



2024 - 2025

ANNUAL REPORT

KANSAS STATE SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

**"TO THE STARS,
THROUGH
DIFFICULTIES"**

~ AS FEATURED ON THE KANSAS STATE SEAL

To the esteemed members of the State Board of Education, the honorable Kansas Legislature and Governor, and the dedicated stakeholders and friends of the Kansas School for the Blind, this annual report highlights a year marked by significant growth and an unwavering commitment to providing high-quality education for students who are blind or have low vision across Kansas. A central focus this year involved bolstering support for parents through enhanced resources and increased opportunities for engagement.

The past year witnessed remarkable expansion across several key initiatives. Our Early Childhood Education Program (ECEP) has continued its robust growth, offering an inclusive and nurturing environment for children aged six months to six years, fostering a strong foundation for future learning and development for students of all abilities. Furthermore, our commitment to ensuring access to qualified vision teachers within this program and statewide remains a top priority.

The Kansas School for the Blind's impact extends significantly beyond its physical location through its innovative Mobile Programs in STEM and Accessible Sports. These programs have experienced substantial growth, bringing engaging and empowering experiences to numerous towns and schools throughout Kansas. These initiatives not only provide crucial learning opportunities

WELCOME

but also effectively raise awareness about accessibility and celebrate the diverse abilities of individuals with visual impairments.

On campus, our dedication to High Quality Instruction remains paramount, evidenced by our active engagement with the state's accreditation system, KESA 2.0. We are committed to delivering a rigorous and enriching educational experience, facilitated by highly qualified educators, to prepare our students for future success. This commitment to excellence is mirrored in the significant impact of our outreach programs, which now support over 800 students statewide, and the crucial work of our Family Infant Toddler team, partnering with Infant Toddler Programs to serve over 220 infants and their families with vital early intervention and support.

Looking ahead, we are enthusiastic about the progress of our new gymnasium, a much-needed facility that will provide a safer and more functional space for physical education and recreation, as well as an enhanced venue



Jon Harding, Ed.S.

Superintendent

Kansas State School for the Blind

for professional development for educators across the state, fostering community partnerships. We express our deep gratitude for the ongoing support of the State Board of Education, the Kansas Legislature, and the Governor, whose belief in our mission empowers us to continue expanding our reach and enhancing the quality of our programs, ultimately empowering parents and ensuring the best possible outcomes for our students as we resolutely move "to the stars, through difficulties," building transferable skills and fostering independence.

Jon Harding

EARLY CHILDHOOD ENRICHMENT PROGRAM



This year, KSSB expanded its preschool enrichment program to offer families onsite childcare. The school became licensed through the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and began providing child care after the regular three-hour preschool classes, allowing families to have a longer day for their children at the school without the need for driving back and forth.

So far, the childcare program is serving just under 20 children, according to Hillary Joy-Sims, who teaches in the preschool and helped to develop the child care program. The resource is available to children with visual impairment, as well as their siblings, the children of KSSB staff members, and children in the community who may or may not have a visual impairment.

According to Joy-Sims, there are a few steps she and her colleagues take to make sure the classroom is accessible to all, starting with creating an environment where children can move around with confidence without the ability to see.

“We use a pretty consistent layout within the room so that children can navigate as independently as possible. If we do make a change, we’re very intentional about guiding

“When they transition into traditional school, I hope they’ll remember being in class with the kid with blindness, and that they’ll be able to support that student by being a friend.”

~ HILLARY JOY-SIMS

children around so they can learn the new map of the environment and know where to find things,” said Joy-Sims.

The teachers make sure to incorporate other senses besides sight into the activities. If a teacher is reading a story, they’ll describe the pictures, and they may pass around objects for the kids to handle, such as a stuffed animal that corresponds with an animal character in the story. Braille is integrated throughout the classroom, helping the children identify their cubbies and other spaces.

When possible, Joy-Sims likes to incorporate some real-world experiences as well. This year, the kids took a memorable field trip to KCI

Airport, where they simulated the process of flying on an airplane—getting their boarding pass at a kiosk, walking down the jet bridge, finding their seats, and preparing for take off.

According to Joy-Sims, it was an opportunity to practice some important skills as well as to stimulate their imaginations, which is especially important for children with visual impairment.

“They need those hands-on experiences to develop pretend play,” said Joy-Sims. “They’re not picking up incidental pictorial scenes in books or on TV that portray what’s happening and what they can expect.”

