



KANSAS STATE SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

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2023 -2024

ANNUAL REPORT

KANSAS STATE SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND



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- Foreseeable Future Foundation

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

On behalf of the entire Kansas State School for the Blind community, we extend our heartfelt thanks for the incredible support of our donors during the 2023-2024 school year. Your generosity has made a profound impact on our students and staff.

Thanks to your contributions, we were able to make students' experiences richer, safer, and more meaningful. These resources have empowered our teachers to develop innovative learning experiences and equip our students with the tools they need to succeed.

We have witnessed firsthand the positive changes your support has brought, turning students into creators, inventors, and masters of their own future. These advancements wouldn't be possible without your belief in our mission.

KANSAS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SYSTEM NETWORK



THE NUMBERS

- 18**
TEACHERS WERE MENTORED
- 9**
TEACHERS STARTED/CONTINUED THEIR EDUCATION
- 5**
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Goals of the Teacher Training Project

Teachers have access to accredited preparation programs in order to earn endorsement(s) as a Teacher of Students with a Visual Impairment (TSVI), and/or Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) at University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Missouri State University and Stephen F. Austin State University.

Support for tuition and fees, supplies, coaching and mentorship activities and professional development is made available to teachers seeking a TSVI or COMS endorsement/certification.

KSSB Field Service Specialists facilitated Community of Practice (COP) for all TSVIs and COMs in their regional areas along with additional training webinars.

Teachers will participate in mentoring activities including eMSS upon completion of endorsement/certification.

PROJECT SEARCH



The Transition Program helps support the student who is leaving high school, but is unsure, undecided and perhaps not quite prepared for the demands of adulthood. Project SEARCH is one of the three pathways in the Transition Program at KSSB.

Project SEARCH is a partnership between KSSB and the YMCA of Greater Kansas City, Vocational Rehabilitation, and the local Community Developmental Disability Organization.

This unique and dynamic program is a one year opportunity for high school students who have met their graduation requirements to prepare for the future through on-site job training, coaching and education to prepare them for competitive employment.

KSSB is only the second school for the blind in the United States to partner with Project SEARCH. The YMCA of Greater Kansas City has agreed to serve as a host site for KSSB's students, who will develop job skills in a community-based setting. Project SEARCH improves employment outcomes for young adults who complete the program.

As part of the program students gain independent living skills (this could be living on the KSSB campus in the dormitory, apartment, and/or cottage), receive individualized instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC), gain valuable work experiences and bank their diploma, not exit, and remain on their home district's IEP.



Jon Harding, Ed.S.
 Superintendent
 Kansas State School for the Blind

Welcome!

As Superintendent of the Kansas State School for the Blind (KSSB), I'm thrilled to present our 2024 annual report. Our school's vision of, "Right Help, Right Time, Right Location," embodies our unwavering commitment to providing students who are blind or visually impaired with the exact support they need to achieve their full potential.

We've taken significant strides in expanding our offerings and reach. This year saw the completion of our new state-of-the-art track and dedicated blind soccer pitch, paving the way for our exciting new Blind Sports Program. This program, combined with the expanded reach of our ECC on the Road and Mobile STEM initiatives, ensures a more inclusive and accessible educational experience for students across the state.

The dedication of our team doesn't go unnoticed. We're honored to receive national recognition for our innovative approaches. Lydia Moreno, a cornerstone of our Makerspace program, received the prestigious Voya "Unsung Heroes" Award. Additionally, our partnership with Microsoft TEALS garnered the "Founders Award" for Computer Science excellence, and the Greater Kansas City YMCA awarded our Project SEARCH team the "Spirit of Service Award."

The future looks even brighter. Launched in August of 2023, our Family Infant-Toddler (FIT) Program already serves 192 children with a visual impairment from birth to three years old. Early intervention is crucial, and this program empowers families with the resources and knowledge to help their children thrive.

As we move forward, partnerships remain at the heart of our success. We express our sincere gratitude to the KC Blind All-Stars and dedicated parents, volunteers, and stakeholders for their unwavering support. Together, we will continue to break down barriers and provide the "Right Help, Right Time, Right Location" for every child we serve.

New strategic plan goals:

- Empower and connect Kansas families of B/VI to promote informed decisions.
- Ensure all children (0-21) in KS have access to licensed vision specialists, assistive technology, and literacy in their primary learning media.
- Provide innovative solutions to increase statewide coordination of vision services.
- Expand community partnerships to maximize student success and opportunities.

Sincerely,

Jon Harding

CAMPUS IMPROVEMENTS

EAGLE ALLEY (Breezeway)

Students named the new breezeway that connects our dorm (Edlund Building) to our school (Johnson Building) "Eagle Alley". KSSB began construction in 2019 to allow students and staff to access the cafeteria, dormitory, and school in a climate-controlled environment. Completed in 2023, it now serves as the home of our "Brailled Bean" coffee operation.

