

Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Strategic Plan

AUGUST 2018

Perspective

The heart of this 10-year strategic plan is to enhance our capacity to serve more students who are blind and visually impaired throughout the state of Indiana, regardless of where they attend school.

Our approach to addressing this challenge has been two dimensional. First, we apply an asset-based approach to institutional change. As such, we have identified the School's existing assets – defined broadly – that contribute to the value of ISBVI in the state's continuum of educational services. Second, we have examined the critical issues facing the School in an effort to develop and articulate strategies to address those critical issues. This two dimensional approach is designed to identify core strategies that align and enhance the School's assets in order to best achieve its mission and to most effectively address critical issues the School faces or will likely face in the next 10 years.

Ultimately, this strategic plan is designed to serve more of Indiana's children who are blind and visually impaired – regardless of their placement – and to serve the educators who take responsibility for guiding these children during their school years. Ideally, the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired serves as a broker of services and resources offered by

Context

The Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired offers a unique set of assets – that is, educational resources – that can greatly improve the lives of Indiana's children who are blind and visually impaired. The three primary, strategic challenges the School faces over the next 10 years are:

- 1** aligning the unique assets of the School so that more children throughout the state can be connected to them;
- 2** enhancing the School's center-based program; and
- 3** ensuring the comprehensive delivery of resources, supports, interventions, and services available to and necessary for children who are blind and visually impaired without duplicating services and by serving as a broker to connect these children with the diverse assets of educational institutions throughout the state.

Action 1:

REDIRECT AND ENHANCE OUR CENTER-BASED PROGRAM

Our primary asset as an institution of learning is our dual ability to ...

... first, teach students who are blind and visually impaired and who may experience other handicaps how to master the Indiana core curriculum and state standards at the level identified on each student's Individual Education Plan and...

... second, through our expanded core curriculum, teach students how to navigate their physical, social, and personal world.

Our challenge and opportunity.

- Core curriculum is the foundation of all learning. Research indicates that the core curriculum needs of students who are blind and visually impaired are substantially larger and more complex than for sighted students.
- Basic concepts that are the primary building blocks of higher learning must be systematically taught to students who are blind and visually impaired. This is the essence of expanded core curriculum. However, meeting the expanded core curriculum needs of these students requires the commitment of significant time, knowledge, and resources on the part of educators. This commitment does not lessen over the years of these students' education.
- ISBVI educators represent the school's best asset. In the next five to eight years, approximately 60 percent of ISBVI teachers will retire. Recruiting quality teachers for the school is challenging. Retention of quality teachers is vital.

Our strategic response.

We will focus explicitly on what ISBVI does best and what it does that is unique in the state, and we will diversify the means by which students can access ISBVI.

Objective 1:

REORDER THE SCHOOL.

1. We will focus on building vision-specific skills early in elementary and middle school, thereby enhancing core curriculum success. Recognizing that not all students will achieve at the same rate and depth, we will identify three paths for high school students. Students needing more intensive services may receive them through ISBVI. More independent students will return to their home schools in situations where those schools have the capacity to serve these students, or these students will go to an Indianapolis high school for education in core curriculum with supports from ISBVI.
 - 1.1. ISBVI will teach core curriculum and expanded core curriculum for students pre-Kindergarten through 8th grade.
 - 1.2. ISBVI will teach core curriculum and expanded core curriculum for students in 9th through 12th grades who require more intensive interventions in terms of time and duration.
 - 1.3. ISBVI will teach expanded core curriculum for students in 9th through 12th grades. Core curriculum will be provided to more independent students primarily by local school corporations with direct assistance from ISBVI educators. This assistance will involve: (a) enhancing local schools' core curriculum by offering tutoring in math, science, and language arts where students are blind and visually impaired and may require especially greater accommodations, interventions, strategies; (b) offering Short Course, year-round school, and distance learning; and (c) ISBVI core teachers going into local schools, assessing students' progress, providing accommodations and interventions, and developing strategies for intensive interventions at ISBVI.
2. We will work with the ISBVI School Board to promote expansion of HB 1904 or introduce new legislation to the Indiana General Assembly that allows ISBVI to function more as a school and less as a state agency.

Objective 2:

SERVE MORE STUDENTS BY DIVERSIFYING THE MEANS BY WHICH STUDENTS MAY BE CONNECTED TO ISBVI FOR EDUCATION IN CORE CURRICULUM AND IN EXPANDED CORE CURRICULUM.

