services for students who are in pre-kindergarten through the 5th grade. The pre-school program consists of two classrooms. The youngest group is the STAAC (Short Term Academic Assessment Classroom) program. Placement into the STAAC classroom is designed for children who are 2 ½ years old. This affords the chance for the students to be evaluated in a structured setting prior to consideration of placement into special education. Currently there are 3 students enrolled in the STAAC classroom. There are 5 students in the Pre-K classroom. At this time there are 27 students enrolled in the Kindergarten through 5th grade classrooms. Additionally, there are 5 students who receive functional academics within an elementary self-contained special education classroom. This brings the total census for the ASBVI elementary school to 40.

The primary focus of the ASBVI elementary school program is to academically challenge and prepare young students for their future. The program provides rigorous academic instruction that meets all the standard guidelines of the Arkansas Department of Education.

ASBVI has continued with our middle school TEAM program. It is comprised of grades 6th, 7th and 8th, and was moved to the Vocational Building. “Team Time” is the slogan of the year. This initiative was created to provide additional support and experience with the Expanded Core Curriculum to increase overall independence of our students prior to them entering into high school. The students are divided into 3 different random groups and work to blend their strengths, needs and leadership skills. To date, the project is going very well! We are looking forward to the overall outcomes as we get nearer to the end of the school year.

Secondary Program

The Secondary School is continuing to develop 21st century learning models and strategies in order to engage students in learning and increase instructional effectiveness. The school has implemented blended and digital learning components in several academic classrooms. These tools will help increase instructional effectiveness and student learning across the STEM disciplines. The school’s distance learning program, through Virtual Arkansas, continues to grow. Currently, the school has students enrolled in a variety of distance learning courses, including advanced topics in mathematics. Initiatives are underway to develop a culture of learning and highly engaged learning environments for the students.

ASBVI Motto: "We're ALL About the Kids!"

Teacher Excellence Initiative:

ASBVI continues to work towards the goal of having 100% of our teaching staff certified as teachers of the blind and visually impaired in addition to their core area of education licensure. We have worked diligently with Stephen F. Austin State University and the Arkansas Department of Education licensure unit to meet all necessary requirements for this additional licensure area. It takes approximately 18 months for a teacher to obtain the TVI licensure area. We are extremely proud of this initiative and are further pleased to acknowledge the Arkansas Department of Education's support for us through their tuition reimbursement program.

The Elementary and Secondary schools have implemented Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) for professional growth and teacher collaboration. Research has shown that teacher collaboration has a major impact upon student learning and success.

Vocational/Career Readiness Initiative:

ASBVI continues to expand this program through a cooperative effort with agencies that traditionally serve adults with visual impairment and blindness. ASBVI is currently partnering with the Division of Services for the Blind in transition services for our students. Through DSB we recently added a new after school programming component with World Services for the Blind (WSB). Students attend sessions after school at WSB that include independent living skills as well as career and employment readiness. For our older students there are also paid employment and training opportunities through WSB. We are excited about this new opportunity and know it will add to the success of our students in gaining meaningful employment.

Other vocational and career readiness programs include our on campus work study program and the 3-week summer Jump Start employment program. In addition we continue to offer career and technical education courses through our Career and Technical Education department. Students are also able to take career classes through Virtual Arkansas online learning and through the Little Rock School District's Metropolitan Career and Technical Center campus.

Technology Initiative:

The use of adaptive technology is fundamental and essential to students with visual impairments and blindness. ASBVI has made major strides in integrating technology into the classroom and curricula. The following technology has been added during the past year:

Twenty-two IP Security Cameras
One Security Camera Server System with Security Software

Two iPad Pros (12.9")
Forty PCs with Monitors
Six Laptops
One Apple MacBook Pro – Music Department
Two Index Braille-D Braille Embossers
Three HD Projectors and Screens
One 43" HDTV and DVD Player
One Network Server
Three Networking Switches
Upgrades to Anti-Virus and Email SPAM Filtering
Upgrade to Duxbury Braille Translation Software



Facilities Improvement Initiative:

ASBVI continues to develop both short-term and long-term overall facilities improvements. A new roof was put on the Woolly Fine Arts Auditorium. Bathroom renovations in Prewitt Hall dormitory are almost complete. Materials are being delivered and staged to begin work on replacing the roof on the Helen Keller Administration Building. Additional roofing projects are being initiated as well. Overall, all of our flat roof buildings – which most of our buildings are - will have new roofs. We will also be initiating a door project to replace many of our old doors and install safer entry systems to improve campus security. Cameras were installed in several classrooms and lobbies. We completed a project of burying our fiber optic cables that were running from roof to roof. We set up a new classroom area for our EAST program that included intensive network upgrades as well as new LED lighting. Our next dormitory bathroom renovation will be in Shults House. We received an Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council (ANCRC) grant to assist in the renovation of our 1938 WPA infirmary building. Roofing on that building will begin soon along with HVAC and electrical upgrades. We are also in the process of upgrading our Simplex Fire Alarm Panels in all of our buildings. The past year saw the completion of the former Easter Seals Building demolition project. We still have a water line project to complete on the property and will then install a post/cable barrier for the property.

ASBVI continues to seek grant and other funding opportunities for long range planning for facilities improvements. In addition, the Arkansas School for the Blind Foundation is in the process of reorganizing and planning for ways it can support the school and its facilities and programs.

