SD School for the Blind
and Visually Impaired

South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired School Improvement Plan

(Updated 2022)

SDSBVI Mission Statement:

Preparing students to step forward with confidence and a vision of lifetime success.

SDSBVI Vision Statement:

All South Dakota children who are blind or visually impaired will have full access to educational resources that prepare them for life.

SDSBVI Core Values:

Each child is an individual, deserving of uniquely-designed learning opportunities focused to help them achieve their highest level of independence.

Families, communities, and school districts as key partners in meeting the needs of each child.

Knowledgeable and caring professionals who provide experiences for each child in the least restrictive environment.

Innovative use of technological tools adapted for each child.

Safety and security in a positive healthy environment.

A commitment to the highest level of independent readiness as each child embraces adulthood with a sense of opportunity.

SDSBVI Programing:

SDSBVI offers a quality teaching and learning environment and outreach services. Our classroom teachers and outreach vision consultants have a South Dakota teaching certificate and obtain the teacher of the visually impaired endorsement as a requirement of their employment with SDSBVI. In addition, we employ nationally certified orientation and mobility specialists, low vision specialists, and speech/language pathologists. SBSBVI is recognized as a K-12 accredited school by the South Dakota Department of Education.

SDSBVI offers two educational environments. Students served on campus in Aberdeen during the school year receive academic instruction which includes special education and the expanded core curriculum incorporating skills of blindness. Public school students, who meet SDSBVI qualifications, can attend SDSBVI during the summer to learn specialized skills of blindness from the school's expanded core curriculum.

SDSBVI also serves children, parents, and teachers across South Dakota. Public school students with vision loss may receive comprehensive functional low vision, academic, cognitive, social/emotional, behavioral, transition, and speech-language educational evaluations performed by expert staff. After students have completed their evaluations, SDSBVI personnel can provide guidance with designing instructional materials and methods that support children who are blind or visually impaired. Outreach vision consultants provide on-site public school assistance to school staff and home visits for families with young children. Services include staff training, technical assistance, educational material loans, and development of Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP), Individualized Education

Programs (IEP), or 504 Plans (as necessitated by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973).

SDSBVI Profile:

The South Dakota School for the Blind was officially opened in Gary, South Dakota, on March 1, 1900, under the South Dakota Board of Charities and Corrections. In 1945, the School for the Blind was placed under the jurisdiction of the South Dakota Board of Regents where it currently remains today.

In 1957-58, the idea of relocating the school surfaced. The major contentions were the inadequacy of the facilities at Gary, the lack of opportunity for city travel experiences and the proximity to a college. In 1959, the State Legislature passed a bill authorizing relocation of the school to Aberdeen. Classes began in the new facility in Aberdeen on September 18, 1961.

In 1970, the name South Dakota School for the Visually Handicapped was adopted. This change reflected the fact that students who are visually impaired as well as blind can receive services. In 1979, serving the deaf-blind was added to the responsibility of the South Dakota School for the Visually Handicapped.

On the recommendation of the South Dakota School for the Visually Handicapped Advisory Council and with the support of the South Dakota Board of Regents, the South Dakota Association of the Blind, and the National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota, the school requested a name change during the 1998 legislative session. On July 1, 1998, the South Dakota School for the Visually Handicapped became the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. During

the 2000 Legislative Session, funding was earmarked for six weeks of summer programs.

The South Dakota Board of Regents approved the building of the new South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired in October 2017. From the start of the project, Northern State University and the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired joined together as partners to make the project fit both organization's needs. This collaboration developed into teaching, learning, and student opportunities that dually benefit the two organizations. On January 13, 2020, the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired started classes at its new home on the former grounds of Jerde Hall located on the east side of the Northern State Campus. The SDSBVI building was financed in collaboration with Northern State University and the Northern State University Foundation. A land swap was completed in order for SDSBVI to move to its new location and provide a repurposing of the former school's location to be the new site for Northern State University's football and softball complex. The approximate cost of the SDSBVI building and grounds was $13.85 million. Funding was obtained through donations to the NSU Foundation capital campaign and both Governor Noem and Governor Daugaard each pledged $2.5 million from the State's Future Fund. The South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired building site and architecture was selected based on the needs of the students and staff that utilize the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Special consideration was given to provide orientation and mobility opportunities for students.

The South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired has demonstrated a commitment of developing and using the best instructional practices and accommodations to educate students who are blind and visually impaired. The school also introduces new technologies as they became available, braille printers, reading software

for computers, adaptive devices, and low vision aids. Curriculum developments, new teaching methods, and the integrated use of the therapy services were adopted to better serve the students. Students have opportunities to develop practical skills through both on-campus and off-campus job training. The SDSBVI also has developed a comprehensive evaluation program to assist schools in planning programs for students who are being educated in their home districts. Additionally, SDSBVI offers Outreach and Transition consulting as a service to the local educational agencies and families of South Dakota.

