



Arkansas School for the Deaf

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Jacob Oliva
Secretary

K. Nicole Walsh
Superintendent

Superintendent's Report- April 2025

State of the School

Enrollment numbers:

- High School: 35
- Middle School: 20
- Lower School including ECC: 54

Celebrations/Events:

- Recent Weather Update
- Plans for the Crystal Bridges Trip have been finalized. We have been working with the Crystal Bridges Education team to develop a field trip experience for deaf and blind students across the state. This event will focus on career exploration in the field of art and museum management. They have done an amazing job helping us build a day that will be accessible for our all of our students' diverse needs. We will also be staying the night at Camp War Eagle to allow our students the opportunity to tour the University of Arkansas the following day. All in all, it will be an amazing time of fun and learning for our ASB and ASD students!
- Our Student Handbook is in the process of being reworked to combine both ASD and ASB.

Building Updates:

- Demo Day Celebration March 12th
- Nabholtz was able to do some work over Spring Break that could not have happened with students on campus.

Human Capital Updates:

Termination/ Resignation:

- Donna Lee-Shields – Food Prep Coordinator

New Hire:

- None

Transfers:

- None

Offers Provided:

- Jackson Brannon (IT)

Positions Posted:

- See Employment Report

Shout Outs:

- Primary Teacher:
 - Breanna Rhodes, Team Ready teacher, is recognized for her dedication to Deaf Plus students and her work with ASD Behavior Specialist in developing and implementing a specific education and behavior plan.
- Secondary Teacher:
 - Jetta Pruss, Middle School Science Teacher - Is recognized for her growth mindset, promoting inquiry, fostering knowledge, and collaborating with fellow educators.
- Custodial/Maintenance Team:
 - James Hayes and Eduardo Tuzon continue to excel as the department's MVPs.

Legislative Updates:

Handout to be provided

School Operations Updates

Facilities Department

Executive Summary:

- "OperationsHERO" statistics for March show a 29% improvement in the average number of days to complete a work request, decreasing from 17 days to 12 days.
- Total completed requests were 168, down from 233 last month, reflecting the quieter month.
- M&R/Surplus items stored in the "Silver Building" behind CTE/Warfield were picked up on March 4th.
- The remaining items staged in Rasnick were picked up on March 6th.

Maintenance and Repairs:

- No emergency repairs to report.
- Preventive maintenance included the removal and replacement of all HVAC filters at both campuses by Little Rock Filter Service over spring break.

Facilities Improvement Projects:

- Demolition of the old Maintenance shop and Parks Elementary.
- Nabholz Environmental has completed asbestos abatement at all buildings slated for demolition.

Energy and Sustainability:

ASD should begin to see a significant decrease in energy costs due to utilities being turned off at the Maintenance shop, Parks Elementary, Pack Hall Lower Dorm, and Rasnick.

Staffing and Training:

The Maintenance Department currently has two open positions.

Classroom Updates

Primary

Key Highlights:

- Lower School students participated in Read Across America activities organized by the ASD/ASBVI Librarian, Elizabeth Moody. Activities included dressing as favorite book characters, making bookmarks, and "Read in Your Jammies."
- New campus entry and parking procedures were implemented on March 3, with a smooth transition thanks to well-prepared staff and accepting parents.
- Students enjoyed observing the installation of new gravel parking and found it amusing when a dump truck got stuck in the mud.
- Plans were made for transporting students to the tornado shelter on March 4, but it was not needed as the storms did not pose a tornado threat.
- Fifth graders continue to enjoy pottery lessons at the ASBVI art room.
- Principal KaAnn Varner attended a Master Schedule retreat at the Arkansas State Library on March 6.
- Students attended the ROAR store on March 7 as part of the PBIS student behavior incentive.
- The end of the quarter was on March 13, with report cards and IEP updates sent out before Spring Break.
- Students participated in MAP testing from March 10-13.
- Students attended Demo Day on March 12, witnessing Governor Sara Saunders and Secretary of Education Jacob Oliva speak and the beginning demolition of the CTE building.
- Parent Teacher Conferences were held on March 21.
- The Social Emotional Learning Team celebrated the end of the Inside Out curriculum with a viewing of Inside Out 2 and a pizza party on March 19.
- Principal KaAnn Varner and Reading Specialist Jennifer Harrington, along with other staff, participated in on-campus Professional Development regarding classroom observations provided by ADE and the TNTP program.
- Second graders from ASD and ASBVI met to see eggs being incubated for the hatching of baby chicks as part of their joint unit on Charlotte's Web.