SENSORY GARDEN

The Nielsen Family donated funds for a sensory garden in memory of Anne Nielsen, Ph.D. who was KSSB's first Director of Outreach. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on October 1st, 2023 to celebrate the refurbished sensory garden, which serves as the entryway to Eagle Alley and our broader campus.

MURAL

Lydia Moreno, Makerspace Coordinator, helped students create a mural on the south side of Brighton Building that depicts students in motion using a variety of assistive technologies. At the end of the mural is a profile that depicts long-time KSSB employee (and original Makerspace Coordinator), Bob Taylor. Bob served over 40 years at KSSB, helping teachers, families and students to understand and better utilize assistive technologies.

ELEVATOR

The Brighton elevator project began in 2021 and was completed in 2024. The lift serves as a safe and comfortable way for students who need mobility assistance to enter and exit the pool on the lower level of Brighton Building. Previously, students and staff were required to navigate relatively steep sidewalks to enter and exit the pool from the lower level of the building.

TRACK RENOVATION

KSSB's original track was built in 1994 through a collaboration among KSSB, the Overland Park Lions Club, and the State of Kansas. After 30 years of regular use, the track was fully renovated with 100% private donations, including a new asphalt subbase and overlay. The Sunderland Foundation and a State Farm Community Grant provided the vast majority of the funds to complete the project. Work began in the summer of 2023 and was completed in the fall of 2023.

BLIND SOCCER FIELD VICTORY PROJECT

The Victory Project, a philanthropic arm of Sporting KC, provided the majority of funds for the Midwest's first blind soccer pitch. Situated on the infield of the new track, the pitch overlooks Big 11 Lake and downtown Kansas City, Kansas. Sidewalls, soccer goals, and equipment have been purchased and the field will host matches, clinics, and demonstrations for students across Kansas, the greater KC metro, and the Midwest.

MAKE 48



PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

TSBVI Makers (Texas)

CSB Cheetahs (California)

WSSB Lions (Washington)

Team MMA (New Mexico)

Team Rockets (Indiana)

Team MSB Bees (Maryland)

In April 2024, students from schools for the blind across the country arrived at KSSB for the first ever Make48 COSB competition weekend. Make48 is a 48-hour competition where teams are presented with a challenge and tasked to build a physical prototype, create a sales sheet, produce a one-minute marketing video and pitch their big idea to a panel of judges. Teams consisted of students from schools for the blind in California, Indiana, Maryland, New Mexico, Texas and Washington. Kansas students who previously participated in KSSB Make48 events served as "mentors" to the visiting schools. It was exciting to see them work against the clock and collaborate together on functional and accessible maker solutions.

This years challenge was to design a device/apparatus/activity/feature for a new gymnasium from the following categories:

- Rock wall
- Treadmill
- An existing activity that is already in the gym
- Indoor Biking
- Indoor Soccer

Many students had little to no experience with production, but sharpened their skill sets using assistive technology and their unique perspectives. Teams worked alongside tool techs to come up with very different prototypes using 3D printers, laser cutters, and traditional power tools to present unique prototypes that improved Blind Sports, gym functions, and adaptations for all!

KSSB is passionate about encouraging real-world technical and innovation skills in our students and this event helped enhance their understanding of STEM...helping them build skill sets for future careers. We were honored to be a leader among schools for the blind in the U.S. Our hope is that they will take skills they have learned about maker competitions and incorporate them in their local areas. For more information about Make48 visit www.make48.com.



KANSAS DEAF-BLIND PROJECT



The Kansas Deaf-Blind (KSDB) Project provides technical assistance to improve services for 180 children and youth who are deaf-blind between the ages of 0-21. The KSDB Project is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and Office of Special Education Programs.

The KSDB Project maintains a statewide child count of children and youth with combined hearing and vision loss and provides training and resources to families and professionals.

