



Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind

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Superintendent's Report Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind September 2025

Events and Updates

Key Updates

- Significant leaks have been reported in the Helen Keller Administrative Building cafeteria. Roy and his team are working to identify and repair the issue.
- At Breeding Cafeteria, a rusted sewer pipe has expanded into a full replacement—about 144 feet of piping from inside the building to the street. Roy has done a great job managing the project, but it highlights broader concerns with the building. We considered relocating to the HK building, but due to ongoing water and gas issues there, replacing the sewer line is the best option.
- The large charter bus used for sports transportation broke down in route to Minnesota last Friday. All students were safe, and we decided to bring them home. We're awaiting a diagnosis. Despite major repairs last year, we're now evaluating the safest and most effective path forward.

Building

Footings for the main building are nearly complete. This week, we're pouring the deeper, wider footings for the tornado shelter/board room/multipurpose room separately. Under-slab plumbing is underway, with electrical work starting soon. Progress remains strong, and we're still on track for steel delivery in early October.

Celebrations

Students had their first day of MAP testing and it went well! We look forward to sharing the results at October's workshop.

Human Capital Updates

New Hire/Rehire:

1. Anne Marie Toomer, Teacher II
2. Velise Burks, Residential Care Coordinator
3. John Brimley, Residential Care Coordinator
4. Micaela Williams, Education Paraprofessional, Rehire

Promotion/Demotion/Transfer:

1. Valtrice Easterling-Smalley, Education Paraprofessional, Promotion
2. Stacy Kratky, Teacher II, Internal Transfer, later resignation

3. Aaron Choate, Education Professional 1, Internal Transfer
4. Jerry Justin Billingsley, Education Paraprofessional, Voluntary Demotion
5. Jackie Pompeo, Teacher I, Extra Help to Regular employee

Termination/Retirement/Resignation:

1. Stacy Kratky, Teacher II, Voluntary
2. Erica Holmes, Teacher II, Voluntary

School Operations Updates

Blind Department

School Demographics

Total Number of Students

24 elementary

26 secondary

2 preschool students

2nd grade pre-referrals

Student Attendance Rates

Attendance rates are good overall. The first week was not a true measure, as several students were absent due to a number of buses not yet running as well as students who had moved but not yet updated their address.

Academic Performance

Standardized Test Scores- MAP and STAR

- Atlas scores have been released. These will be attached.
- Atlas k-3 screeners will begin on September 2.
- The NWEA map fall testing window will be September 13-17
- ARDB- Blind department is now a Accuplacer testing site and has tested 3 students. Additionally, we will be offering the ACT this fall.
- 3 student's test scores met the minimum score to take Concurrent World History through Arkansas Tech University. The high school cooperating teacher on campus is Steven Faught.

Achievements

- Bryson Selby received a 3 on the AP US history exam in spring of 2025.
- Student achievements should be noted on the Atlas assessment data.
- Interim reporting for the first nine weeks was due Friday, September 5.
- Bryson Selby is attending UALR for concurrent credit in College Algebra.

Teacher Shoutouts

- Christina Robertson- gaining her Sped Ed Visual license
- Tammy Harrison- gaining her biology license
- Katie Runder- licensed social work
- Josie Hall- Early Childhood/SPED Integrated License

Behavioral Data

- No suspensions
- Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
 - Students have been learning the expectations in the different areas of the school.
 - The Blind department high school cheerleaders created a “cheer” to teach the R-O-A-R. This has been included in the daily morning meeting.

Challenges and Struggles

- Academic Challenges
 - The first weeks of school after the summer break always brings minor challenges. Students are getting into the routine of learning. Teachers are doing quick assessments to learn what students know and what needs to be quickly retaught in order to teach new material.
- Behavioral Challenges
 - Along with academic challenges, students must get back into the routine and organized structure of the school day. Students have done well overall with the ROAR expectations.
- Resource Challenges
 - With ARDB beginning a new literacy journey with the ARC curriculum, the Blind Department is working to get all materials accessible to students. It’s a collaborative effort and one that will be a great switch. The librarian, Mrs. Moody, Donna VanDevender, and the Blind Department staff have been working together.

