

2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT



**STEPPING INTO THE FUTURE TOGETHER:
ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND BLIND**



Mission Statement

At the Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind, our mission is to empower students with the tools, confidence, and support to grow into independent, capable adults. We are committed to providing a student-centered education that recognizes and nurtures each learner's unique strengths, interests, and potential. Through specialized instruction, individualized support, and a strong community, we prepare our students for lifelong success.

Vision Statement

The Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind envisions a future where every student confidently navigates life with purpose, independence, and pride. We strive to be a national leader in accessible, specialized education; where all learners are equipped to define and achieve their own version of success, contribute meaningfully to their communities, and live fulfilling lives beyond school.

At the school, we believe in:

P - Professionalism

We act with integrity, stay current in our fields, and strive for excellence. We maintain a positive image and do what is right for each other and our students.

R – Respect

We value all individuals, embracing diverse cultures, languages, abilities, and opinions. We remain kind and professional, even during disagreements.

I – Inclusion

We create a safe, accessible, and welcoming environment where every student and staff member feels seen, heard, and valued.

D – Determination

We believe in the potential of every student and support their growth, independence, and success through resilience and high expectations.

E – Empowerment

We uplift student voice and choice, promote open communication, and collaborate across roles to help each other thrive.

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LETTER FROM OUR SUPERINTENDENT

N I C O L E W A L S H

Dear ARDB Families, Staff, and Community,

This year marks another exciting chapter in the story of the Arkansas School for the Deaf and the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Together as ARDB—Better Together, we continue to grow in strength, unity, and purpose as we serve students who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Blind, Visually Impaired, and DeafBlind from across Arkansas.

We are thrilled to share the progress on our new 91,000-square-foot instructional building—an extraordinary step forward in accessible design and inclusive education. This state-of-the-art facility, opening in January 2027, will bring our students together in an environment intentionally designed to support communication, collaboration, and innovation.

The 2024–2025 school year focused on improving campus safety and security—a responsibility we take seriously as a residential and statewide educational community. Through the installation of new perimeter fencing, expanded camera systems, and the addition of 24/7 on-site security personnel, we have strengthened the protection and peace of mind of everyone who learns, works, and lives on our campus.

As we look toward 2025–2026, our focus has shifted squarely to instructional improvement. Across both schools, our teachers are rolling up their sleeves and engaging deeply in the urgent, important work of improving student outcomes. We are already seeing the results of their dedication, with encouraging growth in both reading and math. Our educators' passion for learning and their commitment to every child's success continue to inspire us all.

We are deeply grateful for our generous donors, volunteers, and community partners whose contributions make these advancements possible. From program enhancements to facility upgrades, your support has a direct and lasting impact on our students' lives.

And to our parents and families—thank you for being steadfast partners in this mission. Your involvement, collaboration, and trust make all the difference as we work together to create a bright, inclusive future for every ARDB student.

It is a privilege to lead this incredible community and to witness daily the compassion, commitment, and creativity that define our schools. Together, we are building not only stronger programs and facilities—but a stronger Arkansas.

K. Nicole Walsh
ASD Superintendent





SCHOOL YEAR 2024-2025

This year, the ARDB Curriculum Department focused on strengthening literacy instruction and building staff capacity to better serve our students who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Blind, or Visually Impaired. A major initiative was the adoption of a new English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum for the Arkansas School for the Deaf (ASD). After months of careful research, review of multiple programs, and input from teachers, specialists, and administrators, the team recommended American Reading Company (ARC) Core. The process included presentations from ARC representatives, site visits to the Kansas School for the Deaf, and collaboration with the Arkansas Department of Education. The \$90,275 investment in ARC provides classroom libraries, assessments, intervention toolkits, and professional development for teachers, ensuring students have access to high-quality, evidence-based reading instruction. ARC was chosen because of its strong alignment with the Science of Reading, its focus on building both foundational literacy skills and background knowledge, and its accessibility supports for students who do not have auditory access to phonics.

In addition to curriculum adoption, the department continued the Para Academy, now in its second year. This program provides paraprofessionals with targeted training and tutoring in reading and math through the iXL platform. With weekly onboarding sessions, personalized tutoring, and independent practice, many paraprofessionals showed remarkable growth—often gaining the equivalent of two grade levels in their own reading and math skills. This success reflects both the strength of the program and the dedication of the staff.

Looking ahead to the 2025–26 school year, ARDB will implement the ARC curriculum in both the Deaf and Blind Departments, continue building on the success of Para Academy, strengthen teacher mentoring, and expand professional development opportunities. Together, these efforts reflect our commitment to giving every student the literacy tools they need to succeed and every educator the support they need to thrive.





DEAF DEPARTMENT

The Deaf Department at the Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind (ARDB) offers a comprehensive scope of education that supports students from their very first classroom experience through adulthood. Our mission is to ensure that every student develops strong language, academic, and life skills while also having access to the opportunities that create a well-rounded education.

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Our Pre-K program builds the foundation for lifelong learning by focusing on language development, communication, and social-emotional growth. Using Foundations for Literacy, we equip our youngest learners with the tools they need to enter school ready to succeed.

In the lower school (K–6), instruction emphasizes literacy and numeracy. Students benefit from Deaf-specific curricula, such as Fingerspelling Our Way to Reading, alongside general programs like the American Reading Company. This balance ensures that students have access to grade-level content while receiving specialized support that meets their unique communication needs.

At the middle and high school level (7–12), students complete core academic courses required for graduation while also preparing for their future. Career and Technical Education (CTE) is a hallmark of this work, with pathways in Culinary Arts, Graphic Design, Robotics, and Business. A Pre-Educator pathway is being developed for 2026–27 to expand career exploration for students interested in teaching and service.

Beyond graduation, the Arkansas Deaf Career Center provides individualized support for students and young adults from age 14 through college completion. This program focuses on transition planning, life skills, academics, and job readiness, helping students move confidently into higher education, employment, and independent living.

Education at ARDB extends beyond the classroom. The Deaf Department proudly reinstated its football team in 2024–25, after nearly a decade, joining basketball, cross country, cheer, dance, art, and e-sports. These programs build teamwork, leadership, and creativity—skills as vital as academics in shaping tomorrow's leaders.

From early childhood through adult services, ARDB's Deaf Department remains committed to providing every student with the resources, opportunities, and support needed to thrive. We believe that a strong, confident adult begins with a student who has been given every chance to grow.





BLIND DEPARTMENT

This school year has been one of growth, achievement, and connection for the Blind Department at ARDB. Our mission is to serve our students, staff, and families, with a focus on building strong relationships, setting high expectations, and ensuring every student has the opportunity to learn and thrive.

