



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 March 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: 63 students

Prospect for another student in 3rd grade possibly next week

PreKindergarten-Grade 6 = 31 students

Grade 7-Grade 12 = 32 students

Overall attendance rate has improved for the month of February, as the numbers of illnesses have diminished.

Highlights and Activities

1. Preparations for Upcoming Summative Assessments beginning next month: As the school year has progressed, students and staff have been dedicated to preparing for upcoming ATLAS summative assessments to begin in mid April and continuing into May. These assessments are critical in measuring student growth and academic achievement. Teachers have been implementing review sessions, practice tests, and targeted instruction to ensure students feel confident and prepared. Additionally, students have been working hard to complete assignments and projects as they close out the third quarter on a strong note.
2. ASBVI Black History Month Celebration: ASBVI organized a Black History Month celebration on Wednesday, February 26 @ 1:30pm. Dr. John McAllister was the special guest speaker and provided the ASBVI community with highlights of his successes and challenges as a black American and stressed the importance of



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unity through diversity. Several students and class groups added to the celebration by delivering songs, poems, and stories that embraced the contributions of black Americans in the history of our country. This event would not have been possible without the organization and coordination of several staff members, especially Mrs. Barbara Cole, Mrs. Alicia Reddick, Mr. Tyler Pfeffer, classroom teachers and paraprofessionals assisting students with presenting, and our special student master of ceremonies, Lucas Harris. Thanks to everyone for making this event special.

3. Little Rock Founders Lion's Club Presentation: Mrs. Walsh and I were invited to present informational updates to the Little Rock Founders Lion's Club at their lunch meeting on Wednesday, February 26. The group were provided updates on the progress of the school over the past year as well as the plans for coordination between ASD and ASBVI and the joint building project. Mrs. Walsh and I were happy to be able to share our story with these important partners.
4. Dental Hygiene Awareness: In an effort to promote good oral health habits, the elementary students received a special visit from a local dentist. The dentist provided an engaging presentation about the importance of brushing, flossing, and regular dental checkups. The main draw for the students was the giant tooth mascot that accompanied the dentist, which added fun and excitement to the learning experience. Students had the opportunity to ask questions and interact with the dentist.
5. Read Across America Week (March 3-7): Read Across America Week is a nationally recognized celebration which promotes literacy by encouraging students to develop a lifelong love of reading. Throughout the week, students participated in various activities such as themed dress-up days, guest read-aloud sessions, and classroom reading challenges. Teachers and staff emphasized the joy of reading by incorporating special storytimes and encouraging students to explore different genres and authors. The week's events helped reinforce the importance of literacy in all aspects of learning.



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6. **National School Breakfast Week (March 3-7):** In addition to Read Across America Week, ASBVI also celebrated National School Breakfast Week. This initiative highlights the role of a healthy breakfast in supporting student learning and overall well-being. ASBVI participated by promoting the benefits of the school breakfast program, ensuring students had access to nutritious morning meals. Students learned about the impact of proper nutrition on focus, energy levels, and academic success. The week served as a reminder to families and students that starting the day with a balanced meal can set the tone for a productive day of learning. Families were invited to join for breakfast on Thursday, March 6, to reinforce the importance of a nutritious breakfast.
7. **Arts Advocacy Day at the Capitol (March 10):** ASBVI participated in the statewide celebration of Arts Advocacy Day at the state capitol building on Monday, March 10. A group of students from grades 3-6, along with select secondary students, had the opportunity to visit the state Capitol to participate in Arts Advocacy Day. This event emphasized the importance of the arts in education, allowing students to see firsthand how policies and funding decisions impact arts programs in schools. Students engaged in advocacy efforts, met with officials, and learned about the significance of artistic expression in academic and personal development. The experience helped students recognize the value of the arts in shaping a well-rounded education.
8. **Quaver Music Madness Event Hosted by the ASBVI Music Department:** To celebrate “Music in Our Schools” Month, the Music Department implemented a fun and interactive March Madness-style competition through Quaver Music programs. Students from across the globe joined our ASBVI students to vote on their favorite songs, narrowing down selections until only the top four remained. The activity allowed students to engage with different musical styles and artists while fostering enthusiasm for music education. The goal was to keep students excited about music and provide opportunities for discussions about musical elements and preferences.
9. **Annual Wrestling “Candy Bar Meet” (March 6):** The wrestling program hosted its annual “Candy Bar Meet,” an exciting event that welcomed both elementary and



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secondary wrestlers. Cheerleaders also participated, bringing energy and school spirit to the competition. The event showcased the hard work and dedication of student-athletes and their coaches, reflecting the growth made in the wrestling program. A strong turnout from families and community members added to the excitement, with students displaying sportsmanship and pride, regardless of the match outcomes. Every participant left with a sense of accomplishment, making it a meaningful experience for all involved.

