The Faces of OSB

Mission Statement
The mission of the Oregon School for the Blind is to provide a model learning environment for students who are blind/visually impaired so they can achieve educational success and become lifelong learners.

Building Life In New Dimensions
Dear Oregonians:

The Oregon School for the Blind (OSB) has served visually impaired/blind children, many of whom have other disabilities, for more than 130 years. Established in 1873, the school serves as a critical part of the continuum of services for children with visual impairments in kindergarten through age 21. Enrollment at OSB occurs through a placement process associated with the annual development of each child’s Individualized Education Program and includes the input of the parents, the student, the local school district, the regional vision program, and a member of the OSB staff. While OSB serves about 50 students per year in its school year residential and day programs, almost half of Oregon’s 850 students with visual impairments receive some service from the school each year. As you read this report you will get a more comprehensive view of the scope of the programs provided.

OSB offers children access to specialized staff and a learning environment designed specifically for children with visual impairments. All students have access to the most up-to-date materials and equipment for the development of their independence.

The Oregon Department of Education is pleased to include the services of OSB as a part of its services to Oregon’s school children. I hope that through this Biennial Report you too will recognize the value of this program to the children it serves.

Sincerely,

Susan Castillo
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Dear Citizens of Oregon:

The Oregon School for the Blind (OSB) is more than just buildings, staff, curriculum, adaptive equipment, and the multitude of other items needed to operate a school. At its heart is the difference that the school makes in the lives of the children it serves.

This Biennial Report focuses on “The Faces of OSB” to tell the story of the achievement of children toward a goal of independence. The eight students highlighted in this report all received support from OSB and its staff. In each case the service enabled them to move closer to a goal being as independent and productive as possible.

I hope you enjoy the “stories” of our students and learn how OSB makes those “stories” a little brighter!

Sincerely,

Donald A. Ouimet
Director
Isaiah Dinsmore is a five year old, totally blind, autistic child, who began attending the OSB School Year Day Program in the fall of 2004. Isaiah, who comes to OSB from the Oregon City School District, travels daily from his home to join a class of other students with similar needs. Prior to his enrollment in OSB, Isaiah was served by the Sun Garden Montessori School as a part of the Elks Preschool Program, which is administered by OSB. Isaiah benefited greatly from this preschool program because of its highly tactual program. He also attended OSB’s 2004 summer program where he joined other young children in the development of concepts during a week-long program.

Isaiah’s mother notes that she has seen great gains in the areas of travel, independent feeding, and communications since his involvement in OSB’s programs.

Elks Preschool Program
The Oregon State Elks Association funds a program that enables visually impaired preschoolers to attend community programs. The program offers support for tuition, assistance from an instructional aide, and the purchase of specialized instructional materials.

School Year Day Program
Students who live within a 50-60 minute bus ride may commute daily from their homes to participate in OSB’s program. This option is usually most beneficial for very young students and those who do not have needs addressed in the dormitory program.
Caitlin Butler, of the Lincoln County School District, had her introduction to OSB via its Assessment program. The local school district, the regional vision program, and the parents all wished to gather more information about Caitlin’s skills and how she learns. Caitlin spent several weeks at OSB while staff evaluated her skills in the curricular areas addressed at OSB.

Based upon the information from the assessment, Caitlin’s IEP team decided that she should be placed in OSB’s School Year Residential Program. When Caitlin finishes her school day, she travels to the dorm for an evening full of programming that complements what she learns in class.

In the three months since enrollment Caitlin has progressed from a wheelchair to a walker. She has a physical therapist and orientation and mobility teacher working on this program. Her parents have carried the program over into the home enabling significant progress.

**Assessment**
OSB provides a comprehensive assessment to students referred by their local school districts. Assessments range from 2-6 weeks depending on the number of areas to be assessed. Following the assessment, OSB provides a written report and consultation to the referring school.

**School Year Residential Program**
Living in the dormitory provides students the chance to practice living skills in an environment where the tasks normally occur. They practice dressing in the morning and various chores each afternoon. The 24-hour program also provides more time for vital programming.
Christopher Routhier has attended OSB for five years as a student in the residential school year program. Chris, who is from the Greater Albany School District, lives in the dormitory from Monday through Friday. While Chris’s classroom placement has remained the same, his program needs have changed as he matures. Chris, who has no vision, follows a program that includes most of the areas offered in the OSB Curriculum. Last year he won an essay contest—Why I want to be a firefighter for a day. His prize was a ride-along with the Keizer Fire Department. Chris acknowledged that “he was not going to be a fireman, but it was nice to know what they do.” This experience, plus his participation in the Work Experience Program, begins to prepare him for a life after OSB.

Chris is a member of the OSB goal ball team and is involved in many activities. His mother believes that one of the greatest benefits of his OSB placement is his chance to have a place and a group to which he feels he belongs.

Curriculum
OSB offers a specialized curriculum that includes:

- Compensatory academics
- Travel skills
- Independent living skills
- Technology skills
- Career/Vocational skills
- Recreation/Leisure skills
- Social skills
- Use of functional vision

Work Experience
Students develop job skills by participating in work experiences both on the OSB campus and in the community. This job sampling teaches students not only the skills specific to their assignment, but also the work habits that allow them to be successful, long-term employees.
John Hinman lost his vision while a teenager. He came to OSB from the Forest Grove School District with a need to develop skills specific to his blindness. In the two and a half years since, he has mastered Braille, Nemeth Code (a Braille code for mathematics), and computer skills that enable him to access print materials and the Internet. He travels independently and has many of the skills needed to live on his own.

John, who is very athletic, is a member of both the OSB (2004 State Champions) and Regional Goal Ball teams. He was named a Jr. All-American in this sport in 2004.

Now that he has developed his adaptive skills, John has renewed his progress toward a high school diploma using many of the Community Based Resources available to OSB students. John is taking classes from the Hadley School for the Blind, a correspondence program, while getting tutoring from OSB staff. He is taking guitar lessons at Willamette University.

Goal Ball
Goal ball is a team sport played by visually impaired athletes on a volleyball sized court. Teams of three attempt to roll a soccer-sized ball containing bells across each other’s goal line. All participants wear blindfolds to equalize the competition. The action is fast and very physical.

Community Based Resources
The wide range of programmatic needs of OSB students results in the need to access a variety of community educational resources. This includes local school programs, private lessons, correspondence type courses, and web-based instruction.
Andrew Nantz, a student in the Imbler School District, has a long history with OSB. Beginning in 1997, Andrew participated in a series of Summer Program sessions that have included Early Age Concept Development, Independent Living—Elementary, and two sessions related to Technology. He has also been evaluated in the Lions Statewide Low Vision Clinic.

In September 2004, Andrew was a part of the Oregon contingent of students who went to Space Camp. The trip itself was a learning experience as it gave Andrew his first flight on an airplane. He noted in his thank you letter to the Elks, “I got to feel what it was like to be weightless. This was done on a machine called the one-sixth gravity chair. This simulates what it would be like to walk on the moon. This was truly a once in a lifetime opportunity for me and I really appreciate it.”

Space Camp
Each September a group of visually impaired students and supporting staff travel to Huntsville, Alabama to attend a week-long program at Space Camp. The Space Camp program is fully adapted to serve the several hundred visually impaired students from around the world who attend it.

Summer Program
A variety of enrichment programs that focus on theme areas with the curriculum embedded. Programs include:
- Creative Enrichment
- Techno-Trail
- Living Skills
- Sports
- Academics
- Backpacking
- Concept Development
Zac Flu went to school in the Jefferson County School District. He attended a local program that met his educational needs. On several occasions that program was augmented by those offered by OSB. He developed work and living skills through several summer program sessions. His functional vision was evaluated by the Lions Statewide Low Vision Clinic. Zac also participated in the Short-Term Program on two occasions. These two short-term placements at OSB help prepare Zac for his current job.

With support from the Oregon Commission for the Blind (OCB) a business was developed that enabled Zac to use the skills he had learned in school. He operates “Zac’s Snacks” at the entrance of the Jefferson County Courthouse. Zac’s desire to visit with people is met daily through his contact with visitors and courthouse employees.
Saleem Ackridge came to OSB in September of 2000 from the Salem-Keizer School District. He was very knowledgeable about traveling about town and often was able to assist students and staff with his broad knowledge of the local bus routes. His goal was to be able to live and work independently.

Saleem, who has functional vision, was seen in the Lions Statewide Low Vision Clinic to determine how he could make the best of his vision and to find out if any low vision devices were needed.

Saleem developed his work skills in OSB’s Summer Work Experience Program. He worked with the Bureau of Land Management performing jobs that included maintaining campsites, moving firewood, planting trees, and painting picnic tables.

Saleem now works at GI Joe’s, (a job he mastered while at OSB) and lives on his own in an apartment.

**Lions Statewide Low Vision Clinic**

This clinic, which is funded by the Oregon Lions Sight and Hearing Foundation, is coordinated by OSB. It provides low vision exams to over 100 children per year. The information provided by this clinic enables teachers to make maximum use of each child’s remaining vision.

**Summer Work Experience Program**

SWEP is a four-week program that places transition-aged students in paid jobs both in the Salem and Portland areas. Students develop both job specific skills and good work habits. Participants live in a college dorm in Portland or the OSB dormitory in Salem.
Melanie (Sager) Lindquist graduated from Damascus Christian High School in 1996. She attended the Transition Program at OSB from 1996 to 1998. During her time at OSB, Melanie focused her energy on developing the necessary life skills to enable her to be independent. She cites budgeting and the Apartment Living Program as two areas in which she received some much needed instruction. Melanie also found the presence of a peer group enabled her to better establish a support system as she finished the program at OSB. She felt she developed some good coping skills and was better prepared for adult life.

Melanie graduated from Mt. Hood Community College in 2000 with an A.A. Degree in Psychology. Melanie currently works as a Child Care Worker at OSB. She serves as a wonderful role model for the students with whom she now works.
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Carol LoHse, Dormitory Program Supervisor
Helen Ashley, Student Health Services Supervisor
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OSB Site Council
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Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through the experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.

Helen Keller

Oregon School for the Blind
700 Church Street SE
Salem, OR 97301