Inside the classroom, teachers worked hard to deliver high-quality lessons in Math and English Language Arts while also meeting each student's unique learning goals through their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Instructional leaders visited classrooms regularly to coach and strengthen teaching.

Students received daily instruction in Braille, assistive technology, and specialized skills through both classroom lessons and targeted interventions. Teachers meet in Professional Learning Communities to share successes, troubleshoot challenges, and plan next steps to support student growth.

Beyond academics, family engagement was a highlight of the year. Families joined us for events like Literacy Night, Cookies with Santa, Low Vision Day, and Braille Bootcamps. These activities not only brought joy to our students but also offered parents and community members the chance to learn more about blindness and how to best support their children.

Our students also excelled in athletics. Competing in NCASB sports such as track, goalball, wrestling, and cheerleading, our Girls Track team earned 1st place in Columbus, OH, the Boys Track team placed 3rd, and our Cheerleaders took 3rd place in Nashville, TN. Students also participated in Special Olympics events, including bowling, track, and basketball, proudly representing ARDB.

The EAST program had another exciting year, with students presenting a creative "Stranger Things"-themed booth at the EAST Conference. Two students were recognized as EAST Student Champions, with one selected to serve on the conference team.

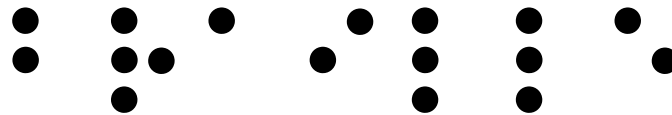
Summer learning opportunities continued to be a strong part of our program. Our Culture Quest summer camp introduced students to the cultures of Hawaii, China, Mexico, and Switzerland through cooking, gardening, art, travel, and recreation—all tied to literacy and math. Older students (16+) participated in Jump Start, a partnership with the Division of Services for the Blind, where they gained real work experience at sites such as UALR Computer Science, KARK News 4, and ICAN Arkansas, while also learning independent living and workplace readiness skills back on campus.



Partnerships and outreach remain central to our mission. Through our collaboration with UCA Occupational Therapy, graduate students visited campus to share strategies that benefit learners with visual impairments. Our Outreach Services continued to make an impact statewide, offering the Low Vision Clinic, Birth to Three Program, Low Vision Competition Day, Braille Bootcamps, and the Instructional Resource Center.

Technology and specialized instruction are key supports for our students. By law, students with visual impairments must have access to Braille instruction unless otherwise determined by their IEPs. At ARDB, students received daily instruction in Braille, assistive technology, and orientation and mobility (O&M). Teachers pursued advanced training through national organizations, while a Certified Assistive Technology Instruction Specialist intern worked one-on-one with students. Two students piloted the Monarch, an innovative braille display. Our technology resources included JAWS and ZoomText software, Chromebooks, iPads, braille displays, notetakers, and magnifiers such as the MATT Connect, Juno, and Jupiter. Our two full-time O&M specialists provided individualized and group instruction to help students travel safely and independently.

We are proud of what our students have accomplished this year and grateful for the continued support of our families, staff, and community partners. Together, we are creating a learning environment where blind and visually impaired students across Arkansas can achieve their goals. We invite you to stay connected with us —through sharing ideas, volunteering, or simply celebrating student success—as we continue to serve as a beacon of learning and opportunity.

