

Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired District Support Plan 2021-2022 School Year



Mission: To provide quality education and training for young people (birth through age twenty-one) who are visually impaired so that they possess the required skills to become personally productive and self-sufficient citizens.

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

Introduction

This year's District Support Plan focuses on support for the Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Plans. One of our major focuses as a school will be addressing learning loss and achievement gaps that are largely a result of the impacts of the pandemic and Covid-19. The district will be setting aside a minimum of 20% of the ARP (American Rescue Plan) funds received to specifically address this area.

Last year we built in support for the ADE Ready for Learning Model in order to provide instruction to students regardless of the setting. While we will not be offering a virtual option off campus for students this year we will continue to build upon our use of technology to supplement student instruction and further develop blended and remote learning systems within the Ready for Learning Model.

The Ready for Learning Model incorporates a guaranteed and viable curriculum, blended learning and a student-focused approach. Also included are diagnostic assessments to assist us in addressing learning loss. In addition, the plan includes the extensive use of technology in order to implement blended and remote learning systems. Training for teachers in utilizing blended and remote learning approaches as well as a Learning Management System (LMS) is also included. Finally, the Ready for Learning model also addresses support for and communication with families and students as they engage with us in these new instructional delivery methods. We feel that even with returning to a face-to-face on campus learning environment these areas are still vital for us to continue to build upon and develop to best meet the needs of our students.

In addition the District Support Plan includes our Literacy Plan that addresses improving outcomes for our students on the Reading section of the annual state Aspire assessment for grades 3-8. The last section of the support plan reflects the district's support of the Wellness Priority goals as developed by the school's Wellness Committee and incorporated into the Elementary and Secondary Schools improvement plans. We recognize more than ever the importance of student physical, emotional and mental health needs and how these areas impact their success in the academic and expanded core curriculum areas.

While we recognize that the 2021-2022 school year will once again present us with the ongoing challenges of dealing with Covid-19 we also recognize the commitment and dedication of our ASBVI family to meeting the special needs of our students and families. We are confident that with the right support and resources we will all be successful in this endeavor. It is the intention of this District Support Plan to reflect the support and resources we are committed to delivering to our students, parents, staff, and community.

District Support of the Elementary and Secondary Improvement Plans

ASBVI is a specialized school district on one campus that is comprised of students from PK-12. All students are students with disabilities that are blind or visually impaired and are served under IDEA with Individual Education Plans (IEP). All students are referred by their local school

districts to ASBVI. All students are considered at risk based on their disabilities. The school serves both local students and students from all over the state.

Class and grade sizes are relatively small (generally <10) and will vary each year according to the number of students moving forward to the next grade and according to new referrals of students from local school districts. Due to the relatively low number of students in each grade and the school as a whole data related to numbers and subgroups is typically skewed and cannot be relied upon alone as an overall needs assessment process.

Students at ASBVI have many needs in addition to their visual needs. Staff, parents, stakeholders and other community partners plays a vital role in meeting those needs. While ASBVI recognizes that other factors related to demographics and other types of subgroups can impact student growth the primary focus of the school is on students' visual needs and compensatory skills. In addition, the school is also focused on growth in the nine areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC). These areas are comprised of essential compensatory skills that directly relate to the needs of blind and visually impaired students. These two areas of focus must form the foundation for student academic and career success.

Individual student data as found within each student's IEP informs the overall needs assessment process. The IEP is each individual student's Student Success Plan. ASBVI assesses many forms of student data that includes Functional Vision Assessments, psychological testing, and academic/career skills assessments. In addition, data related to student attendance, teacher effectiveness (especially as a Teacher of the Visually Impaired) and parent engagement is assessed.

Both the Elementary and Secondary school have identified targeted areas for improvement within their plans. As a district we are committed to supporting the overall plans of the school and making available the necessary resources to meet the goals within the plans.

Elementary School

1. Increased student attendance

ASBVI recognizes the vital importance of student attendance as it relates to student learning and success and supports the Elementary school's efforts to improve attendance. Funding and other necessary resources will be provided as needed to provide student incentives and provide consistent communication to parents and the referring district.

2. Increased reading and writing skills

ASBVI recognizes the vital importance of a strong foundation in the English Language Arts (ELA) and supports the school's efforts to improve reading and writing skills. Funding and other necessary resources for requested curriculum, supplemental instructional tools and materials, and student activities to promote literacy will be provided as necessary throughout the school year. Resources related to professional development and training in the RISE initiative for the Science of Reading, will be provided as requested and needed throughout the school year.

3. Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) skills

ASBVI recognizes the ECC as one of the school's primary focuses in teaching blind and visually impaired students the compensatory skills that lead to independence and lifelong success. Funding and other necessary resources will be provided as needed to provide professional development related to the ECC skills especially for our teachers and staff that are new to the field of blindness. Funding and resources as necessary will also be provided for requested student activities and parent communication initiatives as it relates to the ECC.

4. Increased student accountability/responsibility

ASBVI recognizes the vital importance of student accountability and responsibility in developing students into successful learners and independent and productive citizens. Funding and other necessary resources will be provided as needed for staff development, student activities and materials that can help support a culture and climate of student accountability and responsibility. The school's counseling and mental health departments will be provided with requested resources as necessary.

5. Addressing Learning Loss for Core Academic Areas

ASBVI recognizes the impact on student learning that the pandemic and Covid-19 has created. The Elementary staff is committed to assessing students during the first 2 weeks of school to obtain specific data regarding achievement gaps in student learning. The district is committed to supporting the Elementary team in this task. Funding and other necessary resources for addressing learning loss in core academic areas will be made available. The district will set aside at least 20% of the ARP funding to address learning loss.

Secondary School

1. Reading

ASBVI recognizes the vital importance of a strong foundation in the English Language Arts (ELA) and supports the school's efforts to improve reading and writing skills and outcomes on the state assessment. Funding and other necessary resources for requested curriculum, supplemental instructional tools and materials, and student activities to promote literacy will be provided as necessary throughout the school year. Resources related to professional development and training in the RISE initiative for the Science of Reading will be provided as requested and needed throughout the school year

2. Mathematics

ASBVI recognizes the vital importance of a strong foundation in mathematics and supports the school's efforts to improve mathematic skills and outcomes on the state assessment. Funding and other necessary resources for requested curriculum, supplemental instructional tools and materials, and student activities to promote math skills will be provided as necessary throughout the school year. Resources related to professional development for staff will be provided. Time will be dedicated to developing a structured math curriculum that is aligned vertically between Elementary and Secondary schools.

3. Attendance

ASBVI recognizes the vital importance of student attendance as it relates to student learning and success and supports the school's efforts to improve attendance. Funding and other necessary resources will be provided as needed to provide student incentives and provide consistent communication to parents and the referring district.

4. Plans for Post-secondary success

ASBVI recognizes that students must not only be successful in their learning but should be prepared to successfully transition into post-secondary learning and career training opportunities. ASBVI supports the school's efforts in taking a team approach to transition that includes the student, parents and staff. Resources necessary to support this effort will be provided as requested.

5. Addressing Learning Loss

ASBVI recognizes the impact on student learning that the pandemic and Covid-19 has created. The Secondary staff is committed to assessing students during the first 2 weeks of school to obtain specific data regarding achievement gaps in student learning. The district is committed to supporting the Secondary team in this task. Funding and other necessary resources for addressing learning loss in core academic areas will be made available. The district will set aside at least 20% of the ARP funding to address learning loss.

Monitoring Timeline and Written Expectations

School Improvement Plans will be monitored during weekly administrative staff meetings. This will allow for frequent monitoring and feedback as well as for keeping the plans linked and relevant to the everyday work with students and staff. It is expected that school leaders will be able to address specific areas of the plan and highlight specific efforts in place and progress as well as present requests for resources and support.

Evaluation Timeline and Expectations

School improvement plans will be evaluated at the end of each nine-week period and revised as necessary. Since ASBVI is a combined school district evaluation will take place as a team comprised of the Superintendent, Principals, Special Education Supervisor, and Lead Teachers. The team will look at data sources related to each area in the plan and assess where revisions need to be made.

Funding

ASBVI is a state agency and works within the constraints of a state budget and general revenue appropriation for the operation of the school and the meeting of students' needs. ASBVI at this time does not receive ESA or other categorical funding normally associated with a public-school system. However, ASBVI remains committed to prioritizing funds in support of the Elementary and Secondary schools.

District Literacy Plan

ASBVI will be using reading data from the 2020-2021 assessment to inform our literacy plan. In addition, we will use data collected from the Star 360 diagnostic assessments to assess further gaps students might have in reading.