By offering specialized childcare in an environment already adapted for children with visual impairments, KSSB’s preschool and childcare programs help parents feel confident they’re leaving their children in capable hands, Joy-Sims said. She added that the experience also empowers parents to become advocates for their children when they move on to new school settings, because they’ll have a framework for what their children need.

Even for the children without visual impairment, the program offers some unique benefits, Joy-Sims said. It encourages empathy and understanding at an early age that she hopes will carry them through their school years and beyond.

“When they transition into traditional school, I hope they’ll remember being in class with the child with blindness, and that they’ll be able to support that student by being a friend,” Joy-Sims said.



MOBILE ACCESSIBLE SPORTS EXPERIENCE



Students across the state of Kansas are getting a hands-on lesson in empathy and inclusion thanks to a unique program led by Leah Enright, KSSB's Blind Sports Coordinator.

The Mobile Accessible Sports Experience brings interactive sports and fun physical activities to K-12 schools in Kansas. Under blindfolds, students take turns participating in activities such as navigating obstacle courses with white canes, using sound cues to aim a beanbag in a game of corn hole, or playing a blindfolded game of goalball, a team sport similar to soccer that was designed for people with low or no vision.

The program's goal is to offer students a glimpse at what it's like to live with a visual impairment—and how they can be supportive of those who do.

“I try to take the approach of, ‘How can you be a friend to someone who can't see as well as you can?’” Enright explains. “Sometimes it's just by saying hi in the hall instead of passing by because they can't see you.”

Since the program's launch in December, Enright has seen a lot of demand from PE teachers across the state. Her goal was to host 10 events this year, and she's already surpassed that goal in just a few months. More than 4,500 students have participated in the Mobile Accessible Sports Experience so far, she said. In total, the mobile sports van has traveled over 5,000 miles throughout the state of Kansas.

At some events, teachers, principals, or superintendents have joined in the fun, donning a blindfold and participating in the activities alongside the students. "It's really cool for these kids to see their principal or their teacher being vulnerable by doing things that are different and uncomfortable," Enright says.

Through the program, students learn practical ways to assist a person with visual impairment or blindness, taking turns guiding their blindfolded classmates through obstacle courses and activities using human guide technique. According to Enright, this helps students feel empowered to help when they meet someone who needs assistance.

In addition to raising awareness and building empathy, Enright hopes the program will create opportunities for kids with blindness or visual impairment to get involved in sports and fitness by showing their classmates and teachers what's possible. Approximately

"I try to take the approach of, How can you be a friend to someone who can't see as well as you can? Enright explains, Sometimes it's just by saying 'hi' in the hall instead of passing by because they can't see you."

~ LEAH ENRIGHT

three-quarters of people with blindness lead sedentary lifestyles, compared with around 25% of the general population.

Enright says the Mobile Accessible Sports Experience shows students that people with disabilities can take part in physical activity too.

"At the end of our time together, I always say, 'Raise your hand if anyone liked one of the activities under blindfold.' And all the students raise their hands," said Enright. "Then I say, 'With modifications and adaptations, people who are blind or visually impaired can enjoy all kinds of activities just like you can.'"

A SPECIAL FOCUS OF THE PROGRAM INCLUDES

Creating an atmosphere where sighted individuals can build empathy and awareness for students who have a visual impairment by participating in physical fitness activities under blindfold.

Demonstrating how many sports can be adapted with specialized equipment like audible balls, textured surfaces, human guides and verbal cues to allow blind people to participate actively.

Sharing examples of sports commonly played by blind athletes, such as goalball, blind soccer, beep kickball, running with a guide, etc and highlight the unique skills of athletes who are blind.

EXPANDED CORE ON THE ROAD



DODGE CITY
AT, STEM, Coding
8 students
10 adults

SALINA
Independent Living
O&M
8 students
12 adults

HUTCHINSON
Blind Sports
Adapted PE
11 students
7 adults

KSSB
Celebrate Access
70 students
12 adults

WICHITA
Celebrate Access
40 students
25 adults

TOPEKA
Advocate at the Capitol
7 students
2 adults



For students who are blind or visually impaired, learning essential life skills often means going beyond the classroom. That’s where the Expanded Core on the Road Program comes in, bringing experiential learning opportunities and a chance to meet new friends to students across the state.