PROMOTING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

- Offered nine **Discover CVI Parent Support Group meetings** for parents of children with Cortical/Cerebral Visual Impairments (CVI).
- Coordinated **Annual Family Day** in collaboration with the Kansas State School for the Blind (KSSB).
- Provided eight **Music and Me** sessions. Music and Me is an online music therapy for young children, ages birth to five, who are deaf-blind or visually impaired.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND PROFESSIONALS

- Hosted webinars which included topics such as CHARGE Syndrome for Educators, Deaf-blind Learning Techniques, Deaf-blind Resources, and Information on the KSDB Project.
- Provided an online six week American Sign Language course in partnership with the Oklahoma Deaf-blind Technical Assistance Project.
- Partnered with KSSB and the Kansas Instructional Resource Center for a statewide Vision Symposium.
- Supported seven Deaf-blind Core Teams, which act as an intermediary between the KSDB Project and the school districts.
- Partnered with KSSB, Kansas School for the Deaf, and the Helen Keller Regional Center to expand awareness of transition options and services for Kansas families and young adults ages 14-21.
- Provided two scholarships for two paraprofessionals to enroll in the Certified Intervener Program through Utah State University.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- KSDB Project employees attended the monthly State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) meetings to provide information about the Project and answer questions that the Council may have about the early childhood referral process and services.
- Partnered with the CHARGE Syndrome Foundation to provide training for educators in Kansas
- Collaborated with the Helen Keller National Center to disseminate information regarding deafblindness.
- Held an annual Advisory Council meeting to learn insights and receive feedback about the Project from community members.



AWARDS

VOYA UNSUNG HEROES

2023 Winner - Lydia Knopp (Moreno)
Rewarding Excellence in America's Schools

"Many of us still remember our 'favorite teacher' — an educator who had a memorable impact on us because they opened our minds and sparked a love of learning with their passion and creativity."

~ Heather Lavallee, President of Tax-Exempt Markets for Voya's Retirement business

"Many of us still remember our 'favorite teacher' — an educator who had a memorable impact on us because they opened our minds and sparked a love of learning with their passion and creativity," said Heather Lavallee, president of Tax-Exempt Markets for Voya's Retirement business. "Too often, these same individuals must dip into their own wallets or forgo an exciting teaching idea because no resources are available to fund it. That's why, for over twenty years, we have been proudly offering the Voya Unsung Heroes program. These grants help bring novel teaching concepts to life and support the outstanding professionals who — every day — are challenging young minds and making a difference in the lives of future generations."

REWARDING EXCELLENCE IN AMERICA'S SCHOOLS: 2023 WINNER - LYDIA KNOPP (MORENO)

Knopp's innovative teaching idea, "KSSB Accessible STEM Instruction," consists of a van full of accessible Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) activities designed to deliver technology to students at the school's residential campus and across the state. Every month, the van will travel to school districts throughout Kansas to introduce STEM activities to rural communities, especially those districts with at least one visually impaired student who may not otherwise have access to such materials. Activities include adapted and accessible coding, robotics, electric circuits, engineering Rube Goldberg Machines and introductions to assistive technology for the blind and visually impaired like braille, large print, screen magnification and speech output devices.

The Voya Unsung Heroes grant (\$7,000.00) will be used to purchase supplies, upgrade equipment and supplement travel expenses.



KCBAS FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- John DeLeon**, President, MTI Events
- Jon Harding**, Vice President
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- Larry Hisle**, Interim Treasurer
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- Amy Huff**, Secretary, Jungk Food Innovation
- Marites Altuna**, Kansas State School for the Blind
- Carah Berry**, Financial Advisor, Edward Jones
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- Brianne Camacho**, KCBAS and Accessible Arts, Inc.
- Monique McDaniel**, Wellspring School of Allied Health
- Christian Puett**, Kansas State School for the Blind
- Nick Privitera**, Mark One Electric
- Stefani Wagner**, Parent

KC BLIND ALL-STARS**KSSB PROGRAMS SUPPORTED BY KCBAS**

- KanLovKids Low Vision Clinics
- Project LIFE & the Brailled Bean
- Extended School Year
- KSSB Makerspace
- Transition Program
- Mobile STEM Unit
- Athletics Program
- Trailblazers Weekends
- Space Camp
- Make48
- Expanded Core on the Road
- Celebrate Access

The KC Blind All-Stars Foundation (KCBAS) seeks to imagine, execute, fund, and support the needs and dreams of blind and visually impaired youth who benefit from the Kansas State School for the Blind (KSSB), and the educators who believe in them. KCBAS believes in the unlimited potential of all youth in Kansas who are blind or visually impaired and is dedicated to expanding society's perception of them as valuable, contributing members of their schools and communities. Within the last several years, the organization has become a very active proponent for KSSB in the community, establishing a yearly community event for fundraising and awareness, partnering with the school on several major improvements including a new playground, resurfacing the athletic track, and distributing student scholarships for those seeking higher education.

The Foundation was incorporated on March 19, 1973 as the Endowment Fund for the Kansas State School for the Visually Handicapped. (The school's name was changed to the Kansas State School for the Blind during the 1991-92 school year, and the fund was renamed the KC Blind All-Stars in 1998.) The fund was intended to benefit the students at the school and later, students in the regional area who were blind or visually impaired.