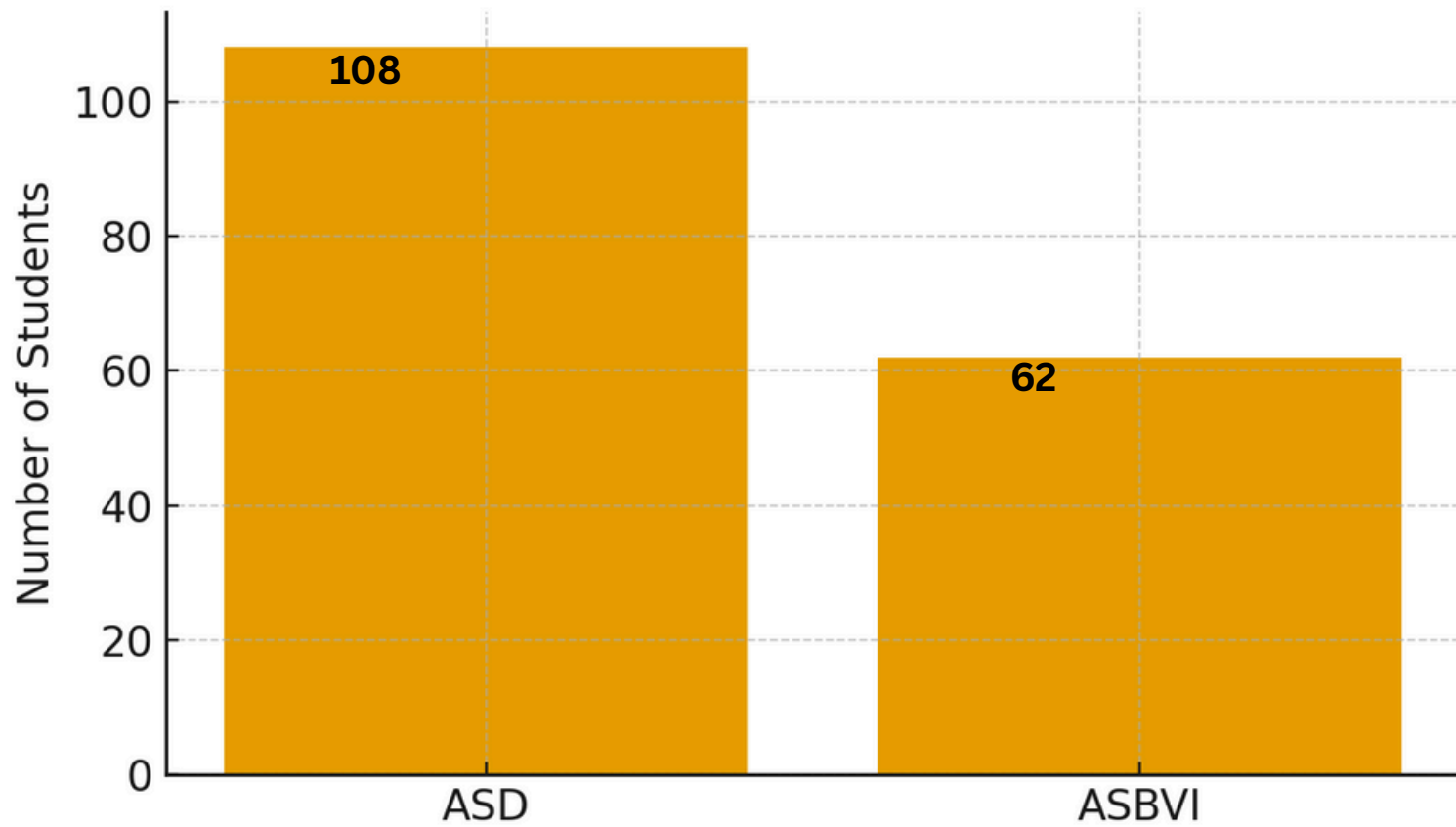




Salutation
Welcome
Tammy



2024-2025 Student Enrollment





DEMOGRAPHICS

DEMOGRAPHICS

SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF
2024-2025



50%

FEMALE



50%

MALE

PRIMARY RACE

1%

ASIAN

14%

HISPANIC

32%

BLACK

5%

TWO OR MORE
RACES

46%

WHITE

2%

HAWAIIAN OR
PACIFIC ISLANDER

100% SPECIAL EDUCATION/IEP

STUDENT STATUS

HOMELESS MIGRANT

0

2

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER

6

HOME LANGUAGE

93% ENGLISH

2% MARSHALLESE

5% SPANISH

EQUIPMENT

23 COCHLEAR IMPLANTS

26 HEARING AIDS

5 BAHA

4 BIMODAL DEVICES

DEMOGRAPHICS

SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND
2024-2025



49%

FEMALE



51%

MALE

PRIMARY RACE

3%

ASIAN

8%

HISPANIC

29%

BLACK

3%

TWO OR MORE
RACES

57%

WHITE

100% SPECIAL EDUCATION/IEP

STUDENT STATUS

HOMELESS MIGRANT

0

0

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER

1

HOME LANGUAGE

94% ENGLISH

1% MANDARIN

5% SPANISH

EQUIPMENT

4 HEARING AIDS

1 BAHA



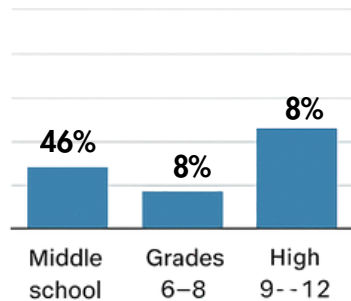
TESTING & STUDENT GROWTH

In the Deaf Department, we use a variety of assessments to measure how our students are learning and growing each year. These results provide important information about what's working well and where we need to provide extra support.

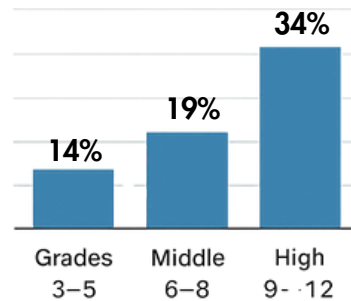
MAP Growth Assessment

Students in Grades 3–12 took the NWEA MAP Growth test, which tracks progress in math and reading over time.

Math



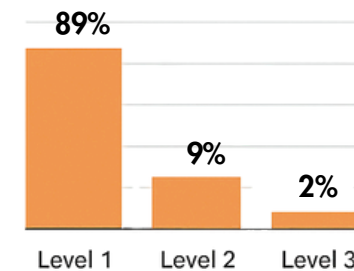
Reading



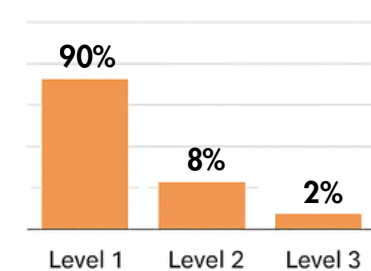
ATLAS Statewide Assessment

Students in Grades 3–10, along with those in Algebra, Geometry, and Biology, took the ATLAS exam, which measures mastery of state standards.

Math



ELA



What this means:

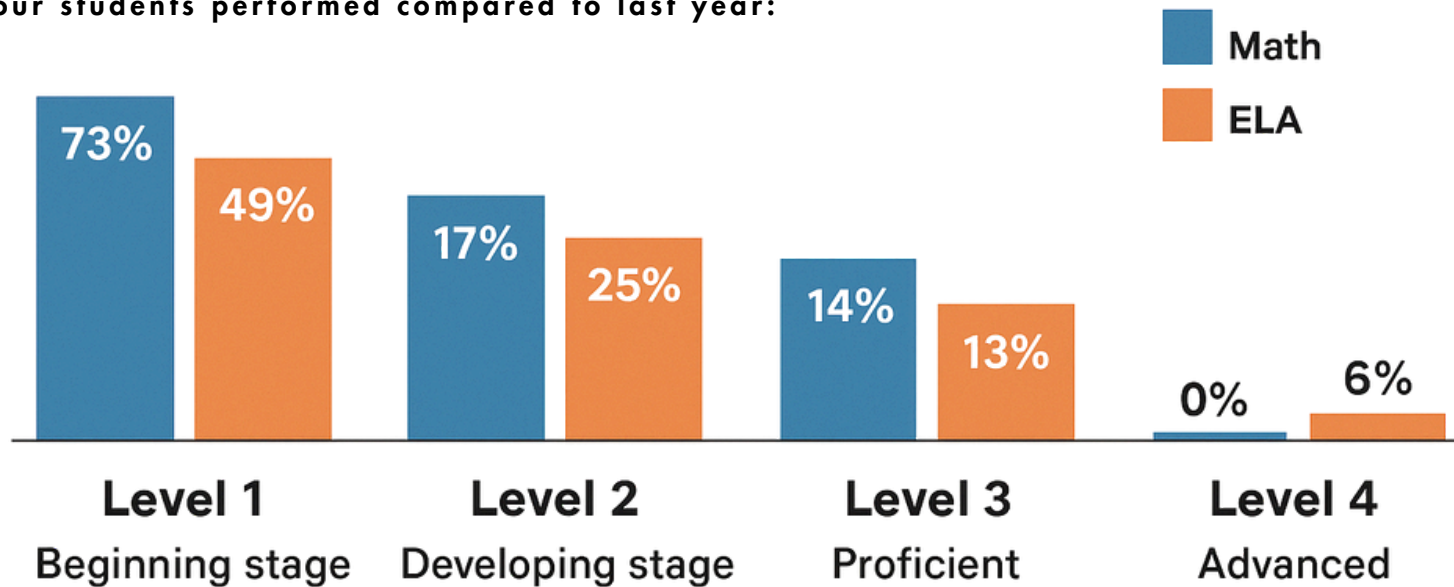
These results show us that while students are making growth, especially in early grades and in science, most continue to need targeted support to meet grade-level expectations in math and reading. Our teachers and staff are using this information to adjust instruction, strengthen interventions, and provide additional opportunities for learning so that every student has the chance to succeed.



