



# Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind

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## Superintendent's Report

Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind

August 2025

### Events

#### Building Progress

- The foundation prep is nearly complete—building pad is done and footings are being dug.
- Installation of new waterlines is underway to ensure consistent water pressure throughout the 91,000 sq ft building.
- During excavation, we identified several undocumented water, sewer, and gas lines. Thanks to the professionalism and efficiency of RedStone Group and Nabholz Contractors, these were swiftly and safely addressed.

#### Celebrations & School Year Kickoff

- We are incredibly proud of our admin teams across both campuses. Their collaboration has created stronger support systems for staff, students, and families.
- ARDB's AR App- a report that covers our district support planning and school data was approved by the Department of Education. This is a significant improvement over last year when it wasn't approved until much later in the school year.
- Kudos to every department—from facilities to administration—for staying focused on our mission: serving students.
- Most importantly: our students are back! We welcome a mix of returning students and new faces—all energized and ready for the year.
- Please join me in celebrating a smooth and successful first week of the 2025–26 school year!

### Human Capital Updates

#### New Hire/Rehire/Lateral Transfer:

1. Chamika Burkley, Education Paraprofessional
2. Terri Stokes, Teacher II
3. Michelle Hampton, Education Paraprofessional (Rehire)

4. Nikita Albert, Cook (Rehire)
5. Valerie Varner, Principal (Lateral Transfer)
6. Miranda Atkins, Education Paraprofessional (Lateral Transfer)

**Termination/Retirement:**

1. Lynn Brooks, Teacher II (Retirement)
2. Rayburn Boland, Principal (Voluntary)
3. Cameron Upton, Teacher II (Voluntary)

## School Operations Updates

**ARDB School Demographics: Registration Report for 2025-2026**

- ARDB current enrollment: 140 students
- Blind Department = 51 students and Deaf Department 89 students.
- Five students have not completed registration, so enrollment could increase.
- There were 8 new students enrolled in the Deaf Department and 4 new students enrolled in the Blind Department for 2025-2026.
- Three students enrolled in Concurrent Credit World History.
- One student enrolled in Concurrent Credit College Algebra at UALR and a second is in the works.
- Five students enrolled in Culinary Arts 1
- Five students enrolled in Culinary Arts 2
- One Blind Department student enrolled in ASL 1
- One Deaf Department junior working hard to graduate early in May 2026

**Blind Department**

Teacher back to school week was quite a success! Special thanks to Donna VanDevender for all the hard work scheduling the professional development opportunities for all.

**Teacher Shoutout**

- Great job to all teachers getting ready for the upcoming school year! I am very happy to welcome Terri Stokes as a special education teacher this year, as well as Trista Burton- 6<sup>th</sup> grade, Nikki Finney- 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, Canedra Bingham- 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
- We were also able to hire new paraprofessionals: Michelle Hampton, Chamika Burkley, and Krystal Barnett.

**Behavioral Data**

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

- The blind department is in the process of developing our ROAR store. Student surveys will be sent out the first week for store items.

- Expectation posters have been made and will be posted for day 1 of school.

### **Action Plan**

- Goals for the Upcoming month
  - Have the best back to school month ever!
- Strategies and Interventions
  - Prioritize needs for 25-26 school year
    - Communication
    - Academic excellence
- Success factors
  - Get 100% parents and staff enrolled onto Parent Square

### **Deaf Department**

June 30 -July 2	Leadership Team Retreat at the Arkansas Department of Commerce
July 3	Complaint Investigation Interview
July 7	Meeting to discuss Sensory Calm Down Area
July 9	Administrators met with ADE HR
July 10	Met with new ADCC Director Mandy Akins
July 14	KaAnn and Lori Cole met to discuss start of the year expectations
July 17	Met with Special Services Director for IEP review
July 15-17	ADE Summit in Hot Springs
July 21-25	Optional Back to School Professional Development
July 28 – August 1	Required Back to School Professional Development
July 28-August 1	Sports Camp – Football and Volleyball

### **Campus Classroom & Office Moves**

There has been quite a bit of moving around on the Deaf Department campus. Teachers, SLPs, and counselors have relocated to new spaces. This was done out of the need to have two departments instead of three. We now have Elementary ECC-6<sup>th</sup> grade and Secondary 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grades. The moves were also necessary to vacate Parnell for the upcoming construction to install another elevator.

