



North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind



Biennial Report 2013-2015



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Superintendent**

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**NORTH DAKOTA VISION SERVICES/SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND (NDVS/SB)
AGENCY FUNCTIONS AND ORGANIZATION**

Our Mission

To function as a statewide comprehensive resource working cooperatively with related agencies in providing a full range of services to persons of all ages who are blind or visually impaired, including those with additional disabilities.

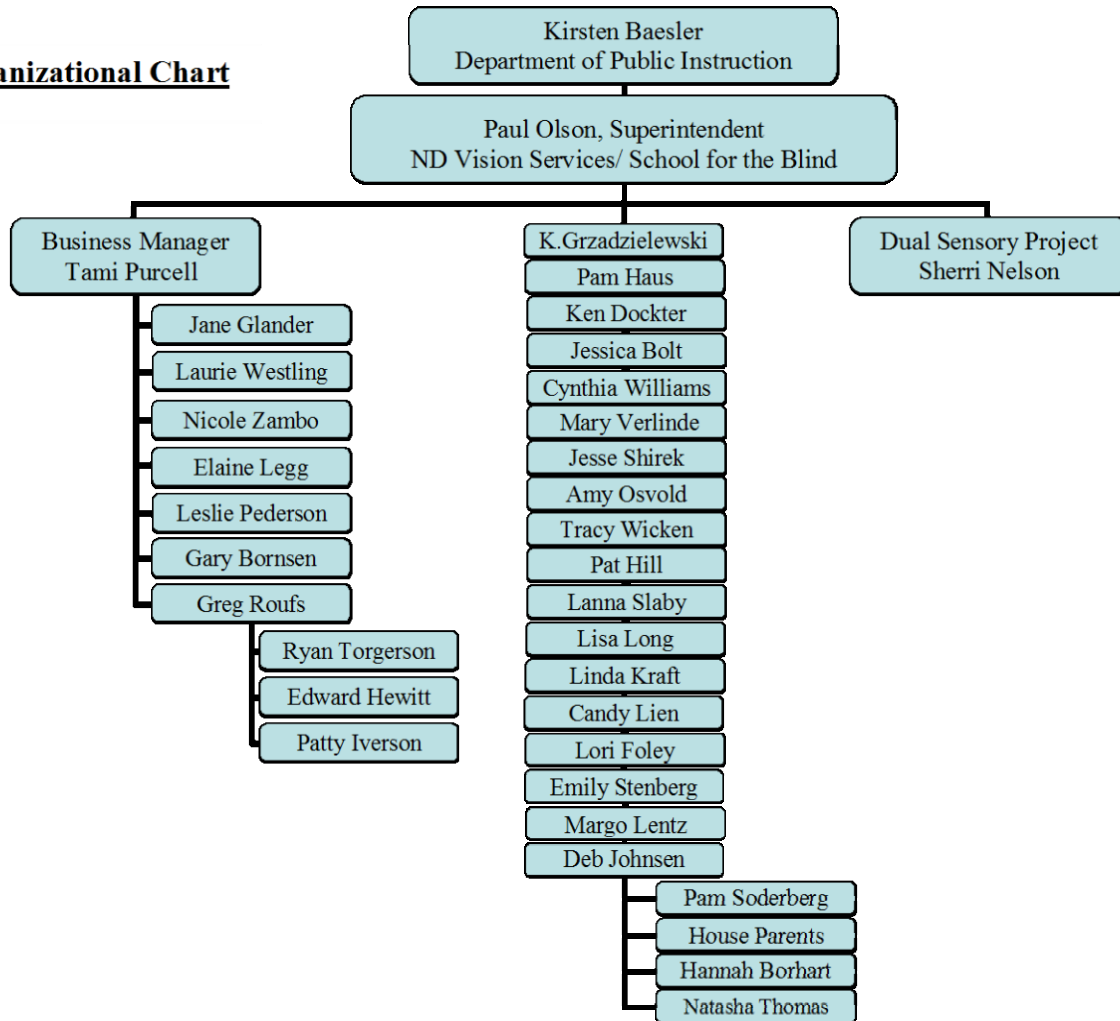
Our Vision

To inspire hope and the desire to achieve in our students as we strive to be leaders in the field of visual impairment.

History of NDVS/SB

- 1908** North Dakota School for the Blind opens in Bathgate with 25 residential students
- 1961** Modern facility opens, with relocation to Grand Forks
- 1967** NDSB Band performs at the Multi-District Lions Convention in Regina, Saskatchewan; they end their visit with a "Command Performance" for Princess Alexandra, cousin of the Queen
- 1974** The school obtains its first piece of adaptive equipment--a talking calculator
- 1980** NDSB Pop Singers ... accompanying themselves with electric guitars, bass, drums and keyboard ... perform at the opening session of the Helen Keller Congress held in Boston on her 100th birthday
- 1980** NDSB begins an annual tradition of sending students to Close Up in Washington, D.C.
- 1991** NDSB becomes a division of the ND Department of Public Instruction
- 1994** State legislature changes programming focus to outreach model
- 1996** Major renovation completed converting the former residence into instructional centers and offices
- 1997** State legislation enables operation of The Store to provide a convenient source of low-vision aids
- 1998** Major renovation converts former pool building to accommodate center-based programming needs
- 1999** Braille Access Center begins operation
- 2001** State legislature officially changes name to North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind
- 2001** Legislature clarifies mandate for NDVS/SB to serve persons of all ages
- 2007** Legislature grants resource to expand adult services
- 2008** NDVS/SB commemorates centennial.
- 2009** Legislature grants 2nd FTE for adult services
- 2014** Major renovation of the west wing and installation of elevator in the south wing

Organizational Chart



STATUTORY/CONSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

CHAPTER 25-06—EDUCATION OF BLIND PERSONS



25-06-01. North Dakota vision services – school for the blind – Maintained – Location. There must be maintained at Grand Forks, in Grand Forks County, a statewide service, resource, and referral center for the education and training of all residents of this state who are blind or have a visual impairment which must be known as the North Dakota vision services - school for the blind.