Reaching Out:

ASBVI plays an active role in the state and city in reaching out to other blind and visually impaired students and their families across Arkansas. The following are some of our main outreach programs.

- **Birth to Three Program** – Our “Family, Infant and Toddler” program was able to touch the lives of 83 families throughout the state of Arkansas during the 16-17 school year. This program serves babies and children ages birth to three years in a variety of settings (home and day-care/pre-school). Instruction is provided to parents or caregivers to offer information and emotional support for acceptance of their child’s visual impairment. Additionally, the “hands-on” approach provided by the ASBVI teachers is designed to help the children develop the prerequisite skills that are needed for entrance into a pre-school setting. ASBVI believes in the importance of early intervention for young students and their families and strives to visit with each child and their caregivers at least one time each month.
- **Summer Programs** – ASBVI houses and coordinates two very important summer programs- Summer Camp and Jump Start. Summer Camp is designed to provide educational and Expanded Core Curriculum intervention services for students who are in grades one through the age of 15 years. JumpStart is geared toward older students, ages 16 through 21 years. JumpStart, through partnership with Division of Services for the Blind, provides paid work experiences throughout the greater Little Rock community. Both programs are 3 weeks in length and historically provide programmatic services for over 65 students (46 in Summer Camp and 20 in JumpStart).
- **Prison Braille Project** – The Wrightsville Unit of the Arkansas Department of Corrections houses our prison braille project. Currently 2 inmates are certified as transcriptionists, with 1 more inmate working to earn his certification. The inmates are working to provide Braille and large print materials for students all over the state of Arkansas. There are 75 students receiving services from the Instructional Resource Center housed at ASBVI – 50 students receive large print materials and 25 students receive Braille materials.
- **The Low Vision Clinic** – The Low Vision Clinic at the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired offers premier assessments for students who are identified as having impaired vision. Each week Dr. Kennan Doan, OD visits the school and examines students with the goal of maximizing their visual efficiency through the prescription of optical devices or functional related services (O&M, etc.). Of the approximate 128 students served through the Low Vision Clinic, one-fourth (32) of those students are public school students.
- **The Braille Challenge** – The Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired hosts the Regional Braille Challenge competition. The goal of the program is to identify and prepare Braille students for the annual National Braille Competition in Los Angeles, California. Each year students from all over the South East region of the US attend our Braille Challenge program. Last year all age groups were represented in all competitive categories; approximately 33 students competed for the overall top spot and trip to California.
- **Braille Boot Camp** – Quarterly our Braille Department offers parents, family members and care givers the opportunity to learn basics of literary Braille production (reading and

writing). Virtually each time the class is offered, between 5 and 10 members are present. The design of the class is to focus upon fundamentals and also to make learning Braille enjoyable for all those enrolled.

- **Cane Quest** – This is a new program that is very similar in format to the Braille Challenge. It advocates for excellence in Orientation and Mobility skills for blind and visually impaired students. ASBVI is excited to be able to offer this national/regional program on our campus.
- **Local Wellness Committee** – The Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired participates in the National School Lunch Program. The school has a Wellness Committee with the focus on encouraging healthy life-styles physical activity and nutrition. The committee coordinates the “Annual Turkey Walk”, Weekly Friday “Dance Days” at lunch and hosts several other events in which the community is involved. The committee also conducts an annual School Health Assessment to assist in setting goals and actions for the school year. The committee has developed a Wellness Policy which can be found on our website.

SCHOOL PROGRAMS:

General Education Curriculum

Virtual Arkansas/Distance Learning Curriculum

Gifted and Talented Program

Special Education Program

EAST

R.I.S.E.

Counseling Department

Licensed Certified Social Worker

Vocational Curriculum

Expanded Core Curriculum Program: Compensatory or Functional Academic Skills Including Communication Modes, Orientation and Mobility, Social Interaction Skills, Independent Living Skills, Recreation and Leisure Skills, Career Education, Use of Assistive Technology, Sensory Efficiency Skills, Self-determination

Extra-curricular: Track, Field, Wrestling, Swimming, Cheerleading, Goal Ball

Functional Curriculum

Licensed Infirmary

Media Center

Residential Program

Child Nutrition Program

Adaptive Technology

Physical Education

Instrumental Music

Choir

Fine Arts

Student Council

Family Career and Community Leaders of America

Future Business Leaders of America

Transition Activities: Work Place Readiness, Independent/Apartment Living, Work-study

ESOL – Teaching English to speakers of other languages

Builders Club – Kiwanis International

STRATEGIC PLANNING:

ASBVI as a school and a state agency has adopted the following strategic plan goals. The complete plan is posted on our website.

Goal 1: Rigorous and specialized academic programs for blind and visually impaired students statewide.

Goal 2: Parents to become primary stakeholders at ASBVI.

Goal 3: To offer relevant transition programs and services that will promote life-long learning, self-efficiency, and personal productivity in our students.

Goal 4: Ensure efficient operations and accountability for responsible use of state resources.

CONCLUSION:

The Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Website provides additional information related to the school, its board of trustees, staff, students and the school's educational programs. It can be found at arkansasschoolfortheblind.org. If you have additional questions you may contact any administrator at 501-296-1810. The administrators are as listed below:

James Caton, Superintendent
Justin Rasnick, Secondary Principal
Teresa Doan, Elementary Principal
Tyrone Williams, Special Education Supervisor