In order to support KSSB students, the KC Blind All-Stars Foundation employs the "TEAMS" approach for support in Technology, Education and Employment, Athletics and Extracurricular Activities, Music and the Arts, and Skill Building. KCBAS mitigates some of the cost barriers for specialized assistive technology and ensures students are given exposure to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) learning that fosters imagination, creativity, and problem-solving. KCBAS offers two annual scholarships, in addition to providing program and project support at KSSB.

**FOUNDERS AWARD (Microsoft TEALS)**

"Our partnership with TEALS has challenged our own expectations and taught us that students who are blind or low vision can master rigorous Computer Science content when accessibility is built in. TEALS volunteers and team have had an unwavering belief in our students and our school from day one.. We are humbled, honored and thrilled to be a part of this ground-breaking partnership."

~ Jon Harding, Superintendent, Kansas State School for the Blind

Technology Education and Learning Support (TEALS) is a Microsoft Philanthropies program that builds sustainable computer science (CS) programs in high schools. This program focuses especially on serving students excluded from learning CS because of race, gender, or geography. TEALS helps teachers learn to teach CS by pairing them with industry volunteers and proven curricula.

Each year the TEALS program awards and celebrates one school with the Founder's Award, in honor of TEALS founder Kevin Wang. KSSB was selected for pioneering accessible Computer Science for students who are blind or have low vision. The Council of Schools and Services for the Blind (COSB) honored Microsoft TEALS at the 2023 COSB Leadership Institute in Louisville, Kentucky for their leadership in working with KSSB and expanding partnerships with other Schools for the Blind, including Washington State School for the Blind and Maryland School for the Blind. Kansas State School for the Blind has been a partner with TEALS since 2019.

From Superintendent Jon Harding: "Our partnership with TEALS has challenged our own expectations and taught us that students who are Blind or Low Vision can master rigorous Computer Science content when accessibility is built in. TEALS volunteers and team have had an unwavering belief in our students and our school from day one.. We are humbled, honored and thrilled to be a part of this ground-breaking partnership."

AWARDS

OLIVIA BLOOMFIELD LEGACY SEAT HONOREES

Leah Enright & Nicole Drake

Olivia Bloomfield was a fearless, dedicated and inspirational advocate for accessibility and inclusion. Born with congenital muscular dystrophy, she believed that all children should have the same opportunities and championed the construction of inclusive playgrounds across Kansas City and beyond.

The Kansas City Current (professional women's soccer team) selected Leah Enright and Nicole Drake as the Olivia Bloomfield Legacy Seat honorees for the Saturday, May 18 match vs. Racing Louisville at CPKC Stadium, the first stadium in the world purpose-built for a women's professional sports team. They are being honored for their work to make blind soccer a reality in Kansas City.

Olivia Bloomfield was a fearless, dedicated and inspirational advocate for accessibility and inclusion. Born with congenital muscular dystrophy, she believed that all children should have the same opportunities and championed the construction of inclusive playgrounds across Kansas City and beyond.

The Olivia Bloomfield Legacy Seating honors the unsung heroes whose service provides a unique and valuable contribution toward making our communities and the world more accessible and inclusive for all. For more information visit OliviaBloomfieldFoundation.org

The Kansas City Current honors each Olivia Bloomfield Legacy honoree prior to each match by showcasing them on the videoboard and sharing a few points of why they are being recognized.



KANSAS INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

The Kansas Instructional Resource Center (KIRC) resources include: instructional materials; braille and large print textbooks; library books and educational aids; braille transcription of educational materials; continuing education and professional development opportunities for teachers; and adaptive equipment for students. KIRC conducts an annual APH registration for Kansas students, and includes all students qualifying for vision services as outlined in IDEA. The 2024 registration period was extended to May 15, 2024.

This year, approximately 2,912 items (large print and braille textbook sets, professional materials and equipment) were circulated, with an estimated value of \$802,468. These materials and equipment allow children who are blind to have low vision access to the same content as their peers, in their home, schools and communities.