### **Library Update**

All Deaf Department Library Services will be in Reed Building. Books and Items from the Middle School and Lower School libraries have been relocated into one library space.

### **High-Quality Instructional Materials HQIM**

- HQIM training was completed during Back to School Week.

- All staff participated in their relevant trainings.
- We look forward to welcoming Kids First Coaching to both departments to support instructional fidelity.

### **Schedule**

The Master Schedule is complete. Several students from the Blind Department will take Culinary Arts with the Deaf Department. One elementary Blind Department class plans to join the Deaf Department Robotics Class with their classroom teacher co-teaching. One student from the Blind Department has joined Football and is doing great.

### **Professional Development**

In addition to the ADE Summit and on our campus PD, several teachers and paras attended professional development at the Arkansas River Educational Co-op in Pine Bluff.

## **Special Services Department**

### **Student Support:**

- ASD Transition Team has a monthly recurring meeting set with Jeremy Hogue (Transition Consultant). The group is continuing work on updating the PISA plan and developing a High School Transition Program from grade 8-13.
- SpedTrack – As of 8/4 -company is ready to begin integration with new faculty & student information for the new school year.
- Complaint Interviews: C-26-2 (Admissions Process)

### **Professional Development/Training:**

- Provided Annual Confidentiality Training to Staff for Back-to-School Week
- Provided Special Education Updates and SpedTrack Overview to ARDB Staff at Back-to-School Week.
- Participated in Admin Leadership Retreat

Challenges and Successes faced in meeting student needs and successes achieved during the month:

### **Challenges**

- Not being able to integrate SpedTrack prior to the first week of school.

### **Successes**

- High School Transition Team Meetings
- Professional Development Week

## **Goals**

- Enhance the infirmity program by increasing the numbers of nursing staff members.
- Have all documentation submitted to ADE Special Education department.
- Continued compliance with Special Education/Due Process practices through continued monitoring and training for teachers who serve in the role of “case manager”/Advocate.
- Continued provision of mental health therapy/support for residential students.

## **Statewide Services**

### **Program Updates**

Big News! Statewide Services began its first week with the birth to three program from the Blind department, and we are DEFINITELY “Better Together.” The department welcomes Shelli Hardman and Alisha Allred to Statewide Services.

### **Services Provided in July**

- 31 Developmental Therapy Sessions (0-3 years old)
- 1 Consult (3-5 years old)
- 8 IFSP Conferences (0-3)
- 5 New Referrals (0-3)
- 3 Family Engagements (0-3)
- 3 EI Evaluations (0-3)
- 3 Transition to Part B

### **Enrollment Numbers**

- 31 IFSP 0-3
- 22 Consult

The department has earned \$3,006.00 in Part C funding and \$3,567.00 in Medicaid funding since 5/9/2025

## **Professional Development**

Dr. Cobb provided training on using the Visual Communication and Sign Language (VCSL) checklist and the Child Cochlear Implant Profile (CHIP) Rating scales are used to measure the progress of infants and toddlers on language development and potential candidacy for cochlear implants. Both of these tools are used on a national level and require experience in working with the birth to 3-year-old populations. Participants in this training will practice using these scales to make informal evaluations regarding the progress of the families they serve. Participants in this session must have a current Developmental Therapy license.

Kate Berry and Dana Darr continued to attend the PBC Community of Practice III monthly training.

