



# Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind

2400 W. Markham • Little Rock, Arkansas • 72205 • (501) 324-9506 • (501) 296-1810

Jacob Oliva  
Secretary

K. Nicole Walsh  
Superintendent

## ARDB Superintendent Report October 2025

### Update

**Building:** The foundation for the new building in 2 of the 4 areas is complete. Underslab electrical and plumbing are also complete. The board room/storm shelter footings have been poured and will be reinforced before the underslab electrical and plumbing go in. We are moving right along schedule. The first steel package has been delivered and erection of the structure has started.

**Celebrations:** Our school celebrated its second collaborative White Cane Safety Day where the blind department and deaf department came together to experience navigation and the importance of the white cane to the blind community. Students interacted well and had so much fun!

**Notable:** Lori Cole, Jena McDonnell, and Nicole Walsh attended the 2025 APH Annual Meeting in Louisville, KY. They gained valuable insight into new options coming from APH, latest info in instruction for BVI students and made important connections to support our teachers.

---

### Human Capital Update

#### New Hires/Rehires

- Allen Harris, Residential Care Coordinator
- Dana Rogers, LPN
- Shawn Galmore, Maintenance Technician
- Anfernee Floyd, Speech Pathologist
- Jessica Talley, Residential Care Coordinator
- Margaret Jones, LPN
- Christen Etherly, Registered Nurse
- Sue Green, Teacher II
- Laura Yarberry, Teacher II

## **Transfer to/from Other State Agency or Other Position**

- Randi Brazeal, Teacher II
- Jayden Sprout, Residential Care Coordinator
- James Stacks, Maintenance Technician

## **Resignations/Terminations**

- Nelda Strickland, Teacher II
  - Susan Fuchs, Residential care Coordinator
  - Kiara Hatchett, Education Paraprofessional
  - Kevin Kenreich, Inventory Supervisor
- 

## **Facilities Update**

### **Work Completed**

- 174 work requests completed in September; average 2-day completion time.
- Replaced the west-end sanitary sewer trunk line under Breeding.
- Installed a new four-inch water meter serving multiple campus buildings.

### **Maintenance**

- Routine maintenance included HVAC repairs, lighting retrofits, and grounds upkeep.
- Emergency repair completed for the Breeding Cafeteria sanitary waste line after failure of a 60-year-old cast-iron pipe.
- Preventive maintenance focused on HVAC filter changes and coil cleaning.

### **Improvement Projects**

- In progress: Installation of tankless water heaters in Marsden and Bradley (scheduled for Fall Break).
- Maintenance Shop Reorganization: Ongoing cleanup and equipment storage improvements using Milwaukee “Packout” systems.

### **Professional Development**

- Facilities staff attended the 54th Annual ASPMA Conference in Hot Springs, focusing on operations and safety training.

### **Resource Management**

- Waste removal cost savings of \$18,000 realized over the past year.
- Implementation of InventoryHQ module for improved inventory tracking.

### **Energy & Sustainability**

- Unused refrigerators unplugged to reduce power use.
- Continued development of recycling and waste reduction programs.

### **Staffing & Recognition**

- New Hire: Shawn Galmore rejoined the maintenance/custodial team on September 2.
- Recognition: Shawn Galmore commended for strong performance in grounds maintenance.

### **Challenges**

- Heavy workload due to multiple concurrent moves and project demands.
- 

## **School Operations Update**

### **Deaf Department (Principal: KaAnn Varner)**

#### **Enrollment, Attendance & Demographics**

- Elementary: 37 students (94% attendance)
- Secondary: 55 students (92% attendance)
- Total Enrollment: 92 students
- Average Attendance: 93%
- Gender Distribution: 58% male, 42% female

#### **Behavioral Data**

- 138 total incident reports
- 98 occurred during school hours (≈71%)
- Average of 4.7 incidents per school day
- Most common issues: defiance, classroom disruption
- 1 In-School Suspension (ISS); 2 Out-of-School Suspensions (OSS)

#### **Highlights**

- Fall sports: 17 volleyball participants (9 varsity, 6 JV), 10 football players, 9 cheerleaders, and 1 cross-country runner.
- Hosted 4th Annual Leopard Spikeout Volleyball Tournament with teams from four states; Mississippi School for the Deaf won.

- Students performed the National Anthem (sung and signed) at the State Board of Education meeting.
- Conducted NWEA Map Testing (Grades 3–12) with full participation.
- Joint Student Advisory Meeting with Blind Department to discuss ideas and concerns.
- Junior Class Fundraiser (Car Wash) held September 26.
- Multiple ROAR Store openings and student safety presentations.
- Mentorship: New teachers met with mentors and worked on classroom organization.

## Challenges

- Ongoing restroom maintenance and removal of unused M&R items.
- Need for a student internet monitoring program and staff training in Aristotlek12.
- ParentSquare not fully functional.

