



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind

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Document Title

Annual Executive Summary- The Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind- 2015

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The Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind

Enabling Authority

§ 22.1-346.2 (E.7.)

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Executive Summary

The Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind (VSDB) is a state agency located in Staunton, Virginia. Per the Code of Virginia (§ 22.1-346), VSDB is established as the only state school for students with sensory impairments in the Commonwealth. VSDB serves students who are visually impaired or deaf/hard of hearing, including those students who are deaf/hard of hearing, blind/vision impaired, deaf-blind, and/or sensory impaired with other disabilities.

As established by the Code of Virginia (§ 22.1-346.2.), the VSDB Board of Visitors provides oversight of the school and residential programs. The Board is comprised of eleven members including two senators and two delegates. The Board meets quarterly to review and approve the operations of the school and the residential programs. The Superintendent maintains direct management of the agency and is accountable to the Board of Visitors.

With a new leadership team in place, VSDB is moving forward with innovative system and program changes at the agency, school, and residential program levels. The administrative team works closely with DOE to implement programs to support increased student outcomes.

The Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, age, political affiliation, veteran status, or against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities in its programs and activities.

Financial Report

For the fiscal year 2016, VSDB revenues equaled \$308,003.54. This figure includes general funds and non-general funds. Total expenditures equaled \$11,167,902.28. This figure does not include any capital costs.

Licensure and Accreditation

VSDB is dually accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD). VSDB is licensed as a residential placement by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. VSDB participates in the School Nutrition Program.

Student Population

VSDB serves approximately 100 students from across the Commonwealth. Per the Code of Virginia, students enrolled at VSDB must be served for Special Education Services under a sensory impairment disability in the area of hearing or vision. Over 80% of the student body is served for more than one disability with an increasing number being identified as multi-disabled. Currently, VSDB serves 16 deaf-blind students with that number increasing on a yearly basis. A student may enroll in VSDB as a residential or day student. Approximately two-thirds of VSDB's student body is residential. Of the total student population, approximately 70% of the student body is deaf/hard of hearing with the remaining students being served under the disability category of visually impaired. All students are served through the School Nutrition Program.

Education/Residential/Recreational Programs

VSDB operates all programs on a standard August-May school calendar. Beyond a student's educational needs, VSDB addresses the needs of the whole child by providing opportunities for peer socialization and interactions within a fully accessible setting. Students who are deaf/hard of hearing at VSDB interact with staff and peers who are fluent in American Sign Language providing direct access to language models and typical language development. Similarly, students who are blind have equal access to all programs and develop social skills in a setting where peers and staff provide natural opportunities for social interactions.

Students are on campus Sunday evening through Friday at noon and return home every weekend. Learning occurs both within the classroom as well as within the residential halls. The residential program supports the skills taught in the classroom across all academic core areas as well as independent living skills and skills related to the Expanded Core Curriculum. The VSDB academic curriculum is based on the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) and is made accessible to all students with accommodations as deemed appropriate in each student's IEP. All students participate in the Virginia Assessment process according to their program of studies. Students pursue various diploma options based on credits earned for an Advanced Studies Diploma, a Standard Diploma, or an Applied Studies Diploma. For an

Advanced Studies Diploma, students may choose to take American Sign Language (ASL) or Spanish as their foreign language option.

Specialized assistive technology enhances communication and access to the curriculum per individual student needs. Specialized materials designed to meet the needs of students with special needs are an essential support to VSDB's curriculum including modified textbooks, subscriptions to supplemental instructional programs, software, and modified and brailled library books are essential to supplement the programs at VSDB. In addition, tutorial and remedial instructional support is provided by highly qualified personnel to students who demonstrate deficiencies in any core area. Tutoring occurs within the educational setting but also extends to after-hours in the residential hall. The residential program works collaboratively with the education program to support a structured tutoring/remediation SOL program for after school hours.

In addition to classroom instruction, students at VSDB also enjoy a unique farming experience as part of their educational program. In collaboration with the school and residential programs, VSDB manages the only educational urban farm in the Commonwealth. The farm is the result of a collaborative partnership between VSDB and the Alleghany Mountain Institute (AMI). The VSDB-AMI urban farm is a two-acre plot of land located on the VSDB campus. Students are involved in every aspect of the farm from the start of seedlings in the greenhouse to the harvesting of crops in the field and to the preparation of fresh vegetables in the dining hall. The farm produces thousands of pounds of produce each year and as an E-Vendor, AMI sells produce not only to VSDB but to local eateries and markets in the area. Students maintain a high level of engagement with the farm program and develop effective workforce skills for employment upon graduation.

During recreational time, students have full access to after school activities, sports, and clubs. VSDB's sports program offers students the opportunity to be part of a team and to participate in soccer, basketball, goalball, track, cross country, and volleyball. The sports program offers students a unique opportunity to participate in sports with full accessibility and to participate with peers sharing many of the same challenges.

Services

VSDB maintains compliance with all federal and state regulations for Special Education Services. It provides special education and related services, diagnostic evaluations, transportation, residential hall services, community experiences, vocational training, work experience, and other support services according to the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Nursing services are provided on a 24/7 basis to meet the needs of the residential program. Services are provided for children from birth to those who have not reached their 22nd birthday by September 30 of the current school year. All students are served through Special Education and have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). VSDB works in collaboration with the student's local school system to provide educational services that meet the student's individual needs.

Through the IEP process, each student has a transition plan that outlines goals upon graduation. VSDB works closely with state agencies and organizations to connect students and families to transition services

to support goals of independent living, post-secondary education, or employment. VSDB maintains DOE indicator data as required related to graduation and student outcomes.

Residential and School Staff

The Principal oversees daily operations of the school program. All teachers and paraprofessionals must be highly qualified to maintain employment at VSDB and teachers at VSDB are highly qualified in multiple areas. In both the Deaf and Blind departments, teachers instruct in multi-grade classrooms. In addition, at the high school level in both the Blind and Deaf departments, each core area is taught by a single teacher who is highly qualified in multiple SOL content areas. In the Deaf Department to support reading and writing skill development, teachers are trained in a bilingual (ASL/English) researched based instructional model.

The Student Life Coordinator manages all aspects of the residential program and works collaboratively with the Principal to ensure continuity of services. In both the Deaf and the Blind departments, residential hall staff possesses unique skills that support a fully accessible program. In the Deaf department, many staff are deaf and fluent in American Sign language, providing consistent language role models for the students. In the Blind department, staff is knowledgeable in braille and the Expanded Core Curriculum and support the maximum level of independence possible for each student.