1. We will enhance and expand our relationship with Washington Township, North Central High School, and other Indianapolis schools.
 - 1.1. We will identify ways to remunerate Washington Township and other Indianapolis schools to fund the education of students we send there.
 - 1.2. We will send teachers and/or support staff with students who need more intensive support and who go to North Central High School.
2. We will expand Short Course as a vehicle for the provision of more opportunities for students who are blind and visually impaired to experience success in core and expanded core curriculum.
3. We will offer short-term placements (semester or year) for students to come to ISBVI at the high school level in order to receive expanded core curriculum while maintaining progress in the core curriculum required by Indiana standards, thus promoting the transfer of credits.
4. We will establish the capacity to send teachers or other staff with students who are blind or visually impaired who choose to be mainstreamed in their local schools.
5. We will formalize 4-year, 5-year, or 6-year academic plans for all students prior to their 9th grade year.
 - 5.1. We will formalize opportunities to achieve academic requirements within a time frame that is most appropriate for each individual student.
 - 5.2. We will improve our ability to meet the special needs of individual students through more flexible programming that diversifies the settings in which students may be connected to ISBVI for education in core and/or expanded core curriculum.

6. We will extend formal educational opportunities offered for residential students at ISBVI to take advantage of the fact that these students are at the school 24 hours a day.
 - 6.1. We will allocate and reallocate professional positions in order to offer core curriculum as after school programming.
 - 6.2. We will formalize the expanded core curriculum that is offered as after school programming.

7. We will establish year-round school.
 - 7.1. We will provide expanded core curriculum intensives during summer.
 - 7.2. We will provide core curriculum intensives for academic kids – both ISBVI students and students from other schools – who need or want more intensive work in a subject.
 - 7.3. We will provide specific core offerings that allow students to fulfill course requirements and receive credit that can be transferred.

8. We will improve our ability to link students to vocational programs.
 - 8.1. We will connect appropriate students with vocational opportunities earlier in their education.
 - 8.2. We will establish a relationship with J. Everett Light and other vocational schools in order to send students to their programs.
 - 8.3. We will send ISBVI teachers and/or support staff with students who need more intensive support in these vocational programs.
 - 8.4. We will work with Voc Rehab to improve the cost effectiveness of equipment purchases so that equipment initially purchased by Voc Rehab for a student can continue to be used by that student after they transition from their high school program.

Objective 3:

ENHANCE OUR CAPACITY TO PROVIDE EDUCATION
IN THESE DIVERSE EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS.

1. We will enhance and support more professional development.
 - 1.1. We will provide staff training in:
 - serving children with multiple disabilities;
 - serving children with severe disabilities (a new and growing population of students);
 - serving children with a visual impairment and additional disabilities who are diploma-bound.
 - 1.2. We will formalize our in-service policy so that professional training and education must be formally shared internally with other staff.
 - 1.3. We will provide incentives for staff to take advantage of training and learning opportunities.
 - 1.4. We will establish and formalize professional development resources and fund training.
 - 1.5. We will require ongoing training in Braille literacy and vision-specific skills for teachers and relevant staff.
2. We will align our staffing structure in a way that explicitly supports our strategic objectives.
 - 2.1. We will allocate and reallocate teachers and internal staff to work directly with students in all of the diverse settings in which we will now teach and support students who are blind and visually impaired.
 - 2.2. We will hire additional orientation and mobility instructors to work with students in all the diverse settings in which education will occur.

Objective 4:

INVEST IN AND ENHANCE OUR USE OF TECHNOLOGY.

1. We will educate all of our teachers on the use of assistive technology to support learning.
2. We will establish the infrastructure – both technological and institutional – necessary to provide distance learning.

Action 2:

EXPAND OUR OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Our highest wish is to connect with and serve more children, families, teachers, and schools throughout Indiana.

Our challenge and opportunity.

- Approximately 20 percent of Indiana’s students who are blind and visually impaired are enrolled at ISBVI.
- So, approximately 80 percent of these students are enrolled in their local schools.

Our strategic response.

We will serve more students who are blind and visually impaired, no matter where they go to school.

Objective 1:

PROVIDE DIVERSE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS FROM ACROSS INDIANA TO BENEFIT FROM ISBVI’S RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE.

1. We will expand Short Course by providing more space and more staff to educate more students.

2. We will offer short-term placements – a semester or a year – for students from schools across the state.
 - 2.1. We will educate local students in core curriculum.
 - 2.2. We will build students’ exposure to expanded core curriculum.
 - 2.3. We will build expanded core curriculum learning for younger students.
3. We will establish distance learning to virtually connect students to classrooms at ISBVI.
 - 3.1. We will establish the technological infrastructure to provide distance learning.
 - 3.2. We will establish the institutional infrastructure to provide distance learning.
 - 3.3. We will amend relevant curriculum in ways that make it more conducive to a distance learning environment.
4. We will offer our Student Employment and Training Program (STEP) year-round to support students’ transition from school to jobs.