Academic Achievement:

SDSBVI students that are receiving on campus educational services in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11 are given the Smarter Balanced Assessment each year. The students may be eligible to take the alternate assessment depending on their individual needs or disability. Due to the low number of students (less than 10) in each class, SDSBVI cannot generate grade level data. SDSBVI does, however, maintain individual testing results which are used internally for individual student growth monitoring. The students' home school district also maintains this data. Student growth is also monitored, using Special Education achievement and ability scores generated during student evaluations. Individual scores for the students are distributed to parents/ guardians and home school districts when results are received.

IEP Goal Monitoring:

Student IEP goals are reviewed and addressed each year during the students annual IEP meeting. The IEP team makes determinations on the goals to be included in the IEP based on the student's individual strengths and needs. The goal progress is reported to the parent/guardian and the LEA on a quarterly basis.

Strategic Priorities and Goals:

Items to be addressed on an annual basis, and in connection to the current SDSBVI strategic plan.

A. Expand, deepen, and strengthen continuity of outreach services to assure critical support for children within homes, schools, and communities.
    1. Strengthen model of statewide services for students who are blind and visually impaired.
    2. Expand the assessment program to better serve students.
    3. Further develop consistent procedures organization wide.
    4. Build a collection of resources for parents and school districts to expand learning for children receiving services.
    5. Expand SDSBVI campus-based experiences for students served in their home school districts.

    Action Steps to be carried out by SDSBVI staff:
    - **Monitor caseload statistics for outreach vision consultants and adjust as needed.**
    - **Monitor assessment usage numbers for on campus and off campus students.**
    - **Create procedural information for SDSBVI.**

- **Share resources and reference materials with parents and school districts, such as curriculum, assistive technology, thematic activities, games, adaptive devices.**
  Organize and expand our LEAP (Learning to be Equipped for Adulthood Program) programming and off-site summer trainings for students.

B. Build on the partnership with Northern State University to be a Laboratory of Excellence in workforce readiness for services to the blind or visually impaired.
   1. Strengthen and bring awareness to Northern State University's (NSU) students to build interest and engagement in the field of vision loss.
   2. Partner with the Distance Learning Network of NSU (Technical and Media Relations) offering college credits in the area of Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI).
   3. Finalize a TVI masters degree within the School of Education at NSU that includes internship opportunities at SDSBVI.
   4. Partner with NSU to market the TVI program across the state, region, and nation.

   Actions Steps to be carried out by SDSBVI staff:
   - **Communicate with Northern State University stakeholders to market and create learning opportunities for teachers and staff on and off campus.**
   - **Communicate with university campuses and programs to share information about the TVI program and educational opportunities in the state.**

- **Create a learning opportunity for people interested in gaining certifications in Blind and Visually Impaired education and ancillary programming.**

C. Establish a center of excellence in transition resources for children who are blind or visually impaired in South Dakota.

1. Make investments to expand the readiness of staff to meet the unique needs of students of transition age.
2. Market our "Learning to be Equipped for Adulthood Program" (LEAP) that delivers customized transition services for students who are seeking work or post-secondary education after meeting graduation requirements or working towards a certificate of attendance.

Action Steps to be carried out by SDSBVI staff:

- **Create training opportunities for staff to learn new technologies.**
- **Communicate SDSBVI's LEAP program to eligible students, parents, and schools.**

D. Increase local, state, and national understanding of SDSBVI's roles and responsibilities as a resource for children in need of specialized vision services.

1. Develop an internal leadership culture within the SDSBVI designed to build capacity and engagement of staff.
2. Use the new SDSBVI facility as a marketing tool to develop a national "Center of Excellence" for educational services and technology use.

Action Steps to be carried out by SDSBVI staff:

- **Schedule biweekly internal administrative meetings to address planning and organizational topics.**
- **Showcase the new SDSBVI facility during presentation opportunities.**
- **Conduct research and development of new technology and teaching methods within the SDSBVI organization.**

E. Review South Dakota Smarter Balanced Assessment results on an annual basis to identify longitudinal trends for individual student growth and proficiency in the areas of math, English language arts, and science.

1. Identify students' individual academic areas of weakness.
2. Generate action plans for improving the areas of academic needs through IEP goals, accommodations, and curriculum revision.

Action Steps to be carried out by SDSBVI staff:

- **Review Smarter Balanced Assessment data on an annual basis.**
- **Review current curriculum offerings based on the curriculum review schedule and the results of the Smarter Balanced Assessment data.**
- **Work with students to improve their previous year's Smarter Balanced assessment scaled score by 30 points from their previous score.**
- **Work with students to improve their previous year's Alternate Smarter Balanced Assessment scaled score by 15 points from their previous score.**

Staff Development:

SDSBVI will host staff development sessions for new staff and returning staff each year. The schedule and content of the training will be developed by the administration in consultation with the SDSBVI Professional Development Committee.

SDSBVI Enrollment Data :

Enrollment Year	Outreach	On Campus	Summer
2017	238	25	39
2018	253	23	38
2019	251	28	41
2020	265	27	33
2021	247	28	43
2022	250	30	45
Estimated 2023	250	30	45

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Data (SBAC):

Year	# of students administered SBAC	% of students meeting score improvement goal
20-21	5	NO data from SY 19-20
21-22	3	50 %

Year	# of students administered the alternate assessment	% of students meeting score improvement goal
20-21	2	No data from SY 19-20
21-22	0	NA