2024-2025 ATLAS RESULTS

At the Blind Department of ARDB, our mission is to help every student grow and succeed academically. This past year, all students in grades 3–10 took the ATLAS Summative assessments in English Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science.

How our students performed compared to last year:



Most of our students are currently scoring in Levels 1 and 2 on standardized assessments, with fewer reaching the higher levels. There are several reasons this may be the case. Standardized tests are not always fully accessible for students who are blind or visually impaired, which can make it difficult for them to demonstrate what they truly know. In addition, the skills being tested do not always align perfectly with what is taught in the classroom. Because our student population is small, even minor changes in individual student performance can create large shifts in the overall percentages.

As we move forward, our focus will be on providing targeted support for students who need additional help, ensuring our curriculum remains closely aligned with grade-level standards, and giving teachers high-quality training so that lessons and assessments are fully accessible for all learners.

Our commitment remains the same: to ensure every student has the tools, resources, and opportunities they need to reach their full potential.



LITERACY - DEAF DEPARTMENT

In the 2024-2025 school year, the literacy team worked closely to strengthen reading instruction for our Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) students by identifying and implementing research-based strategies tailored to their unique learning needs. A key focus has been on teaching reading strategies such as monitoring comprehension and using context clues as well as word attack strategies using fingerspelling and morphology. These strategies help students build meaning from text, encouraging them to engage actively with reading materials and develop critical thinking skills.

Recognizing the importance of aligning instructional strategies with the right tools, the literacy team also partnered with the curriculum department to evaluate and select a new literacy curriculum. Our shared goal was to ensure that the chosen program not only supports evidence-based reading practices but is also accessible to the diverse needs of our student population.

The collaboration included classroom observations, data analysis, teacher feedback sessions, and a review of curriculum options with a focus on DHH best practices. The literacy team chose and began implementing a supplemental curriculum, Fingerspelling Our Way to Reading (FOWR), during the last quarter. This is an evidence-based intervention curriculum specifically designed to support the literacy development of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students. FOWR enhances phonological awareness of fingerspelled words, which increases expressive and receptive fingerspelling skills and identification of printed words. It also provides reading opportunities using vocabulary words in sentences and stories that are developed through each unit.

Additionally, the team explored core literacy programs for adoption, with one curriculum standing out due to its successful implementation in other schools for the Deaf and Blind. To further evaluate its effectiveness, members of the literacy team visited the Kansas School for the Deaf to observe the American Reading Company (ARC) Core curriculum in action. After thoughtful review, we selected ARC Core as our core literacy curriculum. This program is designed not only to teach students how to read but also to build background knowledge, expand vocabulary, strengthen writing skills, and foster a deep understanding of complex texts. Our next step was to begin working collaboratively to make the necessary modifications and adaptations to ensure the curriculum is fully accessible and appropriate for our students' individual educational needs.

We are excited about the direction we're headed in and remain committed to empowering our students with the tools they need to thrive as confident, capable readers.



LITERACY - BLIND DEPARTMENT

During the 2024-2025 school year, the literacy team focused on advancing student success across all areas of literacy. We began by completing state-required assessments, including DIBELS, Heggerty Phonological Awareness Screeners, the NWEA MAP assessment, and the ATLAS Screeners. The resulting data charts informed instructional planning and provided a baseline for measuring student growth.

Professional development remained a priority throughout it all. New staff received training in our literacy curriculum, and teachers were offered high-quality follow-up training to strengthen instructional practices. We also continued the Wilson Reading System; an intensive one-on-one intervention designed to accelerate foundational reading skills and help students work toward grade-level proficiency.

Throughout the year, progress was monitored through DIBELS, the NWEA MAP assessment, and curriculum-based measures. Observational walk-throughs both supported teachers and ensured fidelity of curriculum implementation.

As the year concluded, a committee was formed to explore the adoption of a new literacy curriculum. After the decision was made to transition, we collaborated to develop a comprehensive rollout plan for the Blind Department. In partnership the Deaf Department and with the American Reading Company, we began securing resources for teachers and students to support the transition.

These efforts reflect our ongoing commitment to meeting state requirements, expanding access to instructional resources, and supporting student success in literacy.





RELATED SERVICES DEPARTMENT

The Related Services Department at ARDB plays a vital role in making sure every student—whether Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Blind, Visually Impaired, Deaf-Blind, or those with multiple disabilities —has the tools and support they need to learn, grow, and thrive. These services extend beyond the classroom, helping students access communication, academics, and everyday life skills.

Our team provides a wide range of specialized supports: the Low Vision Clinic connects students with vision care and adaptive equipment; Orientation & Mobility specialists teach students how to navigate the world safely and independently; Speech-Language Pathologists support communication, articulation, and language development; Occupational Therapists build fine motor and sensory skills for classroom and daily life; Physical Therapists strengthen gross motor abilities for movement and participation; and our Educational Audiologist ensures students across both campuses have access to the hearing equipment and resources they need.

This year, we served nearly 100 students in speech therapy, over 50 in occupational therapy, about 35 in physical therapy, and 50 in orientation and mobility. Our staff have also built new programs—including expanded family ASL workshops, push-in therapy models, and collaborative cross-department events like Cane Quest and White Cane Day, which brought Deaf and Blind students together for shared learning experiences.

Looking ahead, the department is piloting the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) for both Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Blind/Visually Impaired students, helping Arkansas move toward statewide standards that teach essential life skills such as advocacy, technology, independence, and social-emotional growth. With strong partnerships and a dedicated team, the Related Services Department continues to be a cornerstone of ARDB's mission: ensuring equitable access and meaningful opportunities for every student.



SPECIALTY CLINICS & SERVICES

ARDB provides a wide range of related services to ensure students can fully access learning and daily life.



Low Vision Clinic

Offers vision care and equipment that helps students maximize their visual access to the world.



Orientation & Mobility (O&M)

Teaches blind and visually impaired students how to navigate safely and independently in school, at home, and in the community.



Speech-Language Pathology (SLP)

Supports students with communication disorders and oral motor needs. Our SLPs are experts in articulation, language development, and overall communication growth.



Occupational Therapy (OT)

Builds fine motor skills and addresses sensory needs so students can succeed in classroom tasks and daily routines.

