



# ROCKET READ UP

Issue #1, September 2025:

## White Cane Wonders

The Indiana School for the Blind & Visually Impaired serves students at its Indianapolis campus and across the state.



## Rocket Fuel

As the Superintendent of ISBVI, I want to extend heartfelt thanks to all our community partners and stakeholders for taking the time to read our quarterly school newsletter. Your continued support and engagement are vital to our mission, and we are deeply grateful for your commitment to our students and school community. This quarter, we are proud to highlight the theme of **White Cane Awareness**, leading up to **White Cane Day on October 15**. For me personally, the white cane is far more than a mobility tool—it symbolizes independence, confidence, and the freedom to navigate through my community with purpose and pride. It represents the strength and resilience of individuals who are blind or visually impaired, and we look forward to celebrating this powerful symbol together.

-James Michaels, Superintendent



*Students and staff participating in ISBVI's 2024 White Cane Day neighborhood walk.*

## Countdown

- Sept. 26-28:** NCASB Track & Field Conference
- Oct. 2:** Virtual information session on O&M (p.4)
- Oct. 15:** White Cane Day
- Oct. 18:** Cane Quest (p. 3)
- Oct. 30-31:** Leap into L.E.A.D.S. course (p. 3)

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- P2:** School news (the view from Devon Avenue)
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### Empowering Students through Assistive Technology, Life Skills & Athletics

by Principal Jay Wilson

This school year, ISBVI is proud to expand our commitment to student success through enhanced assistive technology, a focus on the **Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)**, and a robust **athletics** program.

Thanks to generous support from the **Lions Club** and the **Indiana Blind Children's Foundation**, students in grades 3 and up will receive laptops equipped with **Fusion software**, which includes both **JAWS** (screen reader) and **ZoomText** (magnification) this school year. Along with access to this software, an emphasis is being placed on keyboarding skills and increasing typing speed. These initiatives will help students build essential tech skills for academic success and life beyond ISBVI.

We're also excited to strengthen our Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) offerings, especially in **independent living skills**. With an accessible kitchen and a dedicated **Family and Consumer Science teacher**, students will gain hands-on experience in cooking and kitchen safety—building confidence and independence. We continue to focus on all areas of the ECC, which include: compensatory skills, sensory efficiency, social skills, recreation and leisure, assistive technology, career education, orientation and mobility, independent living skills, and self-determination. To further extend this support, we will also be offering in-person and virtual webinars on several ECC-related topics, designed to help parents and families actively support the ECC at home. These will be led by our new Parent Engagement/Community Liaison (see p.4).

For students in grades **7-12**, our athletics program offers opportunities to compete in sports such as **track and field, goalball, bowling, wrestling, cheerleading, swimming, and forensics (speech)** through the **North Central Association of Schools for the Blind (NCASB)**. Our athletic teams compete in regular season meets and each season culminates in a conference championship. All athletes must have a valid **IHSAA sports physical**. For more information, contact Athletic Director Dave Brown at [dbrown@isbvik12.org](mailto:dbrown@isbvik12.org). Participating on our athletic teams is a great way to build discipline and teamwork. It also looks great on a job or college application.

Together, these initiatives reflect our mission to prepare students for a confident, independent future.



### Fall Outreach Programming

Orientation & Mobility students in grades 3-12 are invited to **Cane Quest** on **October 18!** This year we are holding the event in October in celebration of Blindness Awareness Month and White Cane Day. Register by **Oct. 3** at: <https://www.in.gov/isbvi/outreach/eventsregistration/>.

The **L.E.A.D.S. (Learners Excelling, Achieving, Dreaming, Succeeding)** program is in full swing, with twelve students attending the first Leap into L.E.A.D.S. (grades K-5) and L.E.A.D.S. (grades 6-12) courses in September. Registrations are being taken for October's Leap into L.E.A.D.S. session, **Mystery Detectives/Tech Explorers**, December's L.E.A.D.S. session, **Leadership Launch Pad**, and spring semester's offerings. Each session focuses on particular Expanded Core Curriculum areas, while encouraging students to form new friendships and grow in confidence. Please visit <https://www.in.gov/isbvi/outreach/short-course-program/> to register.

### White Cane Wonders Resources

**Articles:** [Everything You Need to Know About White Canes](#) from Lighthouse for the Blind

[White Cane Day & History](#) from Lions Vision Resource Network

#### Videos:

- [How to use a white cane---the basics - Unsightly Opinions](#)
- [How a Blind Person Uses a Cane - BreakingBlind](#)
- [Cane Techniques on the Stairs - KSSB O&M](#)
- [Guide Dog vs. Cane: Pros & Cons! - Molly Burke](#)

### Professional Development Opportunities

**In-person:** [Closing The Gap Conference Assistive Technology in Special Education, Rehabilitation and Everyday Living](#), Minneapolis, 10/21-24

#### Online:

- TSBVI [SWOMA Orientation & Mobility Conference](#), 11/7 & 8
- [Asynchronous courses from the Described and Captioned Media program](#)
- [Perkins webinars](#)
- [APH Hive course catalog](#)



*Leap into L.E.A.D.S. students making pasta from scratch in our first session of the year*





### News for families

I'm excited to introduce myself, Cassie Kessler, as the new **Parent Engagement & Community Liaison** at ISBVI! My role is to connect families, share resources, and create opportunities for us to come together and support one another. Whether through learning sessions, fun events, or simply staying in touch, my goal is to help families feel welcomed, supported, and connected all over the state, not just at ISBVI.

We have some exciting things coming up! This fall, we're offering **virtual family sessions** on the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) and Orientation & Mobility (O&M)—two important areas that help children build independence and confidence. We're also planning family-friendly celebrations in the spring including a Beeping Egg Hunt and a Family Picnic. Looking ahead to February 2026, we are thrilled to be hosting a Family Resource Fair on campus - a chance for families to meet community partners, explore services, and discover tools that can support your child's growth at home and at school. Keep an eye out for details!

Missed an ECC virtual session and want to catch up? Email me at [ckessler@isbvik12.org](mailto:ckessler@isbvik12.org) and I'll be happy to share the digital recording. Please remember to register for upcoming sessions and take a minute to complete the survey after each session. Your feedback will guide our work as we plan future topics and supports that matter most to your family!

**Virtual series continues:** Does your child receive Orientation and Mobility services? Our October session is designed to equip parents and caregivers with practical strategies, hands-on skills, and confidence to support their child's safe, independent navigation at home, school, and in the community. Participants will gain an understanding of basic Orientation & Mobility techniques, the role of O&M in the Expanded Core Curriculum, and ways to integrate these skills into daily routines to promote independence, confidence, and exploration. Want to register for the **O&M session on October 2nd** from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m.? [Click here!](#)

**Free books!** Seedlings Braille Books for Children is a nonprofit promoting literacy and independence. Through programs like "**Book Angel**," families can receive free braille books each year. Please check out [Free Programs - Seedlings](#) for details and registration!

Also, your child is eligible for the FREE **Braille and Talking Book Library Service** from the Library of Congress. Please contact [ckessler@isbvik12.org](mailto:ckessler@isbvik12.org) or your school librarian for assistance with the application.