The Expanded Core on the Road Program is KSSB’s mobile expanded core curriculum series. Through group events held in schools and conference spaces throughout Kansas, students with blindness or visual impairment learn key life skills and connect with other students of similar ages and abilities. This year, the program hosted six events that served 144 students, as well as their teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents.

The program has an impact that stretches beyond the skills taught—it creates a sense of community for students who often face their challenges in isolation.

“In many cases, they might be the only student in their school building or in their whole district who is visually impaired,” said KSSB’s Anna Cyr, who leads the program. “We bring those students together so they can interact with other kids like them and learn those skills together.”

The expanded core curriculum is a set of nine instructional areas for students with blindness or visual impairment, with categories such as independent living, social skills, and recreation and leisure. This

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~ ANNA CYR



year, participants in Expanded Core on the Road events learned skills such as making a bed, counting and handling money, using technology to read food packaging, and taking care of their fingernails.

While the students learn, their teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents have the opportunity to network with each other and share resources.

When possible, Cyr likes to bring in adults with blindness or visual impairment to meet with the kids. At Celebrate Access, the program’s largest annual event that drew 110 students this year, a woman with visual impairment played the steel drums for the

students and introduced them to her guide dog.

These real-world role models help students imagine what’s possible for their own futures, Cyr said, and how the skills taught through the program apply to them.

“My hope is that they’ll recognize the importance of learning these skills now because they’ll need to use them later,” said Cyr. “It’s not just because my teacher says I need to do it. It’s like, ‘Oh, that’s Miss Kelly and she knows how to use voiceover on her phone to read an email and respond to it.’”

Perhaps most important, the students get to connect with other children who share their experiences with blindness and visual impairment. Cyr recalled one student who was anxious about being in new environments, but who had a blast playing games with her peers during Blind Sports Day, one of the events the program hosted this year.

“Her paraprofessional told me they’d never seen her smile that much,” Cyr said.



FAMILY INFANT TODDLER

THE NUMBERS

943
HOURS OF HOME VISITS WITH FAMILIES

316
YOUNG CHILDREN SERVED

49
COUNTIES, DELIVERED SERVICES TO

36
DR. VISITS ATTENDED WITH FAMILIES

26
INFANT-TODDLER SERVICES SUPPORTED

13
PRESENTATIONS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD PROVIDERS



The Family Infant-Toddler (FIT) Services was launched in August 2023 through a partnership with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. FIT provides free vision services to families of infants and toddlers with visual impairment.

Through its partnership with Infant-Toddler Services of Kansas, FIT helps support families of children aged birth to three understand their child's vision loss and how it relates to their development. FIT developmental vision specialists are strategically located across the state, ensuring families can access essential resources in every region.

PARTNERSHIPS

- Presented to Children's Mercy Hospital Ophthalmology Clinic.
- Participated in major conferences, including the Kansas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
- Fall Conference, Kansas Division for Early Childhood, Local Interagency Coordinating Council Retreat, Blue Valley Special Needs Resource Fair, and KC Mom and Baby Fair.

INTERAGENCY COORDINATING COUNCIL INVOLVEMENT

Engaged with local interagency coordinating councils in 33 counties, including Johnson, Wyandotte, Geary, Riley, Cloud, Republic, Dickinson, Barber, Clark, Comanche, Edwards, Ford, Gray, Harper, Hodgeman, Kingman, Kiowa, Meade, Ness, Pratt, Ellis, Norton, Osborne, Phillips, Rooks, Rush, Russell, Smith, Barton, Pawnee, Rice Counties and part of Rush and Stafford Counties.

PROVIDING SOLUTIONS TO ENHANCE VISION SERVICES

Professional Development: Provided 13 vision-related presentations to early childhood providers.

Presentation Topics: Addressed topics encompassing Family Infant-Toddler Services Overview, Vision Screening Training, Understanding CVI, Understanding the Impact of B/VI on Early Development, Supporting Development for Young Children with B/VI, CVI Book Make & Take, Neonatal Hypoxic Ischemic Encephalopathy and Vision Impacts.

MOBILE STEM UNIT

In the 2024-25 school year, Stemmy the Mobile STEM Van is back on the road, bringing hands-on, accessible STEM adventures to students all over Kansas! So far, Stemmy has rolled into 45 schools and organizations, cruising 3,670 miles and connecting with 1,378 curious minds since 2020.