Action Plan for Improvement

- Goals for the Upcoming month
 - Communication (continued)
 - NWEA and Atlas Fall assessment window
- Success factors:
 - Get 100% of parents and staff enrolled onto Parent Square
 - Complete the testing window and analyze the data

Deaf Department

Key Highlights

- **Student Integration & Collaboration:** Students are actively participating in courses and sports across both campuses. Notably, a blind student joined the football team and is excelling. Cross-departmental collaborations continue, including ASL I for credit and future joint programs.
- **New Staff:** We welcomed Anne Marie Toomer as a new 2nd grade teacher. She brings valuable experience in Deaf Education and has deep roots in the community.
- **Events & Activities:**
 - August 8: Welcome Back Spirit Assembly
 - August 15: Professional Development on Planbook and Individual Health Needs
 - August 19: Staff ensured student safety during a severe storm at dismissal
 - August 28: Raptor/Lockdown PD
 - August 29: FLEX Friday – CPR/First Aid/Stop the Bleed PD
- **Communication & Engagement:**
 - Parent Square is the primary communication platform with families.
 - Class sponsors secured for Juniors and Seniors.
 - Club and sports sign-ups were structured to balance academics and extracurriculars.
- **Personnel Updates:** Blair Anderson transitioned to the Blind Department as Administrative Assistant. Justin Billingsley joined the Deaf Department as a para, also assisting with office duties.
- **Facilities & Safety:** Hallways in Shibley, Adcock, and Reed are cleared for safety. Plans are underway to upgrade the Shibley playground, with improvements targeted for both ECC and older elementary students.
- **Athletics:** ASD hosted a successful volleyball and football weekend with Oklahoma School for the Deaf and Scott Schools, marking the first football game of the 2025 season.
- **Technology & Systems:** SpedTrack has replaced SEAS as the new IEP system, offering enhanced features. Professional development and online training modules are available to staff.

School Demographics**Elementary Overview (ECC–6th Grade) - Enrollment Summary**

Grade	Total Students	Boys	Girls
Early Childhood Center	4	3	1
Kindergarten	6	3	3
1st Grade	3	0	3
2nd Grade Class A	3	1	2
2nd Grade Class B	5	2	3
3rd Grade	7	5	2
4th Grade	9	5	4
5th Grade	10	4	6
6th Grade	7	3	4
Total	54	26	28

Secondary Overview (7th–12th Grade) - Enrollment Summary

Grade	Total Students	Boys	Girls
7th Grade	6	4	2
8th Grade	7	3	4
9th Grade	5	0	5
10th Grade	6	4	2
11th Grade	8	4	4
12th Grade	6	3	3
Total	38	18	20

Days Absent by Grade (August)

Grade	Days Absent
ECC	13
Kindergarten (K)	4
1st Grade	5
2nd Grade	9
3rd Grade	8
4th Grade	14
5th Grade	4
6th Grade	5
7th Grade	8
8th Grade	5
9th Grade	5
10th Grade	13
11th Grade	12
12th Grade	2

Achievements

- **Athletic Camp Success:** Twenty student-athletes participated in a multi-sport athletic camp held during the last week of July. Students engaged in Cross Country, Cheerleading, Volleyball, and Football, building skills and team cohesion ahead of the fall season.
- **Fall Sports Participation:**
 - Volleyball: 17 participants
 - 9 Varsity, 6 Junior Varsity, and 2 sixth-grade students participating for experience
 - Current record: 1 win – 3 losses
 - Football: 10 players
 - Current record: 0 wins – 1 loss

- Cheerleading: 9 students actively cheering at events
- Cross Country: 1 runner
 - First meet scheduled for September 9th in Heber Springs

Teacher Shoutout

Kara Siemens: Kara Siemens teaches 6th Grade ELA and 4th–6th Grade Math. Formerly a middle school teacher, she transitioned to the Elementary Department following the ASD and ASBVI merge. Kara quickly connected with students and staff, bringing strong instructional skills and a passion for teaching—especially in math. In addition to her classroom role, she also serves as the Robotics Coach for the 6th–8th grade team. Her dedication and positive impact are evident throughout the school community.