2020-2021 data from the ACT Aspire state assessment shows that 53% of students in grades 3-8 scored “in need of support” on the Reading section of the assessment. This is an increase from our last scores from 2018-2019 of 44.68% in need of support. While we were hoping to see some improvement for the overall grade range we recognize the impact of the pandemic and Covid-19 along with early school closures on the learning outcomes for our students.

ASBVI recognizes the special needs of our students with blindness and visual impairments and the challenges they face in successfully navigating the state assessment. ASBVI also recognizes the vital importance of our students being able to meet those challenges as they prepare for transition towards college and career success and towards productive lives of independence. Additionally, ASBVI recognizes that effective and strong reading skills are an essential foundation to success in other content areas pursued by the student.

In order to accomplish improved student outcomes in the area of reading on the annual state assessment ASBVI will begin work with the following goals during the 2021-2022 school year.

Goals

1. For the 2022 ACT Aspire state assessment the students currently “in need of support” will obtain scores at least 15 percentage points higher than the last assessment results.
2. For the 2022 ACT Aspire state assessment ASBVI will increase the percentage of students moving from “in need of support” to “close” by 6%. In addition ASBVI will increase the percentage of students moving from “close” to “ready” by 8%.
3. In support of improved reading skills and improved student outcomes on the ACT Aspire state assessment for reading; ASBVI will continue to provide professional development opportunities during the 2021-2022 school year for instructional staff to continue to demonstrate proficiency and mastery in the Science of Reading.
4. Continue to build and develop a school-wide Literacy/Reading Intervention Team.

Funding/Resources

ASBVI is a state agency and works within the constraints of a state budget and general revenue appropriation for the operation of the school and the meeting of students’ needs. ASBVI at this time does not receive ESA or other categorical funding normally associated with a public school system.

ASBVI is committed to prioritization of funding towards needs related to reading skills and instruction. ASBVI will also provide necessary resources as they are needed by the schools to work towards improved student outcomes in reading skills and on the state assessment.

Literacy Updates

ASBVI will continue to utilize the Heggerty curriculum and Benchmark Workshop curriculum during the 2021-2022 school year. For the new school year, we have added 6th grade curriculum to the Benchmark Workshop. We have also added Study Synch curriculum for 7-12 grade. In addition, ASBVI has also trained staff on the Wilson Reading screening and provided PD on data usage using Freckle/Star 360 assessments.

ASBVI now has 2 lead staff that are certified as SoR Assessors. In addition, instructional staff have demonstrated proficiency and awareness requirements in the Science of Reading.

For the 2021-2022 school year ASBVI has added a dyslexia/reading specialist to the staff and a reading interventionist. These additions demonstrate our goal of building and developing a robust literacy/reading intervention team to support our students and instructional staff.

ASBVI faces a unique challenge in implementing the Science of Reading for students with blindness and visual impairments. Many of these challenges are related to materials and methods being made accessible for the use of blind and visually impaired students. We are committed though to integrating the Science of Reading into braille literacy and literacy for visually impaired students. ASBVI is also committed to examining the research available in the field of blindness as it relates to reading instruction and successful outcomes for students.

District Support for the ASBVI Wellness Priority for School Improvement

The Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired is committed to the academic, mental, and physical wellness of all students. In order to address the various needs of the students we take every opportunity to create positive, safe, and health conscious learning environments at all levels in various settings throughout the school.

During the 2021-2022 school year the district will support the school Wellness Committee by supporting the following Wellness Priority Goals.

Goal 1: The LEA will provide coordination and support to create a healthy nutrition environment for students.

Goal 2: The LEA will provide coordination and support to create an environment that promotes physical activity and provides quality physical education for students.

Goal 3: The LEA will provide professional development for school staff that promotes healthy nutrition and physical activity.

Goal 4: The LEA will provide coordination to support a safe and healthy learning environment.

Conclusion

The District Support Plan along with the Elementary and Secondary Improvement Plans are considered living documents and will be revised and updated as necessary to reflect a continuous cycle of improvement at ASBVI. Our approach is one of Plan, Do, and Check.

For over one-hundred and sixty years ASBVI has been educating blind and visually impaired students in the state of Arkansas. The years have brought many challenges. Through a dedicated staff, community and Board of Trustees that puts students first we have met those challenges. COVID-19, missed learning from the previous year, and the need to implement new instructional delivery methods to ensure the continuity of learning are some of the new challenges we face in 2021-2022. Through putting kids first and the commitment to a continuous cycle of improvement ASBVI will meet these challenges as well. At ASBVI “It’s all about the Kids”!