25-06-01.1. Definitions. For purposes of this chapter, an individual who is blind means an individual who is totally blind or whose central visual acuity does not exceed twenty/two hundred in the better eye with corrective lenses, or the widest diameter of the visual field is no greater than twenty degrees; and an individual with a visual impairment means an individual with an impairment in vision which, even with correction, adversely affects the individual's functional ability.

25-06-02. Duties and responsibilities of North Dakota vision services – school for the blind. Within the limits of legislative appropriation, North Dakota vision services – school for the blind shall:

1. Provide vision-specific services that

include consultations, evaluations, information, training, and educational services, including instruction in orientation, mobility, Braille, Braille music, daily living skills, technology, vocational training and recreation.

2. Collect and distribute information on vision services and resources available in the state.
3. Coordinate loans of adaptive devices, equipment, and materials.
4. Maintain a data base of residents who are blind or have a visual impairment.
5. Facilitate collaboration with agencies and programs providing services to individuals who are blind or have a visual impairment.
6. Assist residents to access appropriate services, including services available from the vocational rehabilitation division, independent living centers, infant development programs, developmental disabilities programs, the state library, local education programs, and advocacy programs.

25-06-02.1. North Dakota vision services – school for the blind – Appointment of superintendent, budget, staff, and reporting structure. The superintendent of the North Dakota vision services – school for the blind is appointed by and reports to the superintendent of public instruction. The North Dakota vision services – school for the blind must have a separate budget and separate staff from the department of public instruction.

25-06-02.2. Superintendent – Special duties. The superintendent of the North

Dakota vision services – school for the blind may also be the superintendent of the school for the deaf.

25-06-03. Superintendent to possess certain qualifications. The superintendent of the North Dakota vision services – school for the blind must possess those qualifications, educational and otherwise, as in the opinion of the superintendent of public instruction may qualify that person to instruct and minister to the needs of the blind persons.

25-06-04. Qualifications for admission to school for the blind – Residents of state entitled to free education. Repealed by S.L. 2001, Ch. 257, § 5.

25-06-05. Services to nonresidents. Individuals who are blind or have a visual impairment who are not residents of this state may receive services from North Dakota vision services – school for the blind if the individuals pay the cost of the services as determined by the superintendent of public instruction. Nonresidents may not receive services to the exclusion of residents of this state.

25-06-06. Transportation of indigent persons. Repealed by S.L. 1979, ch. 336, §3.

25-06-07. Instruction at school for the blind. Repealed by S.L. 2001, ch.257, § 5.

25-06-08. Accounts for clothing – How collected. Repealed by S.L. 1997, ch. 244, §4.

25-06-09. Blind person – Duty to report. Repealed by S.L. 2001, Ch. 257, § 5.

25-06-10. Purchase and resale of vision-specific adaptive aids, devices, and appliances – Revolving fund – Continuing appropriation. A revolving vision aids, devices, and appliances fund is hereby established in the state treasury to be used by the North Dakota vision services – school for the blind to purchase and resell vision-specific adaptive aids, devices, and appliances to be used by blind and visually impaired persons resident in this state. The North Dakota vision services – school for the blind may apply service charges when needed to cover the cost of purchasing, invoicing, and shipping, and all revenue from the sale of aids, appliances, devices, and shipping and postage fees must be deposited in the fund. The North Dakota vision services – school for the blind may receive gifts, grants, and donations for deposit in and use by the fund. All moneys in the revolving fund are hereby appropriated to the North Dakota vision services – school for the blind on a continuing basis for expenditure for the purposes of this section.



MAJOR PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind (NDVS/SB) provides regionalized outreach services and center based programming to persons of all ages; namely, infants and their families, students, and adults with blindness and visual impairment, including those with multiple disabilities. Information and resources are available to enable persons to maintain their independence.

Vision Resource Center

The Vision Resource Center at NDVS/SB serves patrons from ages birth through end of life: this includes but is not limited to students, teachers, vision professionals, parents, and people with visual impairments or blindness. We manage and administer materials obtained through federal and state funding as well as grant funding sources. We strive to offer the latest in both professional and practical information for individuals whose lives are touched by visual impairment or blindness. We provide standard materials in non-standard formats, educate patrons in information literacy, and support the rights of all to the freedom of access to information.



The Vision Resource Center is committed to the state-wide accessibility of its collection through Online Dakota Information Network (ODIN) and to a working partnership with the North Dakota State Library in providing all patrons within the state access to information despite physical or geographical limitations. Public relation activities and education are, therefore, an important component of our mission. Requests for materials are taken over the telephone, mail, email, etc.

APH Quota Funds: Ex Officio Trustees at NDVS/SB administer the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) program for all legally blind students and eligible adults in the state. The system through which these specialized materials are distributed is known as the Federal Quota Program. Through it, textbooks and aids are provided free to eligible blind students in educational settings ranging from early intervention programs for visually impaired infants to rehabilitation for elders who have age-related vision loss, from center-based and residential school programs to the regular classroom.