1029 TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS REGISTERED WITH KIRC

STATE YEAR 2023 **831** PUBLIC SCHOOLS

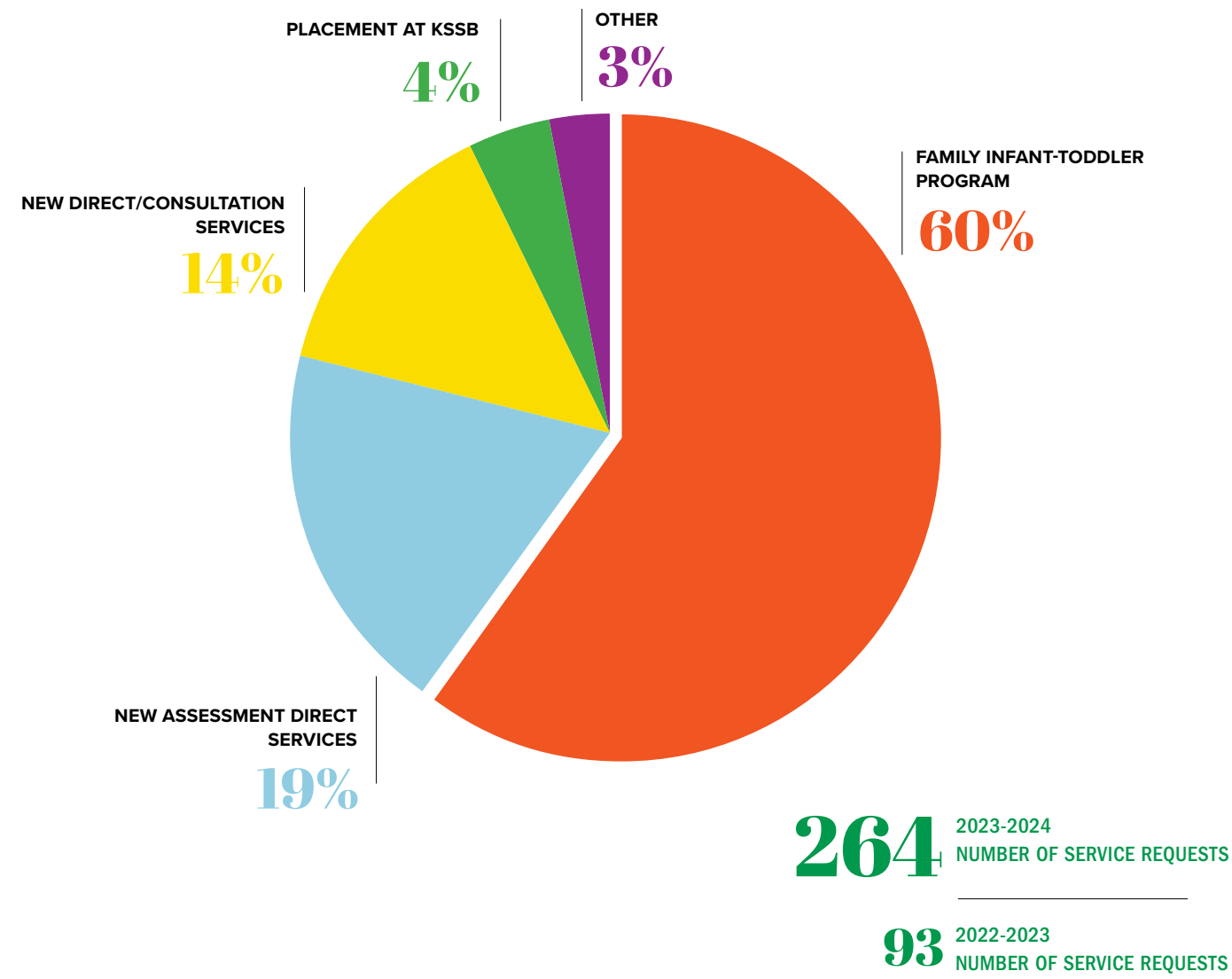
\$802,468 = 2,912 items
VALUE OF ITEMS SHIPPED FROM KIRC FOR USE WITH STUDENTS

158 INFANT AND TODDLER

STATE YEAR 2022 **40** KSSB

\$505,677 = 2,333 items
VALUE OF ITEMS SHIPPED FROM KIRC FOR USE WITH STUDENTS

REASONS FOR SERVICE REQUESTS



EVENT

KANSAS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS (KASB) DISTRICT SHOWCASE

KSSB was selected to participate in the inaugural Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB) Showcase. The showcase kicked off the annual KASB convention in Wichita, an event that brings together hundreds of school leaders from across the state. Each Kansas school district was invited to feature a unique student-centered program. KSSB, in partnership with Envision, Inc. brought students to the Showcase who had participated in our Make48 Inventor's Competitions. Make48 is a thrilling national invention competition and documentary that challenges teams to dream up, design, and prototype a new product in only 48 hours. The event has gained significant recognition for its ability to foster creativity, teamwork, and problem-solving skills among participants. KSSB has hosted three "Make48" competitions and sent students to national competitions, where they work alongside local business leaders who serve as "team leads", guiding and mentoring students in the invention process.

STAFF

DAVE MITCHELL

School Resource Officer

Officer Mitchell was born and raised in Lawrence, KS. At 18, he joined the US Marine Corps where he served until 2001. In July of 2005, Mitchell was hired by the Kansas City, KS Police Department. He worked for eight years in patrol, four years in SWAT, and five years in community policing.

