



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- 2018

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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.

VSDB provides innovative educational programs to support those students with sensory impairments within the Commonwealth. VSDB works closely with the Virginia Department of Education to implement prescriptive programs to meet the needs of its student population and to ensure enhanced 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 fiscal year 2018:

Revenues equal \$632,487.22 and includes general fund and non-general fund (no federal grants or bond reimbursements). Expenses equal \$11,872,640.91 which includes general funds and non-general funds (including federal). These figures do not include any capital.

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).

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. VSDB serves students who are deaf/hard of hearing, blind/vision impaired, deafblind, or deaf or blind with other disabilities. Over 80% of the student body is served for more than one disability with an increasing number being identified as multi-disabled. 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. All students are served through the National School Meals 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/vision impaired 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. For residential students, VSDB provides transportation weekly to and from designated "hubs" throughout Virginia. Day student transportation is provided in partnership with the local school division. 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.

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VSDB provides additional special education services per each student's IEP. These services include speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, orientation and mobility training, and braille instruction. In addition, VSDB offers 24/7 nursing care that is accessible to all students as needed and/or prescribed.

Specialized assistive technology enhances communication and access to the curriculum per individual student needs. Specialized materials such as 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 and also extends to after-hours in the residential halls.

At VSDB, learning extends beyond the classroom with the CROPS program located on the school's 73-acre campus. The CROPS program is comprised of the VSDB greenhouse and the VSDB Educational Urban Farm, the largest educational urban farm in the Commonwealth. The program is funded fully by the VSDB Foundation and provides full accessible agricultural and horticultural experiences to the students. Hands-on learning activities allow students to develop workforce skills in support of more effective transition planning as well as teach students the importance of healthy lifestyles choices. 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 to the preparation of fresh vegetables in the dining hall. The farm produces thousands of pounds of produce each year and provides fresh produce to VSDB's cafeteria. Students maintain a high level of engagement within the farm program and develop effective workforce skills to support employment upon graduation. This year, the CROPS program was a proud recipient of a national USDA Farm-to-School grant. As one of only two Virginia recipients, VSDB was awarded approximately \$76,000 in funding to support continued development and growth of the CROPS program.

During recreational time, students have full access to after school social activities, sports, and clubs. VSDB's sports program offers students the opportunity to be part of a team and to participate in a variety of sports such as soccer, basketball, goalball, track, cross country, and volleyball. The sports program supports student participation with fully accessible activities 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 each student's individual needs.

VSDB offers a multi-year high school program with innovative transition program options that encourage students to remain at VSDB until they "age out" and are no longer eligible for special education services.

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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. Through the IEP process, a transition plan is developed that is prescriptive to each student's individual needs and interests and outlines goals for life after graduation. During the high school years, VSDB students access opportunities for career exploration and workforce skill development through on and off campus work experiences. VSDB partners extensively within its community to provide an expansive array of career placements and experiences. VSDB maintains DOE indicator data, as required, related to graduation and student outcomes.

VSDB's innovative transition services support the development of essential workforce and independent living skills. Students have the opportunity to develop independent living skills while residing in the residential halls, and as they approach graduation, by participating in the on-campus fully accessible Independent Living Apartments (ILA) Program. The ILA program is the only one of its kind in the Commonwealth and is designed to provide students a nine-weeks experience within a supervised apartment setting. A VSDB designed curriculum provides prescriptive instruction to meet the needs of the unique student population and supports a successful transition into the ILA program.

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 with many being highly qualified in multiple areas. In both the Deaf and the Blind Departments, teachers instruct in multi-grade classrooms. In addition, at the high school level in both the Blind and the 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 (American Sign Language/English) researched based instructional model.

The Director of Student Life manages all aspects of the Residential Program and works collaboratively with the Principal to ensure continuity of services and support of transition plans. The Residential Program includes specialty programs that support student independence as graduation nears. For adult students, the "18 and up" residential hall floors support a supervised residential setting with a greater level of independence in preparation for placement in the Independent Living Apartments. These prescriptive and unique programs are crucial elements in preparing students for life after VSDB. 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.

VSDB's unique programs and services offer students who are sensory impaired, throughout the Commonwealth, an opportunity to "Grow, Do, and Become"! For many students, enrollment in VSDB allows them, for the first time, to learn, participate, and to succeed on equal ground as their peers. For many, they are one of the same rather than the one who is different and for the first time, experience the opportunity to develop true friendships, to become leaders, and to reach their potential.