Behavioral Data

• Discipline & Referral Summary

Total Referrals 88

- Grades with Highest Referrals:
 - 4th Grade: 22 referrals (25%)
 - 10th Grade: 17 referrals (19.32%)
 - 2nd Grade: 11 referrals (12.5%)

Referrals by Location

- Classrooms: Most referrals (approx. 36–38)
- Dorms: Second highest
- Hallways and Playground: Moderate
- Bus, Gym, Cafeteria: Fewest referrals

Disciplinary Actions

- In-School Suspensions: 2 events totaling 1 day, 2 students involved
- Out-of-School Suspensions: None
- Expulsions: None

• Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

- Overview of PBIS initiatives: ROAR Store
- Impact on student behavior: It is exciting that we will have our first ROAR store opening on September 5th. Students are working hard to earn tickets.
- Our ROAR store has relocated from Parnell to the first floor of Adcock. This is an excellent location. It is between the Elementary and Secondary Departments making accessibility easier.

Challenges and Struggles

- **Academic Challenges**

- Students are underperforming in all academic areas.
- Possible reasons for underperformance – Language deprivation which leads to reading/language deficiencies. We are working hard to overcome. We have two new ELA curriculums in our toolbox: Fingerspelling Our Way to Reading for grades K-3 and American Reading Company for grades 4-12.

- **Behavioral Challenges**

- New behaviors are manifesting in some students that have not been an issue before. We are collecting data, informing parents and meeting with them to implement supports in an effort to prevent these behaviors from escalating from Tier I to Tier II or Tier III.
- Some student families are unable to communicate with their child and this plays a huge role in behaviors. Many students are not learning norms for acceptable behavior from their parents because of the inability to discuss behaviors and solutions.

- **Resource Challenges**

- We are continuing to search for more effective and fun recess activities for K-5 students. I will be sending out a survey asking teachers, paras, and therapists for ideas and suggestions.
- The two new restroom stall doors in the boy's second floor restroom have not yet been repaired.
- It is difficult to maintain a hygienic smell in the restrooms. We have ordered something to be put into the restrooms that will help combat odors. It is especially noticeable downstairs near the adult restrooms at the main Shibley entrance to the building and in the ECC classrooms, hallways and restroom/changing room.

Action Plan for Improvement

- **Goals for the Upcoming month**

- Academic goal – Continue to gauge utilization of HQIM materials – note specific usage in CWT forms
- Behavioral goal – Continue encouraging teachers/staff to utilize more de-escalating techniques to redirect problem behaviors. We are noticing an increase in de-escalating techniques being utilized. Staff attendance at CPI de-escalation professional development seems to be making a big difference.
- School culture goal – Respect. Encourage students to have more respect for themselves and others.

Strategies and Interventions

- We are establishing collaborations between the SEL team and Lower School teachers to develop new positive ideas for encouraging students to take responsibility for their own actions including academics during the Health & Safety class period in the 2025-2026 school year.
- We plan to further analyze classroom data through observations, to determine how much the time-of-day influences behavior incidents.

Success factors

- We will know we were successful with our monthly goal when we have decreased SWIS reports with specific students involved.

Special Services Department

Nursing and Health Services

- For August 2025, the department documented 185 student visits to the infirmary
 - 173 students were able to return to class
 - 12 students were sent home
- 1 staff member requiring emergency transport
- 2 students were dismissed to guardians with instructions to go to Arkansas Children's Hospital emergency department.

The Health Services Department remains committed to fostering a safe, healthy, and supportive environment for all students and staff. With continued training, careful planning, and a dedicated team, we strive to ensure that every student has the resources and medical support necessary to thrive on campus.

Special Education & Admissions

We continue to work towards finishing our Compliance Action Plans and have made very good progress in both departments. A new LEA will be joining us on September 15th.

Related Services

- Speech-Language Pathology: 96 students (58%)
- Occupational Therapy: 54 students (32%)
- Physical Therapy: 35 students (20%)
- Orientation & Mobility: ~50 students (30%)
- Staffing Updates: - Converted two contractors to full-time: Physical Therapist (Ant. Floyd) and Behavior Support Specialist (former BCBA contractor).
- Achieved 100% staff CPR/First Aid/CPI certification; ancillary licenses are current.
- Collaboration: - Bi-monthly Language Access & Equity meetings.
- Bi-monthly Behavior Support Team meetings.

Dorms

Dorm staff reports indicate that the students are settling in nicely and being cooperative and following behavioral expectations as necessary. Our staffing situation has improved and the students are being taken care of appropriately.

Mental Health and Counseling

- The mental health counselor is working every Wednesday with students. She comes from RPI out of Russellville.
- Our school counselors and our social worker collaborate with each other and the staff to ensure that our students' needs are being met.

