



Arkansas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired

2600 W. Markham • Little Rock, Arkansas • 72205 • (501) 296-1810 • Fax (501) 296-1831

Jacob Oliva
Secretary of Education

Dr. Chris Barnes
Interim Superintendent



Board of Trustees Superintendent Report January 2025

Dr. Chris Barnes, Interim Superintendent

This month, Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI) has been focused on student learning amidst many extracurricular activities. Below are some major points showcasing **ASBVI PRIDE** for the current month:

ASBVI Enrollment: 64 students

We enrolled two new 4th grade students.

Highlights and Activities

1. ASBVI Christmas Festivities: The week before Christmas was a magical time at ASBVI. On Wednesday, December 18, ASBVI held its Merry Grinchmas activity where students participated in a Christmas party, received Christmas gifts, and were visited by Santa Claus and The Grinch. On Thursday, December 19, ASBVI held its annual Christmas music performance and parent dinner where students performed renditions of wonderful Christmas songs for families. Dinner was served by the cafeteria team in order to support families attending the performance. On top of those activities, we had several staff coordinate our Angel Tree and Mail for the Military programs as well as seek funding from community partners to support student gift purchases. Special thanks to everyone who helped to ensure all of our festivities ran smoothly, especially Alicia Reddick, Algis Staskevicius, Brian Tanner, Terry Powell, Abby Jones, Barbara Cole and the cafeteria team, Betty Sanders, Nene Bingham, Lori Cole, Jena McDonnell, Robin Dean, Debbie Mayes, and many others behind the scenes.
2. Inclement weather has taken a few days out from regular programming at ASBVI. However, during the events, staff stepped up to ensure buildings and grounds were properly maintained and that transportation was effectively coordinated. Special thanks to Roy DePriest and the maintenance team for clearing snow



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from steps and sidewalks, Gary Wade and the transportation team for coordinating transportation plans with Village Travel and surrounding districts, David Burton and the security team for staying overnight to ensure the campus was secure, Lori Cole and Jena McDonnell for conducting building inspections, and the Arkansas Department of Transportation for clearing the roads on campus.

3. Upcoming Events

- ASBVI Spelling Bee: Thursday, January 16, at 1:00pm in Woolly Auditorium
- NCASB Wrestling and Cheer Conference Competition: January 24-26 at Tennessee School for the Blind in Nashville, TN.
- NWEA Winter Testing: January 27-31
- High School FBLA Conference: Wednesday, January 29 in Conway
- Arkansas Regional Braille Challenge and Cane Quest Challenge Event: Thursday, February 6

Human Capital Updates

ASBVI continues to struggle with filling vacant positions. The following positions are currently open and advertised:

- Teacher Supervisor (Interviews currently being conducted)
- Teacher–Special Education (Recommendation made and offer letter extended)
- Teacher–Gifted and Talented (shared with ASD)--no qualified applicants
- Teacher–Science 7-12 (working with ASD to see if we can share resources)

We have hired a new teacher, Josie Hall, who will be working with our Pre-K program. Miss Hall is an ASBVI alumnus and recent graduate from Harding University. We are excited to have Miss Hall on board.

Staffing for the infirmary is approaching critical mass. We currently have openings for a Registered Nurse Supervisor, Registered Nurse, and a Licensed Practical Nurse. We have conducted interviews for the Registered Nurse and Licensed Practical Nurse positions, and hope to have those positions filled by February 1. We are currently relying on contract services for nursing in order to provide proper staffing coverage.



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Building Project Developments

On Tuesday, January 14, the architect team met with specialty teachers, therapists, cafeteria managers, and the security team to gather feedback on design considerations for the new construction project. During the meeting, participants examined various layout options and shared insights on how these configurations could optimize their ability to deliver services effectively to students. The input provided will play a critical role as the architects integrate these considerations into the overall design in order to ensure the new spaces meet the unique needs of the school community.

Parent Square Communication Platform Coming to ASBVI

After significant troubleshooting involving our technology team and DIS and DESE officials, ASBVI is excited to announce the activation of the Parent Square Communication Platform. This new tool will enhance our ability to keep parents informed about campus events and updates. During a recent pilot, the platform was used to send inclement weather notifications, receiving positive feedback from both parents and staff. Parent Square seamlessly integrates with eSchool, automatically pulling contact information with changes applied through a nightly pull. While we plan to transition to using Parent Square exclusively for communication, staff training and parent information sessions are still needed. In the meantime, email will remain an active channel for updates until the system is fully implemented.

Commencement of 95th General Assembly and ASBVI Biennial Report

The regular legislative session for the 95th General Assembly convened at noon on Monday, January 13, and the regular session will last until April. During the next few months, several bills around education will be submitted for consideration into law, including some crucial ones directly referencing ASBVI and ASD as well as the appropriation bills for both schools. Mrs. Walsh and I plan to keep board members and stakeholders informed of developments in legislation that impacts the schools.



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One of the components of the legislative session is the legal requirement for ASBVI to provide the governor and general assembly with a report of the progress the school has made during the past two years along with recommendations for the upcoming biennium. The report was drafted and submitted on behalf of the school in accordance with the law.

January is National School Board Appreciation Month

As we celebrate School Board Appreciation Month this January, I want to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude to each member of the ASBVI and ASD Board of Trustees. Board Members: your service requires you to balance many different perspectives, often stepping outside of what might be considered popular or easy to ensure the right decisions are made for our students. This is no small task, yet you approach it with dedication, integrity, and a steadfast commitment to our mission. At ASBVI, we believe that everything we do is all about the kids, and your leadership embodies that belief in every decision you make. Your thoughtful guidance and tireless advocacy ensure our students receive the education, resources, and opportunities they deserve. On behalf of the entire school community, thank you for your selfless service and unwavering support.