Behavioral Data:

- One suspension reported.

- PBIS initiatives, such as the ROAR Store, are becoming more effective with consistent opening.

Challenges and Struggles:

- Academic challenges due to language deprivation.
- Behavioral challenges, particularly on Mondays and towards the end of the school year.
- Resource challenges, including the need for more effective recess activities and unresolved facility issues.

Action Plan for Improvement:

- Academic goal: Continue to gauge utilization of HQIM materials.
- Behavioral goal: Encourage the use of de-escalating techniques and support VB-MAPP.
- School Culture goal: Promote respect among students.
- Strategies include collaborating with the SEL team and analyzing classroom data to address behavior factors.

Secondary

Key Highlights:

- The ASD Secondary Department recently celebrated Read Across America, encouraging students to embrace the joy of reading.
- A financial planning presentation was hosted to equip students with essential skills for their future.
- Students were enthusiastic about attending the Arkansas Welding Academy for hands-on training opportunities.
- In April, Deaf History Month was initiated to raise awareness and appreciation for the contributions of the Deaf community.
- Students are also preparing for the upcoming ATLAS testing to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

Summary of Struggles and Challenges:

- Changing routines for school buses has presented challenges, particularly in coordinating schedules with buses and cars. Through careful planning and communication, operations have been streamlined for smoother transitions.
- The heavy pollen and unpredictable weather add another layer of difficulty, requiring vigilance about safety and comfort.

Academic Performance:

Achievements:

- March 3-7: Read Across America

- March 10-14: MAP Testing (English and Math)
- March 14: Financial planning presentation by Riley Cater and Adam Xaysude from Northwestern Mutual
- March 17: Arkansas Welding Academy visit
- March 18: ILLI Leadership Walk-Through with ASD and ASBVI
- March 21: Parent-teacher conferences for Middle and High School
- March 31: FAFSA Frenzy for High School students
- April: Deaf History Month
- April 4: WIN Presentation on DeafBlind Choreography
- April 10: Draft Day for High School students
- PBIS Student of the Month for March: SkyLynn, a 6th grader
- ATLAS Testing Schedule:
 - April 14: Reading (Grades 3-10)
 - April 14-15: Writing (Grades 3-10)
 - April 22-24: Math (Grades 3-8)
 - April 28-30: Science (Grades 3-8)
- High School Testing:
 - Math (Algebra 1 & Geometry assessments): April 22-24
 - Science (Biology assessment): April 28-30

Behavioral Data:

- Suspensions: 0
- Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS): Overview and impact on student behavior

Challenges and Struggles:

- Academic Challenges: Areas of underperformance due to language deprivation
- Behavioral Challenges: Trends in student behavior, impact of external factors
- Resource Challenges: Staffing shortages (Art Teacher, Science Teacher for High School), staff absences due to illness, facility and infrastructure issues

Action Plan for Improvement:

- Goals for the Upcoming Month:
 - Academic goal: Gauge utilization of HQIM materials
 - Behavioral goal: Encourage de-escalating techniques
 - School culture goal: Promote respect among students
- Strategies and Interventions: Collaborate with the SEL team, analyze classroom data
- Success Factors: Measure success by decreased SWIS reports

Extracurricular Achievements:

- March 12: Demo Day with Governor Sanders
- March 13: Varsity Track at Caddo Hills, Arkansas
- March 17: JV Track at Bryant, AR
- May 1: Prom Night with the theme "Masquerade"
- Travis and Kalia featured on the magazine cover for the Special Olympics Spring Games:



Special Services Department

Food Services

March Statistics:

- Meals Served:
 - Breakfast –1094
 - Lunch – 1201
- Days Served – 15
- Eligibility Numbers as of 3/31: Free 53, Reduced 16, and Paid 41.