More than just a van, Stemmy is a traveling STEM playground—where students dive into robotics, coding, engineering, and problem-solving while also discovering the world of braille, cane navigation, and assistive tech. Every stop is packed with creativity, discovery, and a chance to build a more inclusive and innovative future. This year, new stations such as conductivity testing, a banana piano, Voice Over with iPads, and the APH Code Jumper were added to the learning mix.

Thanks to partnerships with Blind Spot KC & Burns & McDonnell, more equipment was added to the van including Sphero Indii's and Makey Makey's. So, where will Stemmy go next?

2024-25 STEM EVENTS

DE SOTO, KS

DODGE CITY, KS

EDGERTON, KS

GRAIN VALLEY, MO

HUTCHINSON, KS

KANSAS CITY, KS

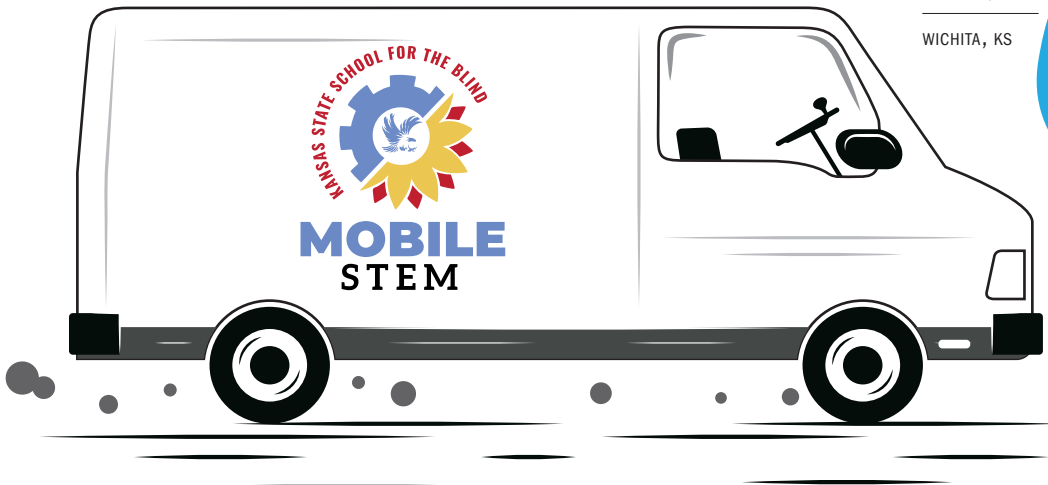
LAWRENCE, KS

MISSION, KS

WAMEGO, KS

WICHITA, KS

WHERE
WILL STEMMY
GO NEXT?





KANSAS TRAILBLAZER WEEKENDS

Kansas State School for the Blind hosted two signature events targeted for students who do not attend KSSB full time during the school year. Known as Trailblazers Weekend, we welcome 22 students each weekend to come spend some time where they can not only learn and socialize alongside their blind peers, but also take on some new challenges towards learning independent skills. The Fall 2024 event theme was Urban Jungle Jamboree where participants engaged with the community partners during the annual 5k run/walk fundraiser. Students then headed to the trails later in the weekend to hike through some fun, but complex terrain as part of their "jungle" jamboree. Always the focus - all domains of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) are addressed as a part of each weekend.

One of our favorite partners is Camp Wood where we held our Spring 2025 Trailblazer Camp Weekend. While most of the participants practiced their skills in archery, rock climbing, horseback riding and team building, there was also a leadership thread to the weekend. This unique opportunity was provided to four juniors and seniors who spent time focusing on Career Exploration part of the Expanded Core Curriculum. Collaborating with the Expanded Core on the Road team, students learned the ins and outs of becoming a camp counselor so that they can in turn serve as mentors for future events either via KSSB or Envision, Inc. Many of our "city" kids don't have an opportunity to spend time in the quiet camp-like environment and as long as they can be with their friends...and also have fun while learning new skills...we can't go wrong with our Trailblazers Weekend events!