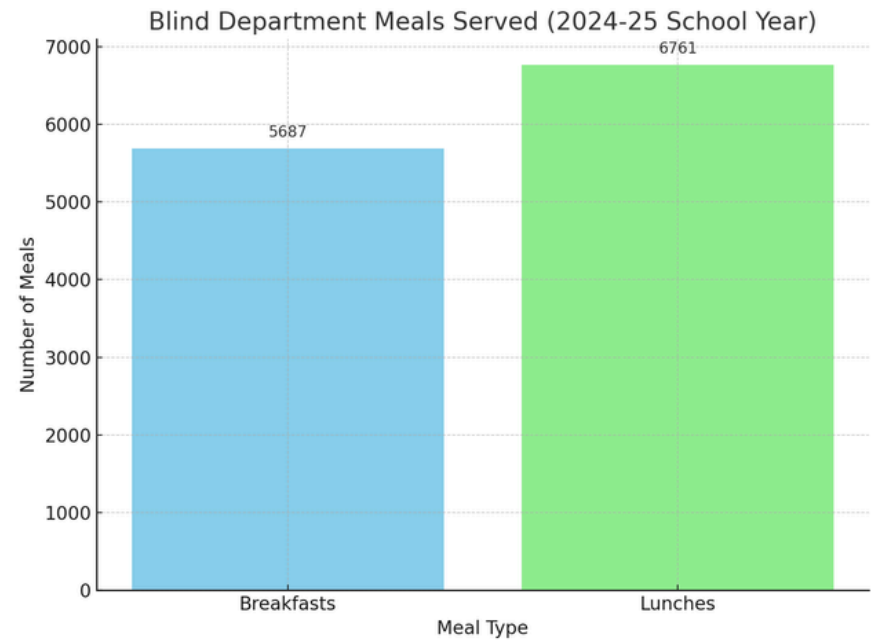
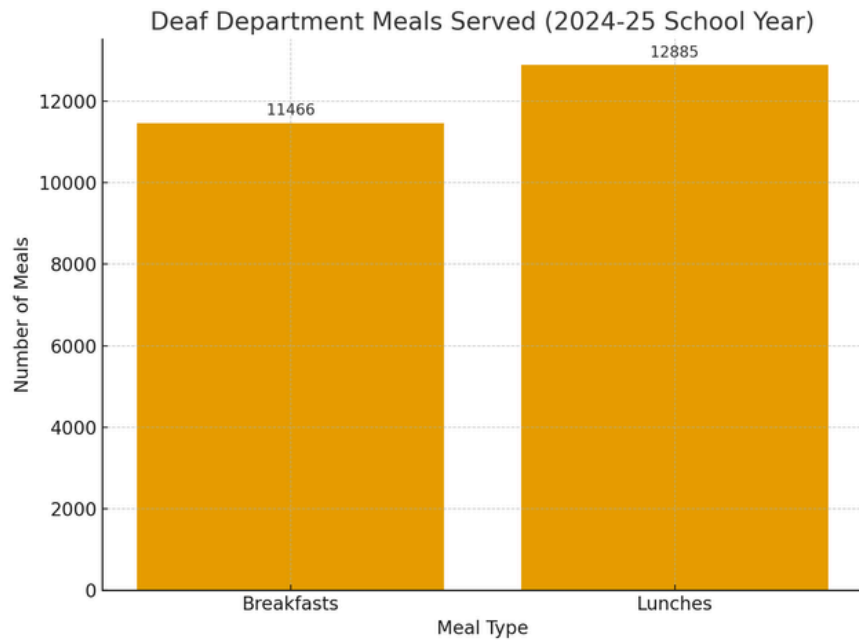


Physical Therapy (PT)

Strengthens gross motor skills to support movement, balance, and participation across all educational environments.



FOOD SERVICE



Deaf Department

In the 2024-25 school year, there were 168 school days, in which we served 11,466 breakfasts and 12,885 lunches. Every day, our goal was to provide healthy, nourishing options, always including fresh fruits and vegetables so children could enjoy the benefits of wholesome food.

One of the most meaningful changes this past year was combining with the Blind Department for dinner meals. This collaboration not only allowed us to serve nutritious dinners but also created a special sense of community as both groups of children came together. In addition, we were able to offer a wide variety of snacks to support both departments' dorm life, giving students the comfort and energy they needed outside of school hours.

Blind Department

In the 2024-25 school year, there were 168 school days, where we served 5,687 breakfasts and 6,761 lunches to our students. Each day, children had the opportunity to enjoy a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables from our salad bar, giving them the chance to make healthy choices and explore new flavors.



HOME-LIFE PROGRAM

The home-life program at ARDB has continued to grow and expand, providing a safe, supportive, and comfortable environment that truly feels like a “home away from home” for our students. Primarily, the dormitories serve students who live beyond a 50-mile radius, though additional residents join us during after-school programs, athletic seasons, academic enrichment opportunities, and special events. This flexibility ensures that students can participate fully in campus life, regardless of distance.

Daily life in the dorms is centered on building independence and preparing students for life beyond school. Staff provide instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum, with an emphasis on personal responsibility, organization, hygiene, money management, and social skills. Students engage in structured life-skills activities, such as cooking simple meals, doing laundry, and practicing daily routines, helping them gain the confidence needed for adulthood. Beyond the walls of the dormitories, students take part in off-campus outings that enrich their learning and broaden their experiences. Trips to grocery stores, restaurants, cultural events, and community service activities give students opportunities to practice real-world skills in authentic settings. These outings also strengthen social connections and encourage students to become active participants in the broader community.

Equally important is the sense of belonging and connection fostered within the dorms. Recreational activities, group meals, and evening programs give students opportunities to build friendships, support one another, and develop leadership skills. Whether through sports participation, study halls, or weekend events, students experience a community that balances responsibility with fun, creating memories that last a lifetime.

This year, the program overcame staffing challenges by successfully recruiting highly qualified individuals who are dedicated to meeting the diverse needs of our residents. These staff members bring both professional expertise and a deep commitment to creating a nurturing, language-rich environment. Their work ensures that every student not only feels safe and cared for but also continues to grow academically, socially, and emotionally.

The home-life program is more than housing—it is a vital part of ARDB’s mission to prepare students for independent, successful futures while providing a community that supports them like family.





HEALTH SERVICES

During the 2024–2025 school year, the Health Services Department at the Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind worked diligently to provide comprehensive healthcare to our students, ensuring both compliance with state requirements and the safety and well-being of each child. Our nurses completed all state-mandated screenings, including vision, hearing, scoliosis, and BMI assessments, with referrals made as necessary to support early identification and treatment of health concerns.

In addition to preventive screenings, the nursing team developed and implemented numerous Individual Healthcare Plans (IHPs) to address the needs of students with chronic conditions and specialized medical requirements. These plans were coordinated closely with families, teachers, and healthcare providers to ensure each student's medical and educational needs were met in a safe and consistent manner. On a daily basis, the nursing office evaluated and treated student illnesses and injuries, administered medications and medical procedures, and provided ongoing monitoring for students with complex health conditions.