Nursing and Health Services

Health Screenings:

- March 10-12: All remaining ASBVI Health Screenings were scheduled and completed.
- April 3: ASD Lower School Health Screenings are scheduled in Health Services East.
- April 10: ASD Middle and High School Health Screenings are scheduled in Health Services East.

Interviews:

Interviews for the RN position are currently underway.

Health Status:

No positive FLU, COVID, or Strep tests this month.

Student Support:

One ASD student was transported to Methodist Behavior Health hospital. The discharge date is planned for next week. We are working closely with Methodist to ensure a safe transition back to school and will monitor the student's mental health upon return.

Behavior Health Team:

Adam Goyne and Deana Shields are in the process of creating a "Behavior Health Team" that includes staff counselors from ASD and ASBVI, social worker Kaite Runder, and mental health therapist Candace. The team is in the planning stages and aims to provide accurate mental health support to students at ASBVI and ASD.

Absentee Form:

An absentee form was created and sent to Lori Cole and Betty Sanders to help the front office know when the Infirmary sends a student home and when they can return.

Supplies:

Supplies have been approved and ordered for the Infirmary from McKesson Medical Supply.

UCA Nursing Students:

UCA nursing students continue to visit ASBVI/ASD twice a week to shadow nurses and learn about community nursing and student care. JR Cartwright has been instrumental in providing tours through the ASD museum and teaching them about the deaf community.

Special Education and Admissions

ASD Tours and Admissions:

- 1 ASD tour held for potential students.
- 0 new ASD admissions this month.
- Potential student information for new students for Fall 2025 is starting to come in.

IEP (Individualized Education Program) Updates:

March Activity:

- **ASBVI:**
 - IEP Meetings: 10
 - Existing Data Reviews (EDRs): 0
 - Evaluation Programming Conference with IEP development: 2
 - Manifestation Determination Reviews (MDRs): 0
- **ASD:**
 - IEP Meetings: 26
 - Existing Data Reviews (EDRs): 4
 - Evaluation Programming Conference with IEP development: 7
 - Manifestation Determination Reviews (MDRs): 0

Student Support:

- ASD Transition Team is working on a roadmap for high school transition by grade level. Mandy and Stacy will review collected information and plan next steps. The goal is to have a minimum plan for all students by grade level beginning in 8th grade through grade 13.
- Transition Team requested to meet with Jeremy Hogue to review and unify the transition curriculum for 8-13th graders (in process).
- SpEd department will hold quarterly Transition Team Meetings to fulfill the requirements of the PISA Plan and get it back on track and cohesive.
- Once ASD has their parts together, they will work on merging the ASB and ASD goals and materials to meet the needs of all students.

Professional Development/Training:

- LEA Job Alike Meeting @ ARESC (bi-monthly in 24-25)
- Early Childhood Forum for EC Coordinators (virtual) - Monthly
- LEA Call – by DESE (monthly)
- Related Services Collaboration 1:1 with Beth – 0 meetings – a different meeting time will be chosen. This collaboration is important to continue to help with miscommunication and cohesiveness between departments.

Challenges and Successes:

- **Challenges:**
 - An elementary student is missing multiple Fridays and now missing transportation set up for Fridays. Lakeside will keep attendance for ASD.
 - Several teachers are struggling with EDR and EPC process. Stacy will set up a training for those who need help with the process.
- **Successes:**
 - CRDC data has been certified and confirmation received.
 - Data was not entered into eSchool for some areas (e.g., Discipline), but it is now correct for this school year moving forward. Jena has been an amazing help.
 - Corrective Actions assigned to ASD as part of the C-25-17 complaint filed against Lakeside have been completed and sent to Lakeside LEA Supervisor.
 - Working closely with Tommy, Brenda, and Elly to support in IEP writing and paperwork process. Confidence is being built.
 - SOP Training for HS Transition Team.
 - More paperwork is ready prior to meetings (some need follow-up).
 - Debbie has a schedule worked out to share ASD and ASBVI responsibilities and is feeling more comfortable working with ASD staff. Debbie caught up the ASD backlog of Social Security Disability Forms, and they have all been faxed.