Officer Mitchell joined KSSB as the School Resource Officer (SRO) in Fall of 2023. He knew he wanted to apply for the position because he saw it as "another great way to continue community policing concepts focusing on our youth and their safety."



PROGRAM

FAMILY INFANT-TODDLER SERVICES

SIX MONTH SUMMARY

- 484**
HOURS OF HOME VISITS

- 174**
CHILDREN AGES 0-3 SERVED

- 100**
BRAILLE BOOKS TO FAMILIES

- 49**
KANSAS COUNTIES SERVED

- 28**
INFANT-TODDLER PROGRAMS SUPPORTED

- 25**
VISION RELATED PRESENTATIONS GIVEN

- 17**
TRAINING SESSIONS PRESENTED

- 3**
CVI CHILDREN'S HOME PLAY SPACES

- 3**
FIT PROGRAM SESSIONS PRESENTED

Research indicates that young children who are blind or visually impaired face unique challenges, with approximately 80% of their learning occurring through vision. The impact of vision loss at birth can lead to more significant developmental delays, highlighting the critical role vision plays in facilitating the development of foundational skills. This underscores the importance of programs like the Family Infant-Toddler (FIT) Services.

Since its inception in August 2023, FIT has achieved significant milestones, making a tangible impact on the lives of young children and their families across Kansas. Developed in partnership with the Kansas Early Childhood Developmental Services under the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, this initiative ensures that vital vision services are available to children ages birth to three years and their families at no cost.

FIT providers collaborate closely with local early intervention programs statewide. This partnership ensures a comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of young children and families impacted by visual impairment, reinforcing FIT's commitment to providing effective support services within the Kansas Part C Service Delivery Model.

From September 2023 to March 2023, FIT Services have empowered children and families, expanded community outreach and partnerships and provided solutions to enhance vision services throughout the state.

During this time, FIT has also obtained professional memberships for all team members with the Pediatric Cortical Visual Impairment Society, Council for Exceptional Children: Division on Visual Impairment and Deafblindness, and Kansas Division for Early Childhood to ensure FIT providers are informed and updated on current research, best practices, and professional development opportunities in the field.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ATTENDANCE

With over 32 TSVIs and COMS, eight certified teachers (three who are pursuing TSVI endorsement), one certified Braille Transcriber and six certified Nursing/Related Services professionals, KSSB has an incredible amount of talent and expertise at our disposal. Certified teachers on campus provide daily instruction to our students in core academic subjects and the Expanded Core Curriculum.

Our Regional Field Services team offers technical assistance to schools and direct services to students throughout the state of Kansas. The goal is to partner with educational teams to address the unique educational needs of students who are blind or have a visual impairment. The most common technical assistance topics requested are related to assessment procedures, technology that will provide the student access to the curriculum, and addressing the needs of students who have a visual impairment and additional disabilities.

DIRECT SERVICES TO STUDENTS

The Field Services Department saw a resounding increase across the board this year. From Service Requests, to direct services minutes, to miles traveled - all numbers were up in 2023-2024!!

This year KSSB provided remote instruction from campus to districts with no providers. Directors from these districts provided positive feedback by visiting and sharing with the state board of education their experience with this service. Regardless of small town, large city and everything in between the campus and Field Services teams are there to help!

2177

HOURS OF DIRECT SERVICES

1041

NUMBER IN ATTENDANCE AT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

311

NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED

52

NUMBER OF NEW STUDENTS ATTENDING A KSSB EVENT FOR THE FIRST TIME

7906

NUMBER OF BRAILLE PAGES TRANSCRIBED

2929

NUMBER OF LP AND ELECTRONIC FORMATTED PAGES TRANSCRIBED

EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR

THE NUMBERS

- 112**
STUDENTS IN KANSAS CITY

- 30**
STUDENTS IN OTHER LOCATIONS

- 77**
RETURNING STUDENTS

- 55**
NEW STUDENTS

- 10**
PEER MODELS

June 2024 offered five Extended School Year (ESY) programs for students across Kansas. Kansas Summer Expanded Education Program (KSEE), Kansas City Lifetime Independence Focused Education Program (KC LIFE), KSSB Preschool Program, Kansas Preparatory Residential Enrichment Program (KS PREP) and Expanded Core on the Road: ESY.

KSEE saw the highest number of participants ages 5-15, followed closely by KC LIFE. KC LIFE is a program designed specifically for high school students who spend three weeks participating in a variety of experiences across the ECC domains and who may need a little more support. The KSSB Preschool Program is full each summer and 2024 was no different. Little ones ages 2.5-5 years old come to campus two mornings a week for three weeks. The most popular program is KS PREP for students in grades 9th-12th who are self-starters, headed to college or work after high school and are preparing to live on their own as adults.