Beyond direct care, the Health Services Department contributed significantly to staff preparedness and school-wide safety by offering multiple professional development opportunities throughout the year, leading training sessions in CPR, First Aid, Stop the Bleed, seizure management, emergency healthcare planning, and personal care. These trainings equipped staff with the skills necessary to respond effectively to both every day and emergency health situations.

The nursing staff also played a vital role in ensuring student safety during extracurricular activities. Nurses accompanied students on both local and out-of-state field trips, providing medical support and supervision to allow students to participate fully and safely in school-sponsored experiences.

The efforts of the nursing staff during the 2024–2025 school year reflect a deep commitment to the health and success of every student at ARDB.





EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

The past year has been one of growth, collaboration, and impact for our Early Intervention team. Staff remained committed to ongoing professional learning through ECHO–First Connections and coursework with the University of Denver, ensuring that our practices stay aligned with current research and best practices. In addition, the team completed training on the ERAVE system, enhancing our ability to efficiently access and manage records to better serve families.

Our team also shared expertise at both state and national levels by presenting at the national EHDI Conference in Pittsburgh, PA, and providing training to state service coordinators. These opportunities highlight our leadership role in shaping the field of Early Intervention.

To ensure alignment with state and federal expectations, staff completed Technical Assistance (TA) training on compliance requirements. Additional training focused on Child and Family Outcomes, Medicaid billing processes, and reporting requirements, while our team also contributed to the Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) and partnered with ADE to improve the First Connections data system.

Collaboration remained a cornerstone of our work. We engaged with a wide range of partners, including First Connections Provider Input Calls, Arkansas Children's Hospital Speech Therapy, Hands and Voices, the Hearing and Vision Collaborative, Deaf Leadership Council, Language Acquisition Workgroup, EDHI, the Landscape Map for Deaf and Blind Services Meeting, and the REAL South Project. These partnerships strengthened our capacity to connect families with resources and to advocate for systemic improvements.

Together, these efforts reflect ARDB's commitment to high-quality services, professional excellence, and meaningful outcomes for children who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families across Arkansas.

Our annual service numbers demonstrate the reach and impact of this work:



**referrals
received**

with 33 children served
under Individualized
Family Service Plans (IFSP)
through Developmental
Therapy



**consultations
provided**

to children
outside IFSP or
age eligibility



32

**evaluations
conducted**

and billed through
Medicaid/Part C



\$8,163

earned in Medicaid
and Part C funding
for the 2024–25
school year





Arkansas Ophthalmological Society donated over \$30,000 to the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired



The University of Central Arkansas' Delta Zeta Sorority – Epsilon Xi Chapter organized a donation drive that supplied hundreds of items for students in the Arkansas School for the Deaf dorms.



Magnolia Lodge No. 60 F&AM raised \$927 to support students at ASD during the holiday season.



Members of Arkansas Tech University's Delta Zeta Sorority – Lambda Alpha Chapter held a book drive and donated hundreds of books to the Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind.

DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Fundraising

This year, we launched our new online giving system, Givebutter, making it easier than ever for our community to support the school. Through this platform and other efforts, we raised more than \$42,000 to strengthen student programs and resources. These gifts directly provide opportunities that help our students dream big and achieve their goals.

Grants and Federal Programs

The school received more than \$1,399,242 in grants and federal funding this year. These resources supported renovations to Parnell Hall, campus safety initiatives, and career and technical education programs. Federal Title funding, combined with state and competitive grants, ensures our students have the tools and opportunities they need to succeed.

Social Media

Our online presence continues to grow, helping us connect with families, alumni, and the community. The Arkansas School for the Deaf Facebook page now has more than 4.6K followers, and the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired page has more than 2.4K followers. Together, these platforms expand awareness of our schools' missions and celebrate student achievements. In the coming year, we plan to merge both pages and implement initiatives to grow followers, engagement, and reach across Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.



GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES FUNDING FOR NEW BUILDING AT ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND BLIND



Governor Sarah Huckabee joins students, staff, and community members to announce a major investment in the future of the Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind. The newly pledged funds will support the construction of a state-of-the-art facility designed to enhance learning, accessibility, and opportunity for all students.





Secretary Jacob Oliva spoke on the importance of vital educational programs and the need for a new facility for the students of ARDB.



Superintendent Nicole Walsh outlined the plan for a new, combined facility for the Arkansas School for the Deaf and the Arkansas School for the Blind, and welcomed Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders and Secretary Jacob Oliva at the project's official kickoff.



Students from the Deaf and Blind Department take part in the ceremony.



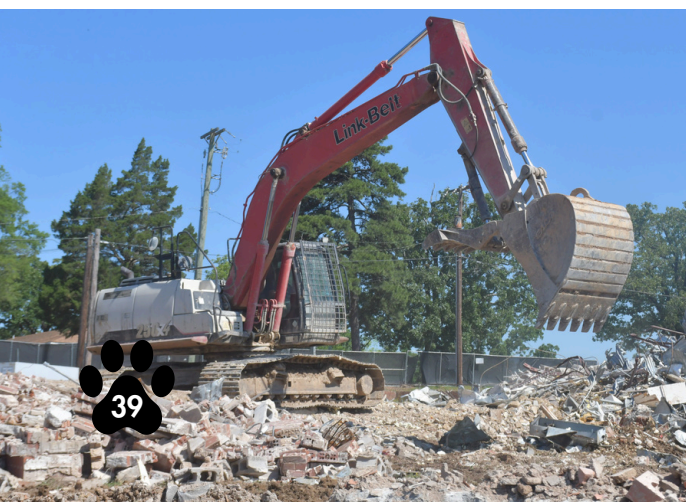


Buildings to be removed: CTE, Lower School, Pack Dorm, and Raznick.