Family and Student Support Services Parent Communication

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

Departmental Highlights:

- On April 8th, the ASD Therapy Department will host a quarterly virtual collaborative session with ASD audiologists, Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs), and Auditory Verbal Therapists (AVT) from the Arkansas Children's Hospital Listening Center. This session will focus on a comprehensive file review and updates regarding students receiving audiological management and interventions.
- On April 10th, Lauren Phillips and Seth Rhoades from ASPYRE, the new therapy documentation and billing platform, will join the ASD therapy team for lunch to discuss performance, progress, and potential enhancements.

Upcoming Dates:

- April 8: Collaborative Session
- April 10: ASPYRE Discussion with ASD Therapy Team

Updates:

- The department is awaiting legislative approval to begin a partnership with the Partners through the University of Arkansas's grant-funded program, Statewide Practice of Interdisciplinary Clinical Evaluation (SPICE). This partnership aims to enhance the early identification and diagnosis of Neurodevelopmental Disorders (NDD) within Arkansas.
- The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) has initiated the necessary paperwork to become a University Vendor, moving closer to formalizing the partnership. However, grant discussions with the Department of Human Services are pending due to funding adjustments.
- The elementary school SLPs and the school counselor organized a Building-wide Social-Emotional Learning Celebration on March 19th. ASD students in grades K-5 participated in viewings of "Inside Out 2" and enjoyed a pizza party. Special thanks to ASD Security, counseling and therapy staff, food service team, teachers, and paraprofessionals for their support and assistance during the event.

Statewide Services

Program Updates:

- 28 Developmental Therapy Sessions (0-3 years old)
- 1 Consult (3-5 years old)
- 5 IFSP Conferences (0-3)
- 8 New Referrals (0-3)
- 1 Family Engagement (0-3)
- 1 EI Evaluation (0-3)

Current enrollment for the department is 27 birth to three-year-old families with IFSP, with 1 in the queue for services. The team is serving 20 toddlers on a consulting basis.

In March, the department received \$1534.00 in Medicaid payments for Developmental Services.

Dr. Cobb attended the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) conference in Pittsburgh, PA in March, which focused on screening, diagnostic evaluations, and early intervention support for families with DHH children. Dr. Cobb presented a poster on coordinating resources for EI professionals to mitigate language deprivation effects.

Dr. Cobb also provided training to First Connections Service Coordinators and Providers on "Essential Resources for Supporting Development in Deaf and Hard of Hearing Infants and Toddlers," which focused on terminology, types of hearing profiles, communication practices, specific evaluation strategies for DHH children, and other resources.

The department continues to attend Practice Based Coaching, Service Coordinator Core Competency training, ASL classes, and KnowBe4 security training.

Compliance and Reporting:

- After many months of hard work, the team finally received \$5616.00 in Part C funding. This money can be applied to billing, services, equipment, and more. Now that the proper procedures are in place, the department will continue to request Part C funding as needed.
- The team discussed the results of their annual monitoring with Andrea Weston from ADE. They identified a timeline indicator issue and reached out to Rosemarie Lavato at ADE, who discovered a glitch in the state data collection system (FCS). As a result, the department was invited to participate in a pilot program to improve FCS and make it more user-friendly.

Professional Collaboration:

- Continuing collaborations with the following groups: First Connections Provider Input Call, Early Childhood Vision and Hearing Collaborative, SWS and ACH Speech Department, and the Deaf Leadership Council.
- The Language Acquisition Workgroup concluded their session; however, Kim Scott, Child Health Section Chief at the Arkansas Department of Health and State EHDI Coordinator, will continue to work with the department to collect growth data on the families receiving developmental therapy.