Expanded Core on the Road: ESY was held in Wichita and Hutchinson for students with a visual impairment who are not quite ready to go to Kansas City for three weeks but still want some experiences they don't get any other place. Wichita and Hutchinson were focused on students in grades 3rd-8th. Parents and teachers were invited to all locations so they too could gain knowledge about the Expanded Core. All Expanded Core on the Road: ESY locations were free to districts and families.



EXPANDED CORE ON THE ROAD



DODGE CITY

Low Vision on the Road (9 students / 10 adults)
Blind Sports and More (4 students / 3 adults)

HUTCHINSON

Career Readiness Forum (12 students / 8 adults)

MANHATTAN

Blind Sports and More (11 students / 8 adults)

KANSAS CITY

Celebrate Access! (55 students / 20 adults)

TOPEKA

Advocate at the Capitol (14 students / 9 adults)

WICHITA

Celebrate Access! (45 students / 27 adults)

KSSB seeks to lead by example in providing high quality Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) instruction through group events across the state. These events are designed to bring students of similar ages and abilities together to generalize their skills in all areas of the ECC with the added benefit of networking opportunities for students, teachers and families. This year's events provided specially designed instruction in the Expanded Core domains of Sensory Efficiency (Low Vision on the Road), Career Readiness, Recreation and Leisure (Blind Sports and More), Compensatory Access/Independent Living (Celebrate Access!), and Self-Determination/Orientation and Mobility (Advocate at the Capitol). One hundred and fifty students along with eighty-six adults (TSVIs, COMS, paraprofessionals, special education teachers and parents) participated in 2023-2024 events.



MOBILE STEM UNIT

Since its founding in 2020, KSSB Mobile STEM Van (affectionately nicknamed Stemmy) has visited 34 different schools or organizations. In 2023, "Stemmy" traveled 2,900+ miles and worked with over 1000+ students and community members. The mobile STEM unit's purpose is to expose students across Kansas with accessible STEM activities. These activities encourage 21st century learning, while also building a culture of empathy and advocacy for individuals who are blind or visually impaired by their sighted peers. Students rotate through activities including robotics, coding, engineering, and computational thinking, as well as introduction to sighted guide technique, cane technique, braille, and assistive technology.

THE NUMBERS

2900+
MILES TRAVELED

1000+
PARTICIPANTS

LOCATIONS

- Clifton Clyde
- Cunningham
- Hutchinson
- Kansas City
- Maize
- Newton
- Paola
- Piper
- Turner
- Wamego
- Wichita



LOW VISION CLINIC



The KanLovKids Project offers Low Vision Clinics to children from ages birth through 21 who reside in Kansas. Students, parents, teachers and related service providers are invited to share perspectives, identify needs, and obtain answers to questions about vision loss from optometrists and ophthalmologists. This collaborative approach provides an opportunity to identify the devices to best address low vision needs in the school, home and community.

During the 2023-2024 school year, a total of 97 students and 262 parents, teachers, nurses and others from 35 different school districts attended 30 low vision collaboration clinics in ten locations in Kansas as well as virtually. Seven students were below age three.

BRAILLE CHALLENGE



The Braille Challenge is the only competitive braille competition in North America. It shares the same goals both locally and nationally: to promote braille literacy, provide resources for families, and create an experience participants will not forget.

The academic Braille Challenge includes students in grades 1 through 12 who read and write braille. Students compete in contests including: spelling, reading comprehension, proofreading, speed and accuracy, and interpreting tactile charts and graphs.

Participants from all over Kansas are eligible to participate in regional events with a chance to go on to the national competition at the Braille Institute in Los Angeles. This signature event helps motivate students to practice and sharpen their braille literacy skills, which are essential to academic and employment success.

PRESCHOOL

THE NUMBERS

- 10**
STUDENTS

- 4**
TEACHERS/AIDES

- 5**
MORNINGS A WEEK (MON-FRI)

- 3**
HOURS A DAY (8:45 - 11:45 AM)

KSSB's preschool enrichment program provides students who are blind or have low vision experiences that are tailored to their developmental needs. Our TSVIs foster an environment that promotes curiosity, exploration, and movement through explicitly designed learning activities. We provide a literacy-rich environment, including pre-braille activities that promote tactile awareness and sensitivity. Our students learn through structured play activities that involve the use of multiple senses. Social skills, self-regulation, and orientation skills instruction are embedded throughout the curricular activities.