Objective 2:

SERVE MORE STUDENTS IN THE INDIANAPOLIS METROPOLITAN AREA.

1. We will establish innovative ways to provide core and expanded core education to these students.
2. We will connect these students with extracurricular activities through ISBVI (i.e., athletics, clubs, dance, scouts, etc.)
3. We will invite local children who are blind and visually impaired to participate in our “Reality Store” – a decision-making exercise that deals with real life choices.

Objective 3:

CONNECT MORE CHILDREN THROUGHOUT THE STATE WITH EXTRACURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES.

1. Using distance learning technology, we will offer virtual club memberships (i.e., Leo, Hamm Radio, etc.) to students not physically located at ISBVI.
2. We will invite students from the state to participate in Space Camp, conferences, conventions, and other ISBVI events.

Objective 4:

OFFER OUR ACCESS THROUGH OPTICS (ATO) LOW VISION CLINIC IN SCHOOLS.

1. We will work with the Indiana Lion's Club and will offer their vision screening assessments and low vision aids and appliances to students in their local communities.
2. We will make connections and contract with local optometrists throughout the state who specialize in low vision in order to better serve students in their local communities.
3. We will take a leadership role in promoting and establishing the early identification of vision loss and improving the referral system for children who experience vision loss.

Objective 5:

ESTABLISH MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL PRODUCTION PROJECTS WITH THE INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS.

1. Working with the Indiana Department of Corrections and Department of Education – Division of Exceptional Learners, we will identify a correctional facility and establish the physical and institutional infrastructure to train inmates to produce Braille books and materials.
2. Working with the Indiana Department of Corrections and Department of Education – Division of Exceptional Learners, we will identify a correctional facility and establish

the physical and institutional infrastructure to train inmates to produce large print books and materials.

Action 3:

ESTABLISH A STATE-OF-THE-ART DEVELOPMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND TRAINING CENTER

We view as our primary role and asset, providing diverse means of accessing core and expanded core curriculum for students who are blind and visually impaired and serving as a broker of "best practices" research and training in core and expanded core curriculum.

Our challenge and opportunity.

- Depending on the degree of vision loss and age of onset, the natural development of children is impacted and will vary.
- No two students with the same eye condition and vision loss have the same needs.
- Therefore, there are varying and diverse needs to be met within the population of students who are blind and visually impaired.
- Diverse interventions and approaches are, subsequently, necessary in order to enhance students' achievements in school and in life. There is substantial need for expertise in regard to these diverse interventions and approaches.

Our strategic response.

We will establish a training center that utilizes all state and national resources to provide necessary expertise to most effectively serve students who are blind and visually impaired, no matter where they go to school.

Objective 1:

PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SERVICES
TO LOCAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATIONS AND IN LOCAL SCHOOLS.

1. We will provide functional vision assessments.
2. We will provide orientation and mobility assessments.
3. We will provide Assessments for Young Children (AYC).
4. We will provide psychological assessments.
5. We will offer all of these assessments to local education associations and in schools throughout the state.

Objective 2:

ESTABLISH ISBVI AND LOCAL EDUCATORS THROUGHOUT THE STATE AS EXPERTS
IN STATE-OF-THE-ART METHODS OF EDUCATING CHILDREN
WHO ARE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED.

1. We will establish a long term plan for professional development – both internally to ISBVI and for educators across the state.
2. We will meaningfully invest in professional development, training, and research opportunities.
3. We will establish requirements and opportunities for internal training (i.e., in-service).
4. We will serve as a “best practices” resource for teachers, consultants, therapists, and others, in supporting a professional compendium.
5. We will collaborate with Project Vision to train teachers, consultants, therapists, school administrators, and others in these “state-of-the-art” methods.

6. We will develop classroom curriculum based in “best practices” and will offer that curriculum throughout the state.
 - 6.1. This curriculum will comply with Indiana standards and federal policy.
 - 6.2. This curriculum will include: (a) expanded core curriculum (e.g., Braille, Nemeth, O&M) and (b) more advanced core curriculum (e.g., advance math and science).
 - 6.3. This curriculum will be used: (a) in ISBVI classrooms; (b) throughout the state as local education associations want to access it; and (c) for distance learning.
7. We will collaborate with Project Vision and apply our “best practices” knowledge to effectively prepare post-secondary students who intend to teach and work with children who are blind and visually impaired.
8. We will establish this training center as a primary resource for general and special education instructors.

Objective 3:

FORMALIZE EXPANDED CORE CURRICULUM.

1. We will construct a formal expanded core curriculum.
2. We will train ISBVI and local education staff, parents, and others in teaching expanded core.
3. We will connect with a post-secondary institution to facilitate research in expanded core curriculum.
4. We will formally articulate the importance of expanded core curriculum and actively educate constituencies regarding the same.