2024- 2025 SEASON

October 21, 2024

- ▶ *KSSB Derailed: Come on Back to KSSB Derailed*

October 29, 2024

- ▶ *KSSB Derailed: How We Space Camp*

November 25, 2024

- ▶ *Hey Humans! Dive into Something Different*

November 26, 2024

- ▶ *What is a School Resource Officer?*

December 17, 2024

- ▶ *KSSB Derailed: How We Guide Dog*

January 30, 2025

- ▶ *Cheerleading Recap with Coach Jaelyn*

March 6, 2025

- ▶ *An Interview With Ms. Chandra*

March 25, 2025

- ▶ *KSSB Derailed: How we Tech Part 1*

April 22, 2025

- ▶ *Starting a Band with The Spinrockers*

May 6, 2025

- ▶ *KSSB Derailed: How We Tech Part 2*

May 13, 2025

- ▶ *What's it like to grow up with Blind Parents with Ms. Aundrayah*

May 13, 2025

- ▶ *KSSB Derailed: How We Work*



PODCASTING

This school year, KSSB has expanded its podcasting program with new audio-visual equipment and video tools for future YouTube broadcasting. Students are recording both on-campus and virtually, producing commercial teasers and full-length shows. Participation has grown from seven students last year to 14 this fall, ranging from ages 11 to 21 years old. We have a KSSB alum now serving as podcast advisor and the program has achieved 7,570 all-time downloads. There are engaged listeners as far as Singapore and Australia and this year, Discover Podcasting at KSSB was featured in FeedSpot Top 100 Visually Impaired Podcasts.

Ongoing studio renovations made possible by donations and grants have added furniture and electrical upgrades, with plans for an audio

booth and music production setup in the future. Additionally, KSSB is collaborating with Families Together on a student-led IEP-focused podcast, IEPod. All high schoolers are engaged in accessible media coursework, using podcast equipment for a digital newspaper and yearbook, while younger students explore media production.

KSSB Derailed is an introductory podcasting class where students learn to research, interview, record, edit, and promote shows, focusing on unique discussions and raising awareness about visual impairments.

KSSB Discover Podcasting is a long-running student-led podcast that has aired over 55 episodes since 2020, accumulating 5,847 downloads. It broadcasts on One Kansas City Radio (100.1 FM) and showcases the voices and interests of visually impaired students.

EARLY CHILDHOOD ENRICHMENT

THE NUMBERS

16

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. Field trips have enabled students in the enrichment program to access Crown Center, the Kansas City International Airport's Air Travel Experience specialty room and the National Agricultural Center and Hall of Fame.



LOW VISION CLINICS

THE NUMBERS

24
CLINICS HELD

70
STUDENTS (0 -21)

7
TOTAL LOCATIONS

In 2024-2025 four doctors came together from across Kansas to provide low vision care to students from birth through age 21. A KanLovKids appointment is more than just a typical visit to the eye doctor. Students come to the appointment with their parent, TSVI, COMS and other members of the educational team who have questions about how the child's visual impairment impacts their daily functioning. The clinics are highly educational, with the doctor taking time to explain the condition, explore how the student functionally uses their vision and then spends time trialing optical devices that could increase a student's access to print at school and in the community.



EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR

June 2025 offered up six different programs in five locations for students across Kansas. Due to the continual increase each year, the Summer 2025 program expanded to two 2-week sessions to provide access for more students, without diminishing the quality of instruction provided during each session. KSSB also encouraged families to participate in both the campus experience and an ESY on the Road session to keep their participants busy learning throughout the month of June!

The six programs are:

- Kansas Summer Expanded Education (KSEE) is our most attended.
- Kansas Preparatory Residential Enrichment Program (KS PREP) is our most popular program.
- KSSB Early Childhood Enrichment Program.
- Kansas City Lifetime Independence Focused Education (KC LIFE).
- Project SEARCH was added this summer and included participants by invitation only.
- Expanded Core On the Road ESY is offered in four locations across Central & Western Kansas.
 - Camp Aldrich in Claflin, KS hosted session one.
 - Friends University in Wichita, KS hosted session two.
 - Cloud County Community College in Concordia, KS hosted session three.
 - CRC Care Center at Stout Elementary in Topeka, KS provided space for session four.

All sessions of ESY on the Road are provided free to districts and families.