Statewide Services

Please note: the numbers below indicate services for both the Blind and Deaf Departments.

Services Provided in August

52 Developmental Therapy Sessions (0-3 years old)

9 Consults (0-5 years old)

4 IFSP Conferences (0-3)

8 New Referrals (0-3)

3 Family Engagements (0-3)

6 EI Evaluations (0-3)

2 Transition to Part B

Enrollment Numbers

31 IFSP 0-3

48 Consult 0-5

79 Families Served

Professional Development

- Kate Berry and Dana Darr continued to attend the PBC Community of Practice III monthly training.
- With the addition of the TVIs, the team has now started holding regular staffing meetings with individual therapists along with the monthly Statewide Services full team meetings.

Compliance and Reporting

- ERAVE training to maintain accurate data in the state vital records system
- Targeted Assistance training to satisfy federal requirements
- Data Verification with First Connections to correct errors prior to federal monitoring
- Medicaid update meeting with Belinda Grayham to analyze monthly billing report, prescription renewals, and Part C funding issues.

Professional Collaboration

After a break during the summer, the department has restarted meetings with the ACH Speech Therapy team, the Hearing and Vision Collaborative, and Part C Provider Call.

Related Services (e.g., Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, Counseling)

- All four speech pathologists have interns from various graduate programs across the state. This is a wonderful opportunity for us to educate future speech pathologists on working with students who are Deaf and hard of hearing.
- The audiologist continues to ensure the students have the most current and up to date equipment. Currently several of our students are eligible for cochlear implant processor upgrades. This can be a tedious process involving many agencies including AR Children's Hospital and Medicaid. There are three students going through the upgrade process and two that will be in the next six months. At this time on campus there are:
 - 22 students with bilateral CI processors.
 - 6 students with unilateral processors.
 - 4 who are bimodal meaning they have a hearing aid on one ear and a cochlear implant processor on the other.
 - 3 students are being reintroduced to their CI processor. This is a process of working through programs and making sure they are wearing the device.
 - 23 students wearing hearing aid.

Child Nutrition

August Meals Served:

Breakfast –1635

Lunch – 1882

Days Served – 19

Eligibility Numbers have not been determined yet.

Interpreting

Department Overview / Mission

The Interpreting Services Department at ARKDB provides equitable communication access for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing students, staff, families, and community stakeholders. We support both American Sign Language (ASL) and spoken language interpreting needs across all on and off-campus events.

Interpreter Staffing Update

Staff Interpreters: 1

Consistent Direct Contractors: 8

Agency Usage: Communication Plus+, Link501

Interns: Sydney Ward, Hope Tilton

Notable Updates

- The Interpreting Services Department was excited to welcome two new interns from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock's interpreting program in the first weeks of August. In alignment with our 'grow your own' philosophy, both interns have observed classroom teaching, staff meetings, infirmity happenings, and all manners of campus life.
- Clayton has successfully onboarded "Sorenson Express" onto campus to allow for brief communication between parties that do not share a common language. This is suitable for interpretation of American Sign Language, English, and Spanish when an in-person interpreter is not available.
- The Interpreting Services Department has also begun preliminary work with campus security to establish protocols for access and interpretation in the event of a crisis or catastrophe affecting campus.

Interpreter Assignments & Metrics

Category	This Month (August)	Year to Date
Educational Assignments	64	64
Mental Health Sessions	14	14
Medical Assignments	25	36
IEP Related Meetings	17	20
Staff Meetings	34	50
After-Hours	5	5
Spoken Language	5	13
Other Events (PD, Board Meetings, etc.)	21	78
Total	185	280

Initiatives / Improvements

- Sorenson Express
- Reunification/Crisis Planning
- Development of “quick tips” guides about using interpreters and working with Deaf individuals
- SLPI Training for staff

Challenges & Needs

- The interpreting services department is in dire need of more staff interpreters. To maintain the workload post-merger, it is necessary to hire at least two more full-time staff interpreters.
- We are also seeing an increase in preventable last-minute assignments; the interpreter request form has mitigated much of this issue but with the start of the new year expectations are still being reestablished.

Goals for Next Month

- Release a video training course for all staff on the proper etiquette for using an interpreter.
- Further establish the boundaries of the interpreter request form
- 1:1 training with nursing and security staff on emergency procedures and protocol with interpreters