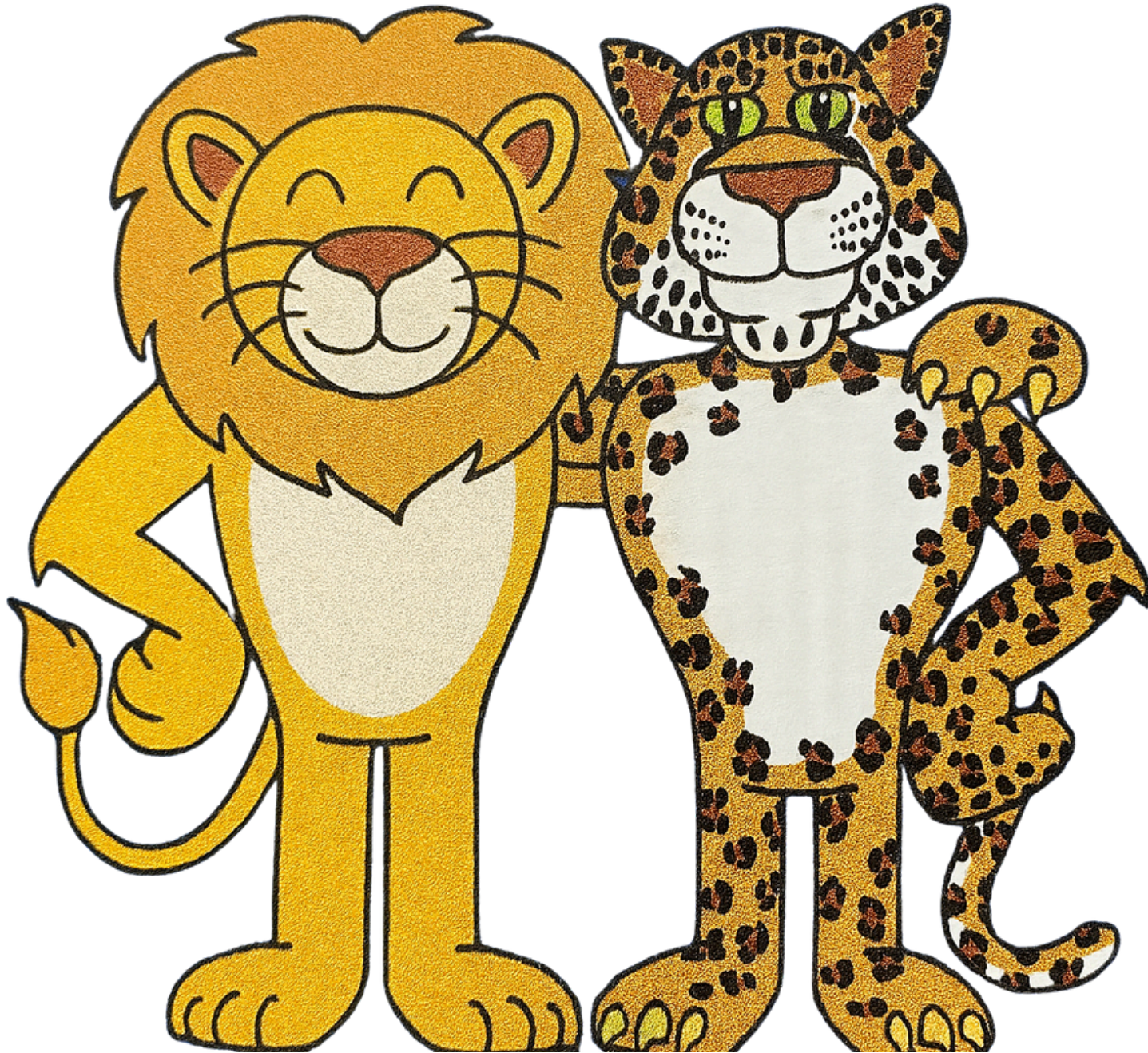


ARDB Board of Trustees with Governor Sanders and Secretary Oliva





#BETTERTOGETHER



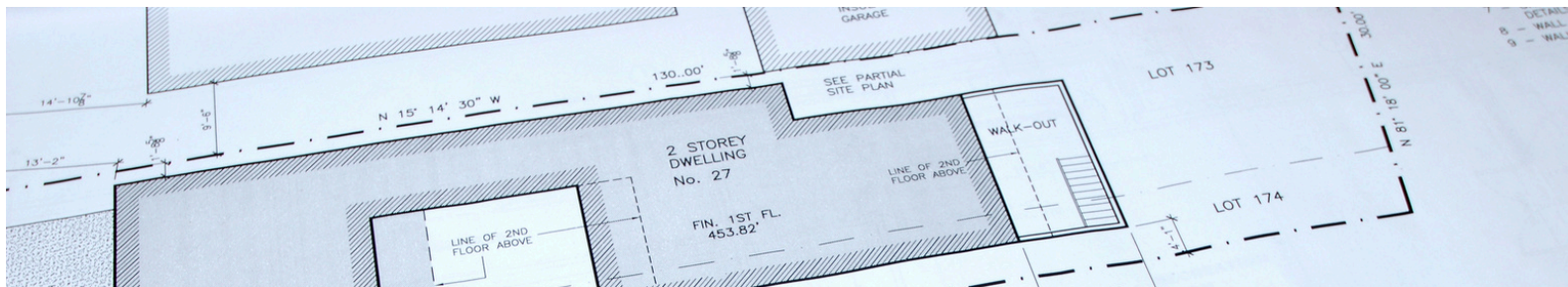
A NEW ERA OF LEARNING AT ARDB

The Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind is proud to announce the construction of a state-of-the-art 91,000 square foot instructional building, projected to open in January 2027. This landmark facility will unite all grade-level classrooms and most of our STEM and Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs under one roof, creating a modern, fully accessible environment that sets a new standard for specialized education in Arkansas. Equipped with the latest technology and designed with universal access in mind, the building will provide spaces that inspire innovation, collaboration, and academic excellence.

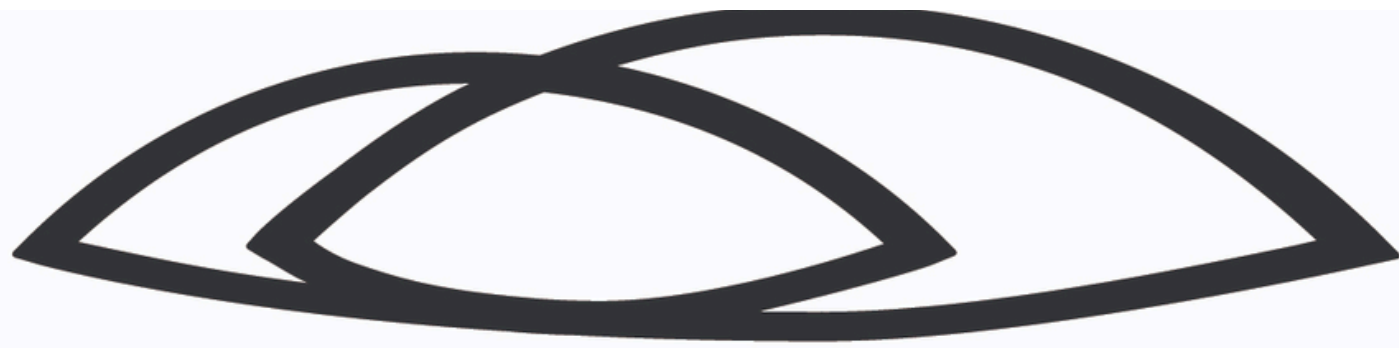
Our architectural vision is being brought to life by SCM Architects in partnership with Mackey Mitchell Architects of St. Louis. The team is further strengthened by the expertise of Robbie Nichols, Deaf Environmental Specialist Architect, and Chris Downey, Blind Environmental Specialist Architect, whose lived experiences and professional insight ensure that accessibility remains at the heart of the design. Together, this team engaged in more than 55 community forums, workshops, and stakeholder meetings so that the voices of students, families, and staff guided the planning process from the ground up.