Our early childhood program is designed as an "enrichment" experience, meaning that our students may also attend other preschools in the community. As the program has expanded, some students are attending the program as part of their IEP placement. Monthly field trips have enabled students in the enrichment program to access the Coterie Theatre, Kansas City International Airport and the F. L. Schagle Environmental Library. Students have also accessed the KSSB swimming pool for monthly pool recreation.

As the preschool enrichment program has continued to grow during the year, our TSVIs have sought child care licensing to further develop the programming available to young children and their families. Plans to move from Irwin building to the southern end of Johnson building are underway in an effort to provide an extended day with child care in combination with preschool. Offering child care to the siblings of students with visual impairments and children of KSSB staff will also assist the program by providing the opportunity to work with sighted peers within the preschool classroom while fostering an inclusive learning environment for all. The current design is intended to offer three classrooms ranging in ages from infant care to pre-K readiness.



KANSAS TRAILBLAZERS WEEKEND



"The opportunity for my students to socialize with peers who are visually impaired was huge. They struggle with peer relationships so this gave them a chance to be themselves in a safe environment. For one of my students, I noticed the difference in their confidence the next few days at school. It was pretty amazing."

WHAT IS A TRAILBLAZER?

Trailblazers persevere in the face of uncertain success. They make habits out of venturing outside of comfort zones, challenging obstacles, taking chances, failing repeatedly, and persevering until they achieve their goals.

Kansas State School for the Blind hosted two Trailblazers weekends during the 2023-2024 school year. We welcomed 24 students ages 14 years and up for Fall 2023 Weekend, and 24 students ages 12 years and up for Spring 2024 weekend. All domains of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) are addressed as a part of each weekend.

The spring 2024 weekend took us back to Camp Wood where skills in archery, rock climbing, kayaking, horseback riding and team building were the focus. Twenty-four students participated in a weekend of experiences like no other... Our "city" kids experienced unique opportunities, old friendships strengthened and new ones grown...it's a weekend they won't forget.

KC Blind All-Stars 5k run/1 mile walk is always a focus of the fall weekend - and each participant takes an active role in the weekend - whether it is running a 5K, walking 1 mile, or volunteering at the start and finish lines... Everyone is involved!



PODCASTING @ KSSB

- ▶ August 30, 2023
Ham Radio with Dr. Kendall Krug
- ▶ October 30, 2023
KSSB Derailed: How We See
- ▶ November 17, 2023
Catching up with Ms. Shelby
- ▶ December 5, 2023
KSSB Derailed: How We Food
- ▶ January 6, 2024
KSSB Derailed: How We Music #1
- ▶ February 5, 2024
Art & Life with Ms. Stephanie
- ▶ March 18, 2024
KSSB Derailed: How We Music #2
- ▶ March 24, 2024
Parent Perspectives with Charles McCartney

KSSB DERAILED PODCASTING

KSSB Derailed is the introductory class to podcasting, where students learn the fundamentals of creating a show run-down, researching and interviewing topics, recording, editing, and promoting shows. KSSB Derailed is a discussion on topics, deconstructed in ways you wouldn't typically think of. The goal is to spread more information and awareness on visual impairments or relevant ideas that Kansas State School for the Blind student hosts want to talk about. (Kid Friendly)

KSSB DISCOVER PODCASTING

Podcasting has been an interest to students with visual impairments here at the Kansas State School for the Blind for several years, and the number of people that are listening to the episodes indicates that others must share that interest. Starting in 2020, the students in the podcast group have broadcast over 55 episodes so far with 6,095 all-time downloads with more to come. KSSB Discover Podcast shows are broadcasted on One Kansas City Radio, 100.1 FM station as well as your preferred podcast platform.



BLIND SPORTS DAY



NCASB COMPETITIONS

Track & Field
Nashville, TN

Goalball Tournament
St. Louis, MO

Wrestling & Cheerleading
Jacksonville, IL

Forensics/Debate
Louisville, KY

Swimming Tournament
Louisville, KY

Research shows that people who are blind/visually impaired lead sedentary lives. Over 70% of the presenting population are sedentary. Some of the significant factors predicting sports participation for this population are education, costs and lack of peer/buddies. Kansas State School for the Blind has created programs for youth in the state to level the playing field in hopes of smashing these barriers. By educating professionals who work with students who are visually impaired on how to include these students in physical education classes KSSB is expanding its reach in local districts.

BLIND SOCCER

Leah Enright & Nicole Drake (grassroots efforts)
Victory Project for Blind Soccer Field (\$33k)
Royals Charities for Blind Sports (\$15k)

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

Blind Soccer Demonstration Clinics
Park University
Baker University
Avila University
Adapted PE Workshops
Manhattan
Dodge City
Blind Sports Day Kansas City