Objective 4:

ESTABLISH SPECIALIZED CURRICULUM AND TRAINING PROGRAMS.

1. We will develop a curriculum and offer training for parents and caregivers and will work to connect parents with this training as early as possible.
2. We will develop a curriculum and offer training designed to teach college-bound students who are blind and visually impaired about the diverse resources available on a college campus and how to access those resources.
3. We will develop an education and awareness component intended to encourage college-bound and college students to become teachers of students who are blind and visually impaired.

Objective 5:

INVEST IN TECHNOLOGY AND SERVE AS A RESOURCE TO EDUCATORS IN THAT REGARD.

1. We will establish a comprehensive assistive technology team that educators and parents may access.
2. We will organize a system to improve access to assistive technology hardware.
3. We will use distance learning as one means of providing training to constituencies across the state.

Action 4:

ESTABLISH MULTIDIMENSIONAL DATA COLLECTION PARADIGMS AND METHODS

The need to change the paradigm within which data collection regarding student progress occurs is real and pressing. The value of doing so is profound – for students and for their schools.

Our challenge and opportunity.

- There are no valid or reliable assessment instruments that accurately measure the academic progress of students who are blind and visually impaired.
- Valid and reliable assessment instruments are crucial in order to understand the effects of educational methods and other interventions in students' lives and in order to assess and report the value of varying methods and interventions.
- Valid and reliable assessment instruments are also crucial in order to accurately evaluate the ability of schools to effectively serve students in multiple and meaningful regards that are relevant for students who are blind and visually impaired.

Our strategic response.

We will establish realistic and accurate measures of student progress that begin to effectively capture what is happening when students who are blind and visually impaired are exposed to educational opportunities.

Objective 1:

ESTABLISH REALISTIC AND ACCURATE WAYS TO DETERMINE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL CHANGES.

1. We will assess what skills students have when they come to ISBVI and with what skills they leave.

2. We will establish new methods of capturing student progress during their ISBVI tenure, utilizing Individual Education Plans, the School Improvement Plan, and other means to be determined.
3. Data collected using these new methods and existing methods will be directly applied to improve students' performance.

Objective 2:

ESTABLISH EFFECTIVE AND MEANINGFUL METHODS TO (RE)AGGREGATE DATA.

1. We will begin to effectively answer the question of how productive young adults are in society and whether and how that depends upon what education and training they have been provided in the course of their primary and secondary school learning.
2. We will establish new ways of reaggregating data to the level of the school.

Objective 3:

ESTABLISH A WORK GROUP WITH RESPONSIBILITY
FOR DEVELOPING THIS PARADIGM AND COLLECTING DATA.

1. We will establish and fill a data collection position to organize and lead this Work Group and this effort.
2. We will include educators and administrators on this Work Group.
3. We will include researchers on this Work Group.

Objective 4:

ESTABLISH EFFECTIVE AND MEANINGFUL METHODS
TO AGGREGATE AND DISAGGREGATE COSTS PER STUDENT DATA.

1. We will establish new ways of tracking and disaggregating costs per student rather than averaging across students.
2. We will establish ways of tracking square footage costs.

Action 5:

SUBSTANTIALLY ENHANCE THE CAPACITY OF THE INDIANA BLIND CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION

The mission of the Indiana Blind Children's Foundation is to invest in the future of Indiana's children who are blind and visually impaired in ways that meaningfully enhance their education and their lives.

Our challenge and opportunity.

- It is expensive to educate students who are blind and visually impaired, regardless of their placement.
- The expense of these students' education is based on the low incidence of the disability, the presence of other handicapping conditions, the need for intensive interventions in terms of time and duration, and the high cost of materials and resources.

Our strategic response.

We will move toward more financial independence and flexibility for ISBVI – specifically, we will become less financially dependent on the State of Indiana by looking at current budget items and strategic objectives and securing private support for them.

Objective 1:

THE FOUNDATION WILL IMPROVE ITS FUNDS DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY.

1. The Foundation will write and implement a funds development plan.
2. The Foundation will secure more financial contributions and diversify its resources.

3. The Foundation will staff a funds development position to serve the grant writing needs for both the Indiana Blind Children's Foundation and the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Objective 2:

THE FOUNDATION WILL ACTIVELY ENGAGE IN EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY.

1. The Foundation will write and implement a public relations plan.
2. The Foundation will secure more interest in the Foundation and the School.
3. The Foundation will substantially enhance volunteer capacity and organization.

Objective 3:

THE FOUNDATION WILL ENHANCE ITS GOVERNANCE AND FUNCTION.

1. The Foundation will write and implement a strategic plan.
2. The Foundation will actively engage in board education and will enhance board development.