THE NUMBERS

139

STUDENTS IN KANSAS CITY

42

STUDENTS IN ESY ON THE ROAD
LOCATIONS

122

RETURNING STUDENTS

59

NEW STUDENTS

12

PEER MODELS



DIRECT SERVICES

THE NUMBERS

5,990

BRILLE PAGES TRANSCRIBED

3,288

LP AND ELECTRONIC FORMATTED PAGES
TRANSCRIBED

1,744

DIRECT SERVICE HOURS

210

STUDENTS SERVED

29

NEW STUDENTS ATTENDING
A KSSB EVENT FOR THE FIRST TIME

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

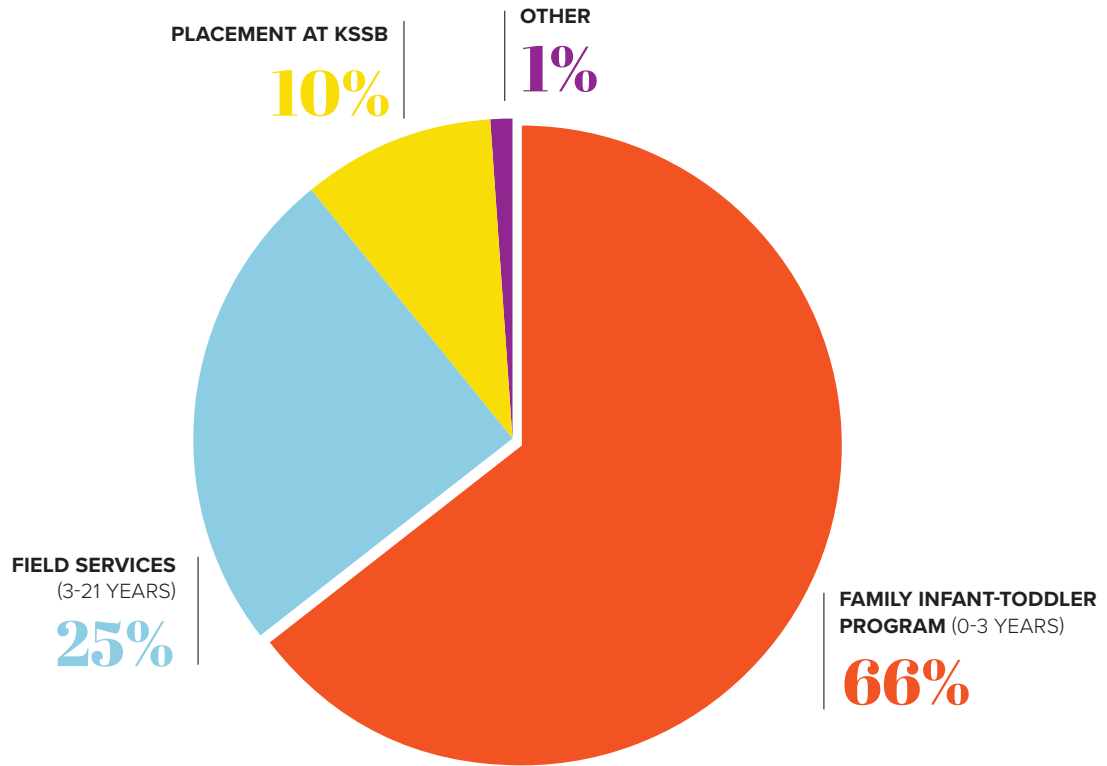
Our Regional Field Services team offers technical assistance to schools and direct services to students throughout the state of Kansas. In 2024-2025, we served over 200 students directly on our caseloads while impacting hundreds more

students through our Expanded Core on the Road events, Trailblazer Weekends, KanLovKids program, Functional Eye Gaze Clinics, Mobile STEM, Family Engagement Boxes, APH Materials and our new Mobile Accessible Sports programs. The goal of Field Services is to partner with IEP teams to address the unique educational needs of students who are blind or have a visual impairment.

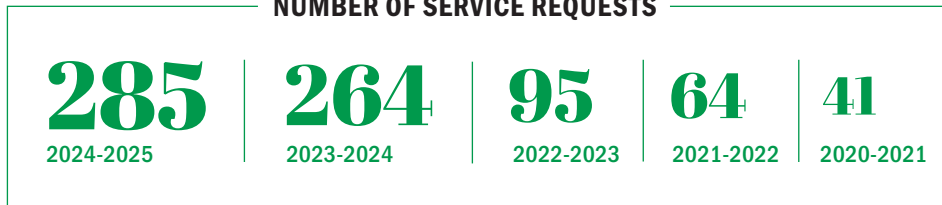
We provided Professional Development opportunities to not only our staff, but also to teachers across the state through our Annual Vision Symposium, assessment trainings for new teachers, KIRC trainings, monthly meetings for KS COMS, and our new Roundtable Discussions!



REASONS FOR SERVICE REQUESTS



NUMBER OF SERVICE REQUESTS



KANSAS INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

THE NUMBERS

1155

KANSAS STUDENTS REGISTERED
WITH KIRC

944

PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

157

INFANT TODDLER PROGRAMS
AND NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

54

KSSB STUDENTS

The Kansas Instructional Resource Center (KIRC) resources include: instructional materials, braille and large print textbooks, library books, 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 2025 registration was the first Kansas count to be held completely online to improve data collection and security. We saw an increase of around 100 students from last year due to the expanded definition of eligibility and increased communication.

During the 2024-2025 school year, KIRC filled 816 orders worth \$503,803.74. These materials and equipment allow children who are blind or have low vision access to the same content as their peers in their home, schools and communities.

STATE YEAR 2024-2025

\$665,645 = 2,167 items

VALUE OF ITEMS SHIPPED FROM KIRC FOR USE WITH STUDENTS

STATE YEAR 2023-2024

\$802,468 = 2,912 items

VALUE OF ITEMS SHIPPED FROM KIRC FOR USE WITH STUDENTS

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 an annual 5k run/walk event for fundraising and awareness, partnering with the school on several major improvements including a new playground, resurfacing the athletic track, updating our gymnasium, and distributing student scholarships for those seeking higher education.



KC BLIND ALL-STARS

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, Employment, Athletics, Extracurricular Activities, Music, 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.



KCBAS 5K Run/Walk



Extended School Year

KSSB PROGRAMS SUPPORTED BY KCBAS

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

KCBAS FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Celebrate Access



MAKE 48

READ

SEASON 8 NATIONALS [RECAP](#)

WATCH

SEASON 8 HIGHLIGHT [REEL](#)

VISIT

WWW.MAKE48.COM

Since 2022, KSSB has hosted three Make48 competitions and participated in two televised national competitions with students who are blind or visually impaired competing alongside their sighted peers for the chance to win a cash-prize. In November 2024, KSSB was selected as the challenge-focus for Season 8 nationals. Six teams from across the country competed to solve the challenge of creating accessible “cottage industries” for individuals who were blind or visually impaired.

New this year, high school students at KSSB are participating in the Make48 Innovation Curriculum Experience made possible by Blind Spot KC. Traditionally, 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. In the Curriculum Experience, KSSB highschoolers are teaming up for a semester-long challenge where they will brainstorm, design, and build a prototype of a product or system that enhances stadium accessibility for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. The solution should focus on making the stadium environment more inclusive, engaging, and navigable, ensuring a positive experience for all.

The prototype could address one of the following areas:

- **Navigation** - tools or systems to help visually impaired attendees navigate stadiums more easily.
- **Event Engagement** - solutions that enhance how visually impaired individuals experience the action, such as tactile maps, audio enhancements, or interactive features.
- **Concessions Accessibility** - innovations to make concession stands more user-friendly and accessible.
- **Safety and Comfort** - products that ensure safety and provide comfort for visually impaired guests while moving through crowded spaces.
- **Enhanced Fan Experience** - design a way for visually impaired attendees to immerse themselves in the excitement of the event, even if they cannot see the action on the field.

KSSB is dedicated to fostering real-world technical and innovation skills in our students, and this event provided an invaluable opportunity to deepen their understanding of STEM. By building hands-on experience, they are developing essential skills for future careers. We are proud to be a leader among schools for the blind in the U.S. and hope that the knowledge they've gained about maker competitions will inspire them to bring these experiences back to their local communities.

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, the North Kansas City YMCA of Greater Kansas City, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Community Developmental Disability Organizations from across the state of Kansas. The Kansas State School for the Blind's Project SEARCH also has connections with other Project SEARCH sites in the state.

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 one of very few schools for the blind in the United States to partner with Project SEARCH. The North Kansas City YMCA of Greater Kansas City has agreed to serve as a host site for KSSB's students, who 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).
- **Community work experience**
- **Must bank their diploma**
not exit, and remain on their home district's IEP.



PROJECT SEARCH

2024-2025 STUDENTS WE SERVED

One intern from Topeka, KS is working with Vocational Rehabilitation to find employment.

One intern from Olathe, KS has found a day placement that includes a paid, part time job.

One intern from Havensville, KS is working with his team to find part time employment.

One college student from Salina, KS is transferring to live in the dorms at KCKCC next year.