PBC Communities of Practice sessions included:

- Reflecting on how participants are using what they learned in the PBC ECHO sessions
- Talking through any challenges or questions that have come up
- Brainstorming ideas and solutions together
- Sharing experiences, insights, and expertise with one another

## **Compliance and Reporting**

Dr. Cobb and Kate Berry participated in ERAVE training to effectively report non-IFSP infants and toddlers—a key component of Arkansas's statewide electronic vital events system. Additionally, new staff received essential training on federal and state compliance pertaining to IFSP services and Medicaid billing, emphasizing that only licensed professionals may deliver services to infants and toddlers under Individualized Family Service Plans. The training was tailored for individuals who either hold or are actively pursuing a Developmental Therapy (DT) license, particularly those preparing to serve Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) and/or Blind and Vision Impaired (BVI) populations and provided a thorough overview of applicable Part C laws. Certified staff also completed their required summer training to maintain compliance with Arkansas Department of Education licensure standards.

## **Professional Collaboration**

Met with Kristen Hammontree, Family Services Coordinator/Deaf Mentor, and Victoria Haggarty, Director of the Regional Early Acquisition of Language center to discuss free resources for families of children under four years of age.

### **Food Services**

- June Meals Served: Breakfast –270
- Lunch – 279
- Days Served – 5
- Eligibility Numbers as of 6/30: Free 47, Reduced 10, and Paid 38.

### **Dorm**

Blind department:

- Prewitt we have 2 staff during 4p-12a with 8 students and one 12a-8a staff
- At Schultz we have 5 students and one 4p-12a staff
- We have 3 staff pending, waiting on their drug screen and background checks to return.

Deaf Department:

- Lower School Girls Dorm: we have one 4p-12a staff and one 12a-8a staff member with 5 students.
- Middle School Girls Dorm: one staff on duty for each shift.
- High School Girls Dorm: there is one staff member per shift with 8 students.
- Lower School Boys Dorm: 2 boys in residence with one staff member per shift.
- Middle school boys: there are 4 boys in residence with one house parent per shift.
- High school boys: we have 5 (4 more are coming soon) 2 staff members on 4p-12a shift and 1 staff member on 12a - 8a shift.

### **Special Education and Admissions**

- 0 ARDB Tours held for potential students.
- 7 New ARDB Admissions this month.
- 0 Denials for Admissions this month.

**IEP (Individualized Education Program) Updates:** Summary of IEP meetings held, new plans developed, and any significant changes.

<b>July Activity</b>	<b>ARDB</b>
IEP Meetings + SOPs	1
Existing Data Reviews (EDRs)	0
Evaluation Programming Conference w/ IEP development	0
Manifestation Determination Reviews (MDRs)	0
EC Transitions to Kinder	0

Significant change – Change in LEA Supervisor at end of July

## **Health Services**

### **Highlights**

#### **Sports Camp & Physicals**

- Sports Camp concluded successfully with no injuries reported.
- Sports physicals were performed by Teresa Whited, APRN; final evaluations are wrapping up this week.

#### **Back-to-School Week: Staff Training**

The Nurse Supervisor conducted comprehensive training sessions for staff covering:

- Special Health Care Needs (Parts 1 & 2): Mandatory for paraprofessionals to bill Medicaid for personal care services.
- Emergency Medical Response: Protocols for seizures, asthma, anaphylaxis, and adrenal crises.
- Medical Needs During Transportation: Guidance for chaperones on managing student health during transport.
- Special Education Confidentiality: Detailed coverage of HIPAA and FERPA compliance.

#### **New Staff Updates**

- Welcomed new nursing team members: Mary Roger, RN, and Bobbie Davenport, LPN, both of whom completed multiple back-to-school training sessions.
- Introduced Debbie Mays as the new Health Services Secretary.



**Student Registration & Current Operations**

- Successfully registered 176 students on campus.
- Administering 96 scheduled medications daily.
- All meal modification forms have been completed and shared with dietary staff, principals, and individualized teachers.
- Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) are currently being distributed to all relevant staff—including teachers, dorm supervisors, and transportation personnel.

**Staffing Update**

- Interviews are ongoing for open RN and LPN positions; there is optimism these roles will be filled soon.
- Tymberly Garrett, LPN (12 a.m.–8 a.m.), recently graduated as an RN and has accepted a hospital position. The team plans to retain her as PRN staff while wishing her the best in her new role.

**Final Thoughts from Health Services**

The school year has started off busy but highly successful. The Health Services team is energized and fully prepared to support staff and students. We look forward to a productive and healthy year ahead.