## Goals – October

- Academic: Continue monitoring HQIM material use.
  - Behavioral: Ensure SEL time for all grades.
  - School Culture: Encourage student responsibility for health, behavior, and academics.
  - Special Education: Support IEP transfer and SpedTrack troubleshooting.
- 

## Blind Department (Principal: Lori Cole)

### Enrollment & Attendance

- 25 elementary and 25 secondary students.
- Attendance declined slightly in October due to seasonal illnesses.

### Academic Performance

- 100% participation in 2024–2025 ATLAS Summative Assessments.
- Noted declines in Level 3–4 scoring attributed to accessibility barriers and small sample size.
- NWEA Map Testing: 92% of elementary and 76% of secondary students showed improvement.
- ELA teachers to begin ARC curriculum implementation in October.

### Achievements

- Elementary and Secondary Students of the Month were named.
- Girls' track team earned 2nd place in NCASB Championship.
  - One of our students received Outstanding Athlete Award.
  - Another student nearly broke a 1980s high jump record.
- Leadership Development: Steven Faught, Brandey Burnett, and Dakota Dalton participating in the Leadership Academy.

## Behavior & PBIS

- One in-school suspension.
- PBIS and ROAR Store launched successfully and continue to engage students.

## Challenges

- Balancing grade-level standards with differentiated instruction.
  - Addressing behavioral issues tied to external stressors; supported by counselors and mental health staff.
- 

## Special Services Update

### Food Services

- September Meals Served: Breakfast 2,080 | Lunch 2,311 | 21 Days Served
  - Eligibility: Free – 82 | Reduced – 12 | Paid – 77
  - Focus on nutritious, balanced meals for both campuses.
- 

### Nursing & Health Services

- Team: 3 RNs, 3 LPNs, 1 CCMA under Health Services Director Deana Shields.
  - Student Encounters: ~425 (Sept–Oct)
  - Ongoing management of chronic conditions: asthma, seizures, diabetes, ADHD.
  - Preventive Care: Flu Clinic scheduled for Oct. 30; focus on hygiene and infection control.
  - Support: Coverage for residential, athletic, and extracurricular events.
  - Goals: Strengthen coordination with dorm and classroom staff; restock medical supplies; continue emergency protocol training.
- 

## Special Education & Admissions

### Staffing:

- LeAnn Brazeal and Laura Yarberry joined the Special Education Department in September.

### Professional Development:

- Teachers and case managers participated in HQMI and SpedTrack training sessions.

### Progress:

- Continued advancement toward completion of Compliance Action Plans.
  - Review and update of admissions policy in progress.
- 

## Related Services

### Staffing Updates:

- Lenae Haley, Speech-Language Pathologist, returned from maternity leave October 14.

### Caseloads:

- Speech-Language Pathology – 96 students
- Occupational Therapy – 54 students
- Physical Therapy – 35 students
- Orientation & Mobility – ~50 students

### Professional Development:

- Staff completed ADE training on integrated and push-in therapy models.

### Key Initiatives:

- Expansion of inclusive, in-class therapy models.
- Launch of SEL lessons for grades K–6 using *Inside Out* curriculum.
- Behavior Intervention Team conducting fidelity checks on student BIPs.
- Focus on ASL language access and consistency across settings.

### Reimbursement Update:

- Billed: \$80,054.68 | Received: \$379.92 (delays due to new agency setup and verification processes).

### Future Goals:

- Complete D/HH Language Access Plans by Dec. 2026.
  - Continue diagnostic expansion for Low Vision and Audiology Clinics.
- 

## Dorms

- Improved staffing and student care.

- Joint Deaf/Blind haunted house and fall events planned.
  - Increased focus on independence and life skills through weekly group sessions.
  - New dorm staff policies implemented to clarify responsibilities.
- 

## Mental Health & Counseling

- Ongoing student support through counseling and SEL integration.
  - Collaboration with RPI counselor and ARDB staff.
  - Data: 138 behavior incidents in September (up from 77 in August); 4.7 incidents per day average.
  - One ISS and two OSS cases recorded.
  - Programs: WIN schedule for SEL focus; *Inside Out* curriculum lessons; Friday Food Bag program.
  - Continued McKinney–Vento compliance monitoring.
- 

## Statewide Services

### Services Provided (September):

- 35 Developmental Therapy Sessions (ages 0–3)
- 17 Consults (ages 0–5)
- 7 IFSP Conferences, 7 New Referrals, 4 Family Engagements
- Total Families Served: 84

### Professional Development:

- Ongoing PTRF Foundations training; participation in Third Thursday Task Force.

### Compliance:

- Completed “Universal Level Targeted TA for 2025 Determination Rating.”
- Cleared data verification checklist for annual audit.

### Collaboration:

- Active partnerships with Vision and Hearing Collaborative and state audiologist; improved family data systems through IT collaboration.