One college student from Oxford, KS is transferring to Kansas State University next year.

One college student from Derby, KS is transferring to Benedictine College next year.

One college student from Overland Park, KS will be returning to KSSB next year to finish a cyber security program.





KANSAS DEAF-BLIND PROJECT

The Kansas Deaf-Blind (KSDB) Project provides technical assistance to enhance services for 188 children and youth, ages 0–21, on its registry who are Deaf-Blind. Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, the KSDB Project acts as a resource on Deaf-Blindness and strives to improve outcomes for children and their families by offering resources, training, and support to professionals and caregivers.

PROMOTING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

- Hosted seven Discover CVI Parent Support Group meetings for parents of children with Cortical/ Cerebral Visual Impairments (CVI).
- Coordinated Annual Family Day in Salina, KS..
- Delivered seven Music and Me sessions, an online music therapy program for children (birth to age five) who are Deaf-Blind or visually impaired.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND PROFESSIONALS

- Hosted webinars which included topics such as Deaf-Blind Resources in Kansas, Deaf-Blind Core Teams, and Information on the KS Deaf-Blind Project.
- Hosted an in-person Deaf-Blind Training for service providers and professionals in Kansas.

- Partnered with the Oklahoma Deaf-Blind Technical Assistance Project to provide an online six-week American Sign Language course.
- Collaborated with KSSB and the Kansas Instructional Resource Center to host a statewide Vision Symposium.
- Supported and provided technical assistance for seven Deaf-Blind Core Teams, which serve as intermediaries between the KSDB Project and school districts.
- Partnered with KSSB, the Kansas School for the Deaf, Families Together, and the Helen Keller Regional Center to raise awareness of transition options and services for Kansas families and young adults with Deaf-Blindness (ages 14–21).
- Awarded two scholarships for paraprofessionals to enroll in the Certified Intervener Program at Utah State University.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Participated in monthly State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) meetings to share information about the project and answer questions regarding early childhood referrals and services.
- Partnered with Families Together to provide funding for Kansas families and professionals to attend the Texas Deaf-Blind Symposium.
- Collaborated with the Helen Keller National Center to disseminate information regarding Deaf-Blindness.
- Hosted the Annual Advisory Council meeting to gather insights and feedback from community members.

PERSONNEL PREPARATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT

THE NUMBERS

14

TEACHERS WERE MENTORED

10

TEACHERS STARTED/CONTINUED
THEIR EDUCATION

6

TARGETED PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR
TEACHERS IN TRAINING

12

ATTENDEES AT THE CREATING TACTILE
GRAPHICS TRAINING

55

ATTENDEES AT THE CVI TRAINING

151

ATTENDEES AT THE KANSAS VISION
SYMPOSIUM

The Kansas Technical Assistance System Network (TASN) partners with KSSB to give teachers access to accredited teacher 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). Support for tuition and fees, supplies, coaching/mentorship activities, and assessment training is made available to teachers seeking a TSVI or COMS endorsement/certification annually. In addition to personnel preparation, the TASN grant ensures that KSSB can continue to offer specialized high quality professional development opportunities to providers across the state of Kansas.

Some activities during 2024-2025 included:

- Ten teachers in training started or continued their university programs in Fall 2024
- Assessment classes for TSVIs in training
 - Functional Vision Assessment - September 2024
 - Learning Media Assessment - November 2024
 - Learning Media Considerations for students with significant needs - February 2025
- 7th Annual Kansas Vision Symposium - November 2024
- Sixteen Visual Behaviors of CVI Training - February 2025
- Creating tactile graphics with Microsoft Word & TGIL Training - April 2025
- KSSB Field Service Specialists facilitated roundtable seminars for all TSVI and COMS professionals across the state of Kansas.
- Professional publication lending library maintained by the Kansas Instructional Resource Center.
- Teachers participated in mentoring activities including eMSS upon completion of their Kansas teacher licensure endorsement/ACVREP certification.

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Blind Spot KC
Bank of Labor
Blue Cross Blue Shield
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Capitol Federal Foundation
Chris & Nicole Carr
Families Together
FSC MEP Engineers
Charles & Gaye Ramsey
(Christian's grandparents)
Mildred Irwig
Delta Innovations
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KCK Community College
KS Lions Sight Foundation
Kansas Arts Commission
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Scholarship Foundation
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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 2024-2025 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 STATE SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

WWW.KANSASBLIND.GOV

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