What makes this project truly pioneering is the intentional design to bring deaf and blind students together in the same instructional building; a model not yet seen in our nation. Classrooms will be carefully planned to honor the unique needs of each student group, while shared spaces will foster opportunities for collaboration, friendship, and mutual understanding. Younger students will receive the focused attention required for their foundational learning, while still benefiting from opportunities to engage with peers who experience the world differently. This balance of challenge, connection, and protection will nurture not only academic growth but also empathy, respect, and citizenship.

With this new building, ARDB is taking a bold step forward in reimagining what inclusive education looks like for students with sensory disabilities, ensuring that every child has the environment, tools, and relationships they need to thrive.







Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art





Students had the wonderful opportunity to attend Crystal Bridges' Art Beyond Sight & Sound event this year. Interactive activities included a career tour, art tour, art making, and additional time at the museum. It was a great learning opportunity for students, and the interaction with museum staff will enhance learning experiences at the museum in the future.

ATHLETICS

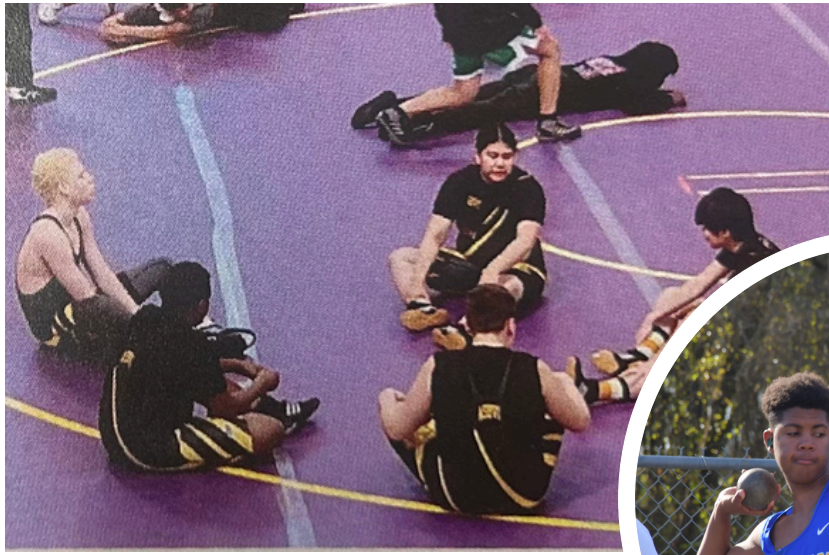




ARDB Athletics

Participating in athletics at school can strengthen school spirit and create a stronger sense of community, leading to greater student loyalty. In addition to promoting physical health and wellness by reducing the risk of obesity and cardiovascular diseases, athletics serve as a platform for imparting essential life lessons such as teamwork, discipline, dedication, and perseverance. Furthermore, involvement in athletics helps students develop social skills, make friends, resolve conflicts, and celebrate shared accomplishments, fostering camaraderie and teamwork. Attending high school sporting events can be an uplifting and enriching experience for the entire community and contribute to the development of self-esteem. Our students can participate in several sports that we offer.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES



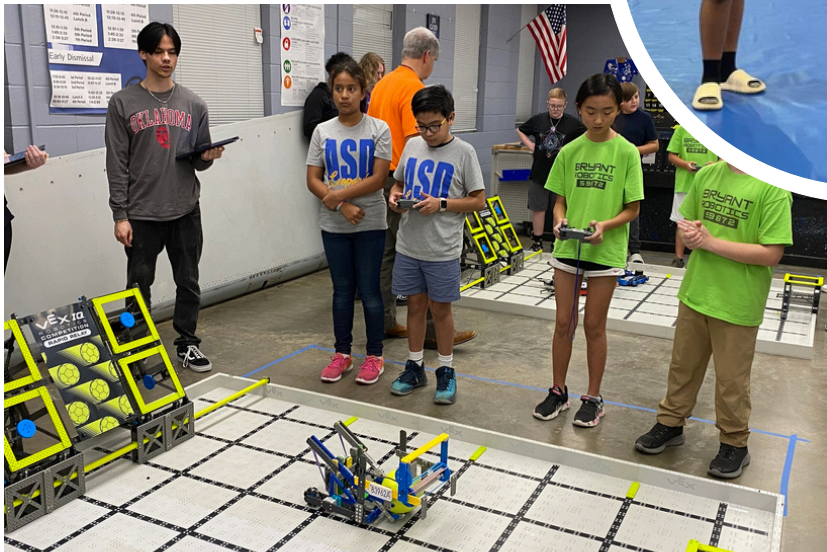
Athletics

- Basketball
- Cheerleading
- Cross Country
- Football
- Special Olympic
- Track and Field
- Volleyball
- Wrestling



Clubs

- Academic Bowl
- Drones
- FBLA
- FFA
- Jr. NAD
- Mathematics
- Robotics
- SkillsUSA



STUDENT ACTIVITIES

ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

ASDAA



The ASDAA community holds its annual reunion every year on the first of June. This event brings old friends together to laugh, catch up, and reconnect. We love these times—swapping stories, sharing memories, and making new ones along the way. One of the highlights is our heartfelt conversations about our journeys with ASD, where we share personal stories that foster understanding and deep connection among us all. Each reunion is a beautiful reminder of the strong bonds we have within this supportive community.

ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

ASB ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



The Arkansas School for the Blind Alumni Association is proud to continue supporting the incredible students at the Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind! For many of us, this school was home from kindergarten through 12th grade—it shaped who we are and still holds a special place in our hearts. Through funds raised from our annual Christmas Tree Sale, we're able to give back to the next generation by sponsoring Cane Quest and the Braille Challenge, purchasing yearbooks and dorm supplies, supporting athletic clubs, and awarding \$2,500 in scholarships each year. We also support the Student of the Month programs and the innovative work of the EAST program by purchasing 3D printers, giving students access to the latest in 3D printing technology. Each year, we donate two iPads at the annual Christmas concert to help students stay connected and build their tech skills. From bringing a snowclone truck to registration day to celebrating student achievements all year long, our alumni are proud to ensure every student in the blind department has a fun, memorable, and empowering experience at the place we still call home.



**DEAF DEPARTMENT
CLASS OF 2025**



**BLIND DEPARTMENT
CLASS OF 2025**

CONNECT WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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