10. ASBVI Talent Show (Thursday, March 13 @ 6pm): The ASBVI Music Department hosted the school-wide ASBVI Talent Show on Thursday, March 13 at 6pm. The highly anticipated talent show provided students with a platform to showcase their unique abilities in music, dance, poetry, and other forms of artistic expression. Participants spent weeks preparing their performances, demonstrating their creativity and dedication. The event brought together students, staff, and families for an evening of entertainment and encouragement. The talent show not only highlighted individual talents but also fostered a sense of school spirit and community pride. Special thanks to Ms. Alicia Reddick and Mr. Algis Staskevicius for their guidance and support of all the performers in preparation of the event.
11. February Students of the Month: Hannah Hill (Elementary) and Basia Hammock (Secondary)
12. Special Student Shoutout: Matthew Greenhill proudly represented ASBVI in the state-level Poetry Out Loud competition. Poetry Out Loud is a national program that encourages students to engage with poetry through memorization and performance. Matthew's participation underscores his dedication, confidence, and passion for poetry. Competing at the state level is a remarkable achievement, and we couldn't be prouder of Matthew. Congratulations, Matthew!
13. Staff Shout-Out: Ms. Abigail Jones (Assistive Technology Teacher). Mrs. Jones is our assistive technology instructor, and this is her first year in the role. She is working closely with students and staff to familiarize them with the adaptive technology available on campus, including screen readers, Braille note-takers,



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and magnification devices. Her efforts ensure that students can complete daily class assignments and navigate assessment platforms effectively. This is no small task, and Mrs. Jones continues to learn and share her knowledge with both staff and students. In addition to her instructional role, Mrs. Jones leads activity coordination on ASB's campus. She plays a key role in organizing volunteers and gathering materials and supplies for events such as Valentine's Day celebrations, bingo nights, dances, and performances. Her dedication and hard work are truly making a difference!

14. Upcoming Events

- Parent Teacher Conferences: Friday, March 21 (In person and virtual)
- Spring Break: March 24-28. Students will return to school on March 31.
- Annual Art Show: Friday, April 4
- DSB Transition Fair: Thursday, April 10
- ATLAS Summative Assessment Window Begins: Monday, April 14
- ASBVI Junior/Senior Prom: Thursday, April 17

Human Capital Updates

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

- Teacher—Special Education (no qualified applicants currently)
- Teacher—Gifted and Talented (shared with ASD)--(no qualified applicants currently)
- Residential Advisors (2)

ASBVI is working with ASD to coordinate the master schedule for the upcoming year. As such, the team is finding ways to consolidate classes and share staff when it makes sense to do so. Our instructional leaders have been so flexible and innovative in their thinking, which will only serve to provide a strong program for our students.

We are proud to welcome Mr. Lamar Raper as our new Director of Transportation as well as Ms. Deana Shields as our new Registered Nurse Supervisor. Both leaders



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have had experience working with our students, staff, and families in previous positions, and we are excited to have them in these leadership roles.

Building Project Updates

On March 13, ASBVI and ASD held its official “Demolition Day” event, which included remarks from Governor Sanders, Secretary Oliva, as well as legislators and dignitaries. The event marked a milestone in the months-long process to establish new facilities for ASBVI and ASD students and staff. Students and staff were present to watch the demolition of the ASD Warfield building, which is being razed to provide space for the new building. We are very excited about the plans for the new building and watching it come along, with an expected completion date of November 2026, and an anticipated move-in date of January 2027.

The architects are also finalizing the plans for specialty spaces including the cafeteria/food services, culinary arts, and the media center. Those stakeholder meetings are taking place in the next few weeks.

Legislative Information

Since the commencement of the 95th Arkansas General Assembly, the legislature has been busy with several new pieces of legislation. Here is a link to a document that provides key pieces of legislation related to education:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1pd6plUYjK6OABFbPMfYSs2IHE0HwKVL5-kEhjSJ56LQ/edit?usp=sharing>