A wide variety of specially designed and adapted materials are available from APH, such as core curriculum materials for teaching reading, social studies, mathematics, and science. Also, available are materials for assessing and improving the use of low vision aids and expanded core curriculum materials for cultivating emergent literacy and concept development. These materials are also useful for facilitating sensory, motor, and perceptual development, for developing self-help and prevocational skills. Other examples of available research-based materials are braille teaching programs, talking computer software, low vision development programs, infant intervention materials, and motor skills improvement kits.

Educational tools include adapted audio recording equipment, devices for writing braille, and talking computer hardware. Special supplies such as braille and bold-line papers, special binders and notebooks, and other consumable materials used in the classroom are also available.

Large Print and Braille Textbook Repository: In response to requests from local vision teachers and/or special education directors, NDVS/SB staff locate and obtain textbooks in alternative formats and loan them to students for the school year. If a textbook is not available in the NDVS/SB collection or through APH, another option is to search the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC).

NIMAS: NDVS/SB has been designated as the provider of NIMAS materials for eligible students in North Dakota.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandated the establishment of the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) as a national repository for publisher source filesets of textbooks and related core printed materials that are created according to the technical specification included in the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard, commonly known by the acronym NIMAS. The NIMAC has been established by the American Printing House for the Blind, Inc. (APH) in Louisville, Kentucky.

When a publisher creates a NIMAS fileset for a textbook or other print material and deposits the fileset in the NIMAC, that fileset can be converted into student-ready specialized formats, such as braille, large print, audio, or digital text. NDVS/SB staff can search the NIMAC database for availability of materials or a request may be made to have a fileset created. This part of the process is done free of charge, but it is important to note that the cost of creating large print or braille materials that are

properly formatted, may cost the local education agency/school to have it produced. NDVS/SB can help local agencies/schools identify accessible media producers if needed.



Talking Book Machine Lending Agency: NDVS/SB maintains the National Library Service (NLS) Talking Book Machine Lending Agency. This service is available to anyone who is unable to read standard print materials as a result of temporary or permanent visual or physical limitations. Digital talking book machines, headphones, and pillow speakers are examples of available equipment. Most books are played on cartridges on the digital talking book machines. The service and all of the equipment are free. Applications are available from the Vision Resource Center.

Sensory Education Library: Young students with additional disabilities can benefit from specialized toys and equipment to enhance their auditory, tactual and visual interaction with the world around them. Children learn best when it is done in a multi-sensory manner. Toys that vibrate, light up, or have unique textures may help students develop greater awareness and resulting communication skills. Switches can assist students with limited dexterity and range of motion interact with technology in a meaningful way.

NDVS/SB Regional Coordinators work closely with local teachers and parents to select the toys and equipment that are best suited to the individual needs of children.

Descriptive Videos: Patrons may borrow videos with a description of the visual elements of a movie spoken during natural pauses in the dialogue.

Professional Collection: This collection provides time-tested references as well as current resources for vision professionals, families and other educators who need to research particular topics. New curriculums, journals and textbooks cover a wide range of topics. It is essential that this collection reflect the most current research in this ever changing field. These materials are particularly important given the fast pace of changing technology, educational trends and medical treatment for visual impairment.

Fiction and Non-Fiction Books: A consumer library of fiction and non-fiction books in braille and large print is maintained. In addition, the library stocks numerous titles with tactile adaptations for the pre-braille reader.

Access to Information: A collection of 50 brochures, handouts, and booklets relating to visual impairment are free to families and teachers throughout the state.

The Store: The goal of The Store located in the Vision Resource Center is to provide persons who are blind or visually impaired direct access to a sampling of low-vision aids that they may need for daily living and enjoyment. The hope is to bridge that difficult first step in selecting low-vision aids. Some examples of items for sale are canes and tips, labeling and writing supplies, magnifiers, sewing and measuring aids, talking clocks, and a wide variety of recreational games. Print catalogs are available as well as a virtual catalog on the NDVS/SB website [\[services.com\]\(http://services.com\). Individuals are encouraged to access the catalog on-line to read product descriptions and view pictures of products. Whether someone is shopping for themselves or for a loved one, this catalog will help customers select the best product. Phone orders are welcome and staff is happy to answer questions.](http://ndvision-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

An additional benefit to North Dakota customers is that we do not charge shipping or handling fees.

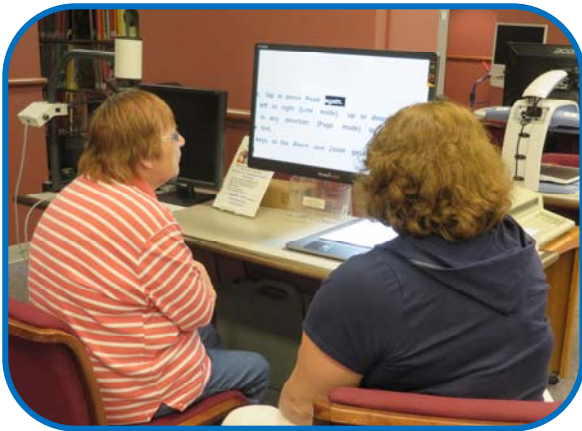
Braille Access Center: The mission of the Braille Access Center is to provide equal access to print materials for persons who are blind or visually impaired. Materials are made available in braille and large print. Items prepared include agendas, programs, catalogs, flyers, brochures, reports, menus, tactile concept books, greeting cards, conference handouts and correspondence. Customized braille materials are provided on a fee for service basis. A limited number of textbooks for students are produced annually upon request.

Technology Center

The purpose of the Technology Center is to provide assistance and information to those persons who are blind or visually impaired and who wish to use technology to meet their needs at school, at work or at home.



A collection of technology for the blind and visually impaired is maintained in the Technology Center. This includes devices such as video magnifiers for enlarging print; talking calculators; computers with large print, braille or synthetic speech output; and computerized reading machines for the blind.



