



ROCKET READ UP

Issue #2, November 2025:

Learning Without Limits through Assistive Technology

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



Rocket Fuel - a note from Superintendent James Michaels

This quarter's theme of **Assistive Technology** holds special significance for me, both personally and professionally. For those of us living and working within the blind and visually impaired community, assistive technology is a powerful equalizer—bridging the gap between us and our sighted peers. At the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, we are committed to leveraging technology in all its forms to enhance productivity and independence. In particular, we are prioritizing the use of Windows-based computers equipped with screen reading and magnification software. As part of this initiative, we are developing a strategy to provide laptops to students from third grade onward at our Indianapolis campus. We recognize that early exposure to assistive technology is essential for building foundational skills that will empower our students to thrive in higher education and the workforce after graduation.



Contestants preparing to start testing in last year's Braille Challenge competition. ISBVI is the host of the Indiana Regional Braille Challenge.

Countdown

Nov. 12: Homework Without Headaches (p.4)

Dec. 3-5: L.E.A.D.S. course (p.3)

Dec. 12: Braille Challenge reg. deadline (p. 3)

Dec. 19: ISBVI Holiday Concert (p.2)

Jan. 15: Tech Time: Tools that Empower (p. 4)

Jan. 24: Wrestling/Cheer Conference, KY



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Music in the air



Beginner and intermediate band classes are focusing on building music-reading skills (in braille or large print) and developing auditory abilities such as learning by ear. The **advanced concert band**, the school's primary performing ensemble, plays at pep rallies, concerts, and occasional outreach events. Although Halloween just passed, they've been rehearsing "A Charlie Brown Christmas" music since September in preparation for the December 19th concert! Our advanced band members are also excited to perform alongside a collegiate marching band at the annual Bands of America Grand Nationals in November at Lucas Oil Stadium, the very field where the Colts play!

Piano students typically practice independently using the Smart Pianist app, which works with our digital pianos. Currently, all middle and high school students are preparing holiday pieces for the Star Lunch in December.

Our **elementary music** students have been learning about instrument families and spend time reading and writing music every day. They're excited to play instruments and make music together.

The ISBVI **High School, Middle School, and Junior Choirs** are busy preparing for the Winter Concert. Choir members continue to develop vocal techniques and musical expression while learning the value of teamwork and unity. Each student is discovering their voice and building confidence to share their talent. Some singers have naturally stepped into leadership roles, even leading rehearsals and offering feedback—true examples of ISBVI Rockets rising to the challenge!

New tech tools at our fingertips

Our **Assistive Technology** team has been expanding access and deepening instruction across campus. This quarter saw the introduction of **Typio**—a fully accessible, gamified typing program that makes keyboarding practice fun and meaningful—and increased instruction in **Desmos**, which enables students who use screen readers to create and submit electronic graphing assignments independently for the first time. Several staff members attended the **APH National Conference** to learn about the latest innovations and strategies for integrating tools like the Monarch and Polly into classrooms. These efforts reflect our commitment to providing equitable access to cutting-edge learning technology.



Outreach Programming

Students of all levels of experience will join us at ISBVI for Braille Institute's **Braille Challenge** on **January 31**. This year's theme is "Connect with Braille." Register by **December 12** at: <https://www.in.gov/isbvi/outreach/eventsregistration/>.

The **L.E.A.D.S. (Learners Excelling, Achieving, Dreaming, Succeeding)** program wrapped up a successful fall on Oct. 30 and 31 with a **Leap into L.E.A.D.S.** (grades K-5) session where students practiced their Sensory Efficiency, Orientation and Mobility, and Assistive Technology skills as they threw themselves into the role of detectives to solve "The Case of the Missing Cupcakes"! A wonderful time was had by all. Register by **Nov. 21** for the final L.E.A.D.S. (grades 6-12) session before winter break, on **December 3-5, Leadership Launch Pad**. Registration for it and 2nd semester's courses is at <https://www.in.gov/isbvi/outreach/short-course-program/>.

Assistive Technology Information

Articles:

Technology Assessment: Tips, Tools, and Resources from Perkins

Assistive Technology Assessment from Paths to Literacy

Braille as Modern Digital Assistive Technology from the New England College of Optometry

Braille Display Devices from The Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Videos: CVI and Assistive Technology playlist from Perkins

In the October 30-31 session, Leap into L.E.A.D.S. students from around the state practiced ECC skills while making new friends among their classmates and ISBVI students.

Professional Development Opportunities

In-person or virtual: ATiA Orlando, 1/28-31

Resource including PD opportunities: COSB Howe's Now monthly newsletter

Online courses: IU CCLC's Learning Academy (asynchronous)

Events & resources for families

- accessAbility's Vision Loss Care Circle, meeting monthly online
- Indiana DeafBlind Services' FamFest 2025-6, series of virtual events beginning Nov. 11





News for families

Finding the right supports and services for your child can sometimes feel overwhelming, but you don't have to do it alone! **The Indiana Disability Resource FINDER** was created to make your search easier and connect you with the help you need, all in one place.

FINDER is a free, easy-to-use website that is always available, even when you are up at 3 a.m. wondering where you may be able to find that support you are looking for. It brings together trusted programs, services, and resources from all over Indiana so you can find the right supports for your family. You can search for help with:

- Education and special education services
- Healthcare and mental health supports
- Employment and transition programs
- Housing and daily living resources
- Advocacy, recreation, respite care, and more!

Whether your child is just starting school, preparing for adulthood, or anywhere in between, FINDER helps families at every stage of life. Want to explore FINDER?

Visit: <https://indianadisabilityresourcefinder.org/>

Upcoming Learning Sessions

Stay connected, learn together, and build new skills!

Join our free, virtual sessions designed for parents, caregivers, and educators of students who are blind or have low vision.

November 12th, 2025 – Homework Without Headaches

Make homework time easier! Learn simple strategies and tools to build independence and reduce frustration.

January 15th, 2026 – Tech Time: Tools That Empower

Explore assistive technology, magnifiers, apps, and other tools that help students thrive at home and school.

✨ Each session is free, fun, and filled with helpful tips and resources! Register here to be sent the link for the meeting! <https://form.jotform.com/252314687387164>.

Missed a virtual session and what to catch up? We are happy to share the recordings so you can watch when it is convenient for you.

Have ideas or topics you'd love to learn more about? Reach out any time: ckessler@isbvik12.org.