Services offered by the Technology Center include:

- On site hardware and software demonstrations for consumers and professionals.
- A file of current vendor information, including demonstration cassettes and disks, as well as information regarding equipment being utilized in the state.
- Hardware and software from APH for loan to eligible students, as well as other hardware or software which is loaned to qualified consumers for a specified amount of time, as available.
- Computer training for professionals and persons with a visual impairment; may include workshops, set-up and installation of equipment, and individualized training at either NDVS/SB or local setting.

Equipment in the Technology Center is updated on an ongoing basis. All equipment and software is adaptive and specifically designed for persons who are

blind or visually impaired. Equipment is loaned for individuals to utilize at their home, school, or work site on a limited basis. Referrals are also made to IPAT

Regional Outreach Services

In providing a full range of services throughout the state, it is very important to sustain regional offices with highly trained teachers of the visually impaired. These teachers consult with local schools and other service agencies in the following areas: classroom adaptations, functional vision evaluation, orientation & mobility, technology, braille, vocational education, recreation, physical education, daily living skills and music.

Regionally based teachers (coordinators) provide consultation and limited direct service. Case management is always the responsibility of the local school, however, the NDVS/SB teacher works alongside the local educator as part of the IEP team. The regional teacher also works to coordinate consultation provided by other staff at NDVS/SB that specializes in areas of instruction like orientation & mobility and technology. The key to success in this model of service delivery is teamwork.

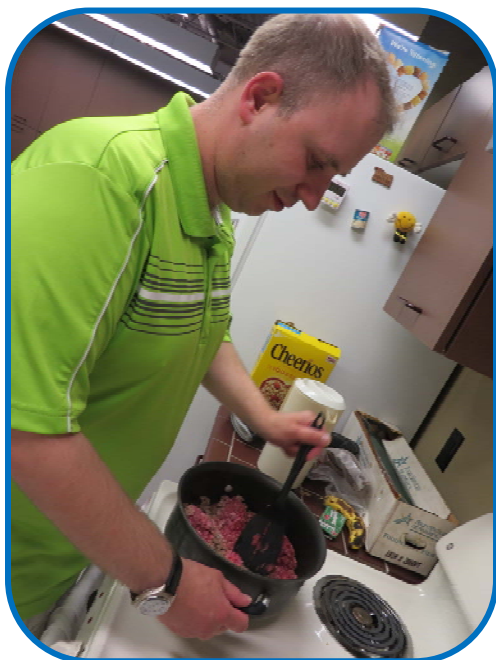
Family and home based service is also typical. Home visits to observe and work with infants and preschoolers are frequent. The goal during home visits and through regular communication with parents is to provide needed support and vital information.

Adult Services

NDVS/SB provides vision specific services to adults which may include evaluations, consultations, and instruction in the following areas:

- Access to Community Resources
- Adaptive Technology

- Communication (i.e., braille, large print)
- Daily Living/Self Care Skills
- Functional Vision Evaluation
- Low Vision/Adaptive Techniques/Aids
- Orientation and Mobility
- Recreation/Leisure Activities
- Vocational



It is the goal of NDVS/SB to assist individuals in reaching their personal and professional goals through the process of assessment and training. The process involves educating the consumer about available resources, determining training needs, evaluating the individual's ability level, delivering instruction, and providing follow-up services as needed.

Referrals may occur through self-referral or through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, which pays a fee for vocational related services for those consumers who are eligible. Services are provided at NDVS/SB and in local communities.

Regional rehabilitation specialists are available to consult with individuals in their homes. Some individuals need minimal adaptation to regain independence while others can benefit from instruction over a longer period of time to meet their personal goals. When intensive instruction is recommended, individuals often choose to participate in the adult training weeks that are scheduled periodically throughout the year at NDVS/SB.

The Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation System (CVES) is provided to persons who are blind or visually impaired ages 16 and older. This is a system specifically designed to evaluate essential verbal/spatial/cognitive, sensory/motor, and emotional coping abilities. This comprehensive report assists with case management and vocational/career planning.

Summer Camps

Themes and activities at summer camps change from year to year, but the inherent value and enrichment that students experience are timeless.

The primary goal of summer camps is to provide students with visual impairments additional experiences relating to skills that are unique to the visually impaired, but that are not included in the academic programs of the school year.

Teen Camp is held in June and provides students opportunity for building friendships with peers who also have a visual impairment. Together they learn about various careers, glean information from the AFB Mentor Bank, practice daily living skills, orientation skills, leisure recreation, community awareness and personal development. They have had opportunity to ice skate in the beautiful Ralph Englestad Arena, do some outdoor camping, and participate in fine arts projects.

Kids Camp is held in August and provides instructional time building literacy (braille or

large print), orientation and mobility activities, daily living activities, team games, craft projects, music games and lessons, and special guest visitors from the community. Friendship skills are developed as they play with peers who understand what it is like having a visual impairment.

Recreational Activities

Recreation and leisure skills may include traditional and adapted physical education activities as well as a host of other hobbies and pastimes that are enjoyed by the general public. However, a person with a visual impairment may need help in identifying the array of choices available. In addition, many of these activities require a degree of adaptation in order to make them accessible for participants with vision impairments.



There are activities specifically designed with visual impairments in mind. Goalball, Beep Baseball and Power Showdown are games designed for both entertainment value and competition for people with visual impairment. The list of other activities that are encouraged is limitless. Most board games, crafts, music activities, etc., can be made accessible. The goal of any programming in this area is to promote a wide range of interests to enhance the individual's quality of life.

How can NDVS/SB help an individual in this area?

During Center Base Programming, time is allowed to experience many activities. A formal leisure/recreation checklist can be used, or informal outings and opportunities can be arranged to experience a variety of selected leisure activities on an individual or small-group basis

Short-term Student Programs

Teen Weeks (7th—12th grade)

Kids Weeks (1st—6th grade)

JAM Mini-Session (7th-12th grade)

Career Week (10th-12th grade)

Preschool mini-session

Summer Camps (Elementary & High School)

Short-term student programs consist of numerous one-week training sessions and two special mini-sessions.

The mini-sessions are designed to meet the needs of preschoolers and teens. These sessions are 2-3 days in length and are structured to provide both skills training and opportunity for socialization.

The one week programs allow for instruction in vision specific areas known nationally as the **Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)**. The one-week programs allow students to spend time periodically at NDVS/SB to enhance skills and receive one-on-one instruction in the expanded core curriculum areas.

Lessons are taught based on input from parents/guardians and teachers, utilizing various checklists, and incorporating input from informal and/or formal assessments in various ECC areas. The daily schedule has time devoted for specialized instruction from Teachers of the Visually Impaired, personal development, study skills and social activities. Selected weeks may have a particular instructional focus.

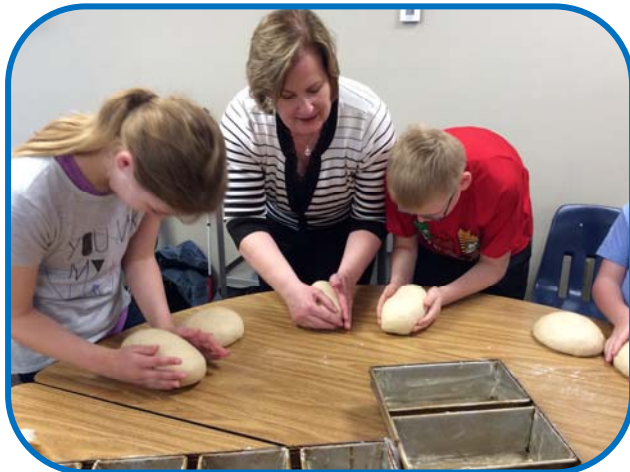
After the week-long session, a written re-

port is compiled and mailed to parents and the local school. If an on-site or home visit is desired, that can be arranged through our staff.

If parents or educational staff members desire to receive training to learn more about the ECC areas, they are welcome to spend time at Center Base. On-site housing can be arranged.

The **Expanded Core Curriculum** addresses the following areas:

- **Daily Living Skills:** Skills in daily living may include dressing, grooming, food preparation, social graces, house-keeping, and clothing care.



- **Braille:** Braille instruction includes reading and writing braille, and may include instruction in braille music.
- **Orientation and Mobility:** Orientation and mobility may consist of instruction in white cane, public transportation, telescopic aids, street crossings, and stairway negotiation.
- **Technology:** Students learn how to access the computer using magnification or screen readers, keyboarding, computer terminology and concepts, and to use closed-circuit television systems and other assistive devices.
- **Career Education:** Career education

includes interviewing skills, work attitudes, information about colleges, job shadowing, and job exploration.

- **Recreation/Leisure:** Instruction in recreation/leisure includes team of these games, athletics and other leisure activities that focus on the development of life-long skills.
- **Social Interaction Skills:** Students learn ways to relate to others and to examine their own personal development.
- **Visual Efficiency Skills:** Students learn techniques to use their existing vision with proper medications and aids
- **Self-Determination Skills:** Students are encouraged to make decisions, and learn how to define life goals which can affect their future careers. Self-determination has been described as “The ability to define and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself” (Field and Hoffman, 1994).

In-service Training

The Outreach Program offers in-service training for parents, teachers, paraprofessionals, and additional staff working with persons with a visual impairment. These individuals have the opportunity to attend training sessions at NDVS/SB or outreach personnel may provide the training in the home, school, job site or workshop. Areas of training may include:

- Braille reading and writing
- Technology
- Daily living techniques
- Visual enhancement
- Orientation & mobility techniques
- Vocational skills
- Recreation/leisure
- Music and braille music

Statewide trainings held during this biennium included the following:

- Visions Forum, October 17-18, 2013
- Family Weekend, April 4-5, 2014
- Cortical Visual Impairment Workshop, September 25-26, 2014
- Visions Forum, October 16-17, 2014
- Family Weekend, April 10-11, 2015
- Dakota AER Conference, May 13-15, 2015
- Presentations to University of North Dakota Occupational Therapy students are ongoing every semester.

Inservices were also provided by staff per request at local and private schools, homes, worksites, and senior facilities. Persons participating totaled 1,492.

2013-2015 BIENNIUM LEGISLATION

The 64th Legislative Assembly approved a very appreciated addition to the operating budget to address increases in utilities, agency transportation and rental costs at regional offices as well as increases in areas such as maintenance supplies and educational equipment. Additional money was allocated to support a professional position in Western, ND and to begin conducting an annual Low Vision Clinic for school age children. Other increases were earmarked for replacement of needed maintenance equipment. The request for \$1,590,000 of funds for a building improvement was not granted during this session.

2013-2015 RESPONSIBILITY ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

No changes in agency responsibility were added or deleted.



EVALUATIONS

Accomplishments and Activities

In August of 2013 Paul Olson assumed the role of Superintendent of NDVS/SB. Restoring funding for this position to a 1.0 FTE at NDVS/SB was a legislative decision as recommended by the Department of Public Instruction.

Valuable training on "Productive Work Habits," was provided to all NDVS/SB staff by TrainND in August of 2013. NDVS/SB places great deal of emphasis on productivity with a small staff and a growing demand for services statewide.

Public Awareness is an ongoing effort. NDVS/SB established a Facebook site in 2013 and has grown to have 213 followers who keep track of special events and news relating to a variety of topics relating to education and rehabilitation. The Reaching Out newsletter is published three times per year and reaches over 400 stakeholders. This publications covers a wide variety of topics of interest to parents, professionals and partners.



Joint planning with the ND Department of Vocational Rehabilitation occurred in the fall of 2013 and summer of 2014. A joint training with Vocational Rehabilitation occurred in October of 2014 at the Interagency Project for Assistive Technology in Fargo. These collaborative

efforts are meant to improve employment outcomes for people with visual impairment of all ages. Paul Olson continues to participate in strategic planning meetings with leadership at Vocational Rehabilitation.

Collaboration with the ND Association of the Blind included: Assisting with the coordination of the annual Ski for Light events, hosting an annual "Walk for Vision," event at NDVS/SB, providing staff at the annual NDAB Camp Grassick. Communication with the leadership of this consumer group for the blind is ongoing.

Greater collaboration with North Dakota Universities has begun. A long-standing partnership with the University of North Dakota continues. In this biennium specific training and support to other campus disability support services has increased. Significant collaboration with Bismarck State College to meet the needs of their visually impaired students has been very successful as an example.

Significant work has been done in collaboration with the ND Dual Sensory Project. A decision to move the Deaf-Blind professional materials library to NDVS/SB was made jointly with the ND School for the Deaf. This collection of professional materials is now housed at the NDVS/SB Vision Resource Center for checkout to parents and professionals. Numerous training opportunities were also conducted in this biennium to better prepare teachers and other professionals to serve this unique population of students.

A new office space for two NDVS/SB staff and the ND Dual Sensory Project Director was acquired in Fargo in 2013. These staff share space and resources with staff members from the ND School for the Deaf to better serve individuals in that region.

An Early Head Start Program under supervision of Mayville State University began operation September 8th 2014 on the 2nd floor of NDVS/SB with a capacity for 8 children. Planning for expansion of this center began in early 2015 with additional capacity anticipated in the fall of 2015. Although this program is not specifically designed for visually impaired students it is a collaborative effort that strengthens NDVS/SB and results in revenue to support our programming.



Numerous professional positions were filled including: Librarian, Vision Outreach Teacher/Mobility Specialist, Regional Vision Outreach Teacher-Minot and Grand Forks based Vision Outreach Teacher. Recruitment of qualified staff in the vision field is very challenging nationally. Success in recruiting these individuals was a very significant accomplishment.

NDVS/SB hosted the Dakotas AER Conference in May of 2015 with attendees from North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Manitoba and Wyoming. The focus of this conference was change with a high emphasis on implementation of the Unified English Braille code.

Major renovation of West Wing (Community High School) was a major accomplishment. This total renovation brought Community High School into the 21st century with a world-class facility to serve its students. This project was done on time and under budget. The bulk of the work occurred between April and the end of August in 2014. NDVS/SB also added an elevator which greatly enhances access to the 2nd floor for staff and student use.

The NDSB Foundation supports many students, adults, and programs. The NDSB Foundation presents annual grants to students and adults who are blind and visually impaired. These grants provide for equipment and services that are not available to the individuals through their local schools or other organizations. They also budget and provide \$1,500/year for NDVS/SB summer camps, and \$2,000/year for Family Weekend expenses.



The conclusion of the 64th Legislative Assembly brought NDVS/SB every requested appropriation with the exception of funds for further renovation. The additional resources granted will be very beneficial in meeting unmet needs including the implementation of an annual low vision clinic for better assessment of children in the 2015-17 biennium and beyond.

Every adult who participates in center-based training weeks receives a phone interview after participation. These interviews provide valuable information

Summary of Surveys					
	VGood	Good	Fair	Poor	N/A
1. How well were your specific needs meet	20	2	0	0	1
2. Timeliness of service provided	20	2	0	0	1
3. Courtesy and respect shown to you	21	1	0	0	1
4. Coordination with schools/agencies/families	20	1	0	0	2
5. Were you satisfied with the overall service you received?	YES: 23 NO: 0 NO RESPONSE: 0				

regarding the quality of the program. A number of suggestions that have been made by adult clients result in adjustments to the program for improvement. The statements below are quotes from adults who participated in adult training during the biennium:

“I was very pleased with everything and everyone.”

“They helped me realize that I am for sure going to go blind and there are options for me.”

“Everyone was professional and welcoming.”

“The instructors were very helpful and informational.”

“It was just overwhelming; the instructors take time and patience with each person.”



“It has helped me keep up with technology and computer skills.”

“I have a lot more confidence. I am getting around more.”

“Braille and JAWS opened up more opportunities regarding employment.”

Directional Trends

The role of NDVS/SB is evolving. The services provided on an outreach basis and at the training facility in Grand Forks will remain consistent. Braille, assistive technology, mobility training etc. will continue to be very important components to our service. These core areas are changing, however, to meet the increasingly sophisticated living and work environments that we are all facing. Trends that we are experiencing and anticipating include:

- Full implementation of the Unified English Braille code which constitutes a major overhaul of this system of reading and writing. January 2016 is the date set for agencies across the United States to come into compliance in both teaching and provision of materials in braille.
- The implementation of the North Dakota State Assessment and the North Dakota Alternative Assessment using the adaptive computer based system designed by Smarter Balanced is a significant challenge for visually impaired students. It is a challenge that will ultimately result in students being tested more accurately. Teaching students with a wide range of visual impairments and ability levels to use

the accommodations embedded in the new computer based testing format will be very time consuming initially. This is the new way of instruction, however, and it is worth the effort. Professional development for teachers of the visually impaired will be essential.

- Transition services that focus on assisting students become better prepared for college and/or career are being targeted. The ND Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and NDVS/SB will be working to carry out the goals of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act. The goal is to improve employment outcomes for our youth and young adults. The 2015-2017 Biennium will be a test period to see if the increased effort results in greater employment and/or post-secondary education.



- In the upcoming biennium we are likely to see national legislation passed referred to as the Anne Sullivan Macy Act. This act enhances accountability for the provision of educational services to children with visual disabilities. The lack of access to education programs that address their specific learning needs has dire consequences. For example, despite legislative efforts to ensure students access to appropriate literacy media, it remains clear that few children who should be receiving

instruction in braille are actually receiving it. This lack of braille instruction contributes to the inability of graduates with visual disabilities to participate fully in the workforce.

- Recruitment and retention of qualified teachers of the visually impaired and other vision specialists continues to be a concern. There is a nationwide shortage of vision professionals. Strategic planning to offset this disturbing trend is a priority.
- The percentage of aging citizens will increase resulting in higher demand for adult services from NDVS/SB. This demand will effect both the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Older Blind Program as well as NDVS/SB. The need for provision of technology training to this older population is a new development that requires expert instruction by qualified professionals.

Short and Long Range Plans and Goals

NDVS/SB participates in a self-study and accreditation process every 5 years through an organization known as the National Accreditation Council for Blind and Low Vision Services (NAC). NAC accredits agencies serving blind and low vision consumers employing contemporary evidence-based standards and a unique on-site peer review process. This process set in action a five year plan with five recommendations which began in 2012.

In the 2013-2015 biennium each of the recommendations were addressed.

1. The superintendent position was restored to full time status be the 63rd legislative assembly--solely serving the blind and visually impaired population as recommended by NAC. This change occurred through legislative action to provide funding needed to accomplish this goal.

2. The intake process for adults receiving center-based training was streamlined and enhanced to better identify their individual short and long term goals.
3. Focus events targeting parents of students served by short-term programs was recommended. This recommendation was partially met. The number of families participating in the annual "Family Weekend," increased significantly due to recruitment. Additional focus events were considered per the recommendation but were not conducted due to time constraints.
4. As recommended by NAC, a program evaluation tool for student short term programming was developed. This 50 point checklist of indicators both measures student growth as well as determining whether the short-term student program is resulting in adequate outcomes in key areas like braille literacy, use of assistive technology, mobility skills, etc. This achievement was not reached easily as it had to be designed for our unique population. It is also designed to

specifically work with our program model. No commercially available, published tool existed to accomplish this goal.

Departmental Goals that were written in the 2009-2011 biennium are still in effect, but objective methods of measuring achievement are still in development.

Strategic Plan

A consultant with significant experience in administration of blindness programs was identified to conduct strategic planning with NDVS/SB staff and stakeholders in the 2013-2015 biennium. Jon Harding of the Kansas School for the Blind has agreed to visit NDVS/SB, conduct interviews, lead small groups through focus groups beginning in the fall of 2015 and ending in the fall of 2016 with a report and recommendations. This process will position NDVS/SB for the upcoming NAC accreditation process in 2017 to ensure that present and future priorities are identified and new goals are set.



STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Services Provided	2011-2013	2013-2015
	Biennium	Biennium
Clients Served (Unduplicated):		
Infants/Students	307	321
Adults	<u>206</u>	<u>208</u>
Total	513	529
Vision Resource Center:		
Items Circulated	33,764	30,888
Talking Book Machines (quarterly)	1,776	1,241
"Reaching Out" Newsletter (circulated quarterly)	1,394	416
APH Federal Registry	275	339
Store Sales (Invoices)	511	491
Braille Access Center (pages)	17,014*	15,950
Short-term Center Based Programs (Persons Served):		
Short Term Programming	149	160
Adult Week	63	61
Summer Camps	43	19*
Evaluations, Consultations and Instructions (Services Provided):		
Consultations	1,669	1,767
Evaluations	330	351
Instruction	9,366	9,737
In-Service Training (Attendees)	1,732	1,492

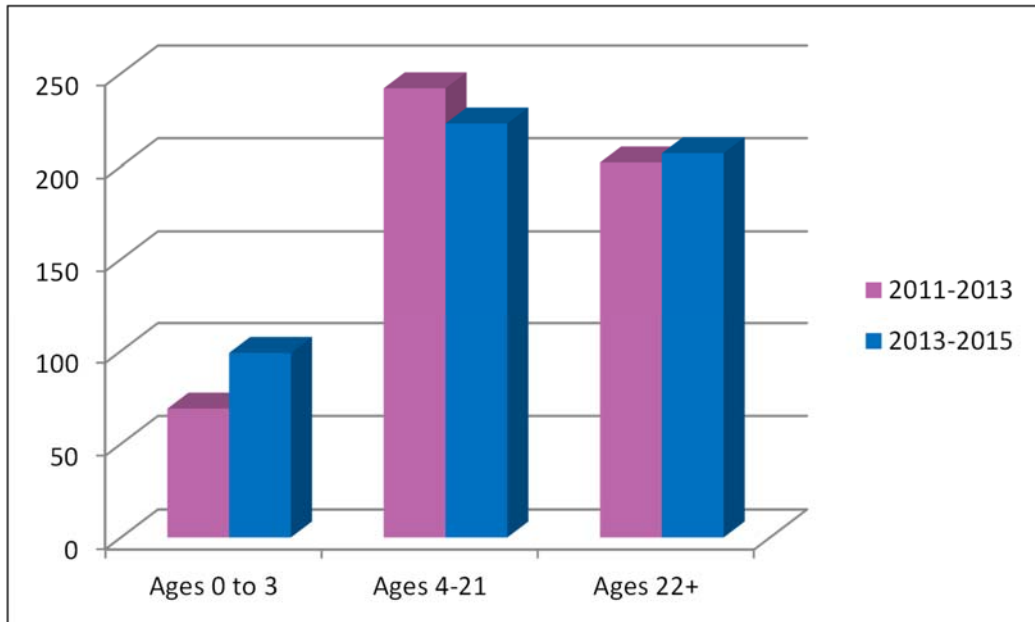
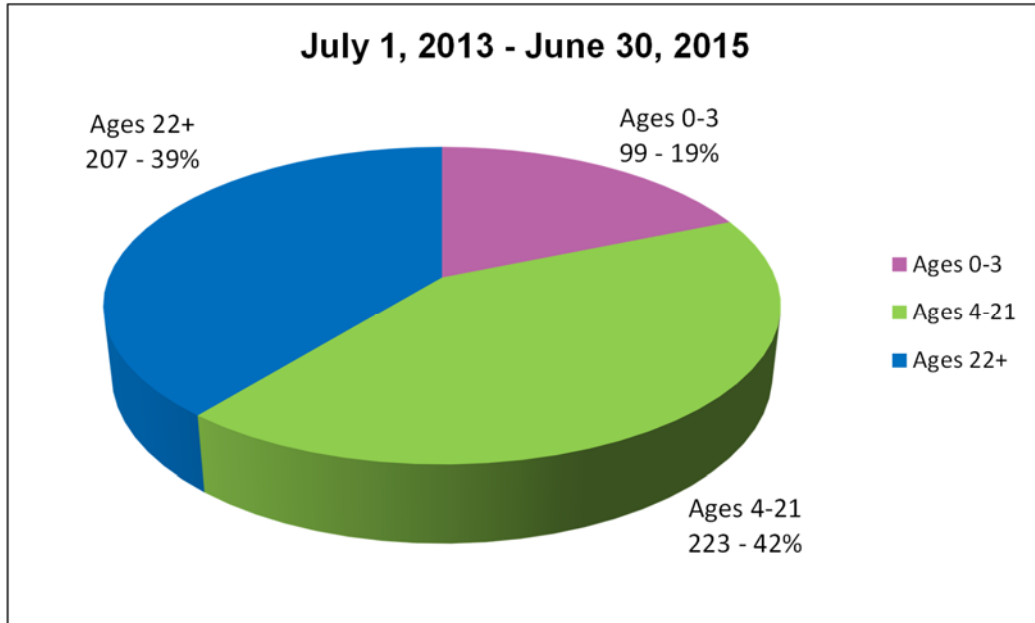
* 3rd Quarter of 2012 was estimated due to staff turn over and lack of data.

* Two less camps were held in 2013-2015 biennium than 2011-2013.

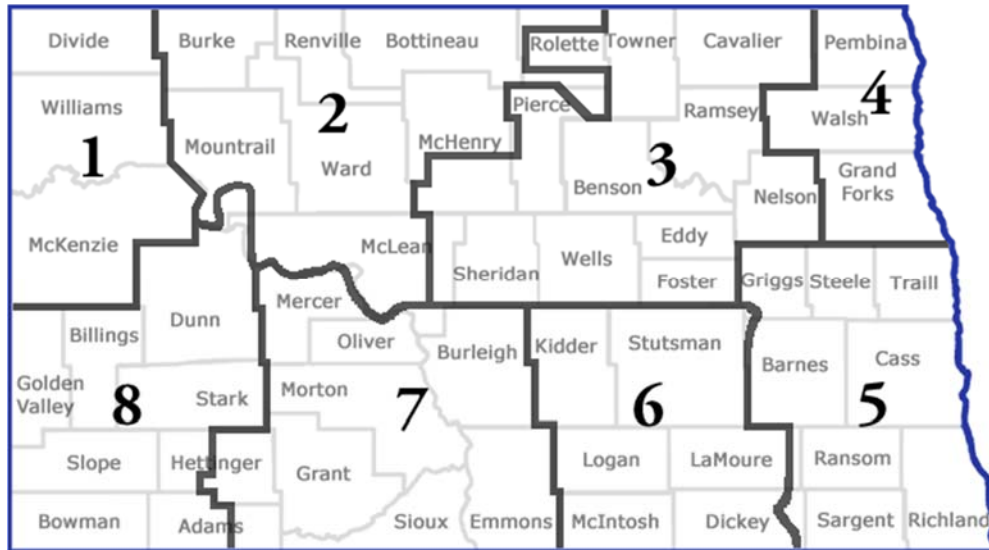
TOUCHING NORTH DAKOTAN'S LIVES



PERSONS SERVED BY AGE



**CLIENTS SERVED BY REGION (UNDUPLICATED)
JULY 1, 2013 to JUNE 30, 2015**



Region 1

Infants/Students – 14
Adults – 8
Total: 22

Region 2

Infants/Students – 51
Adults – 24
Total: 76

Region 3

Infants/Students – 24
Adults – 7
Total: 31

Region 4

Infants/Students – 41
Adults – 80
Total: 121

Region 5

Infants/Students – 76
Adults – 41
Total: 117

Region 6

Infants/Students – 37
Adults – 15
Total: 52

Region 7

Infants/Students – 41
Adults – 21
Total: 62

Region 8

Infants/Students – 28
Adults – 7
Total: 35

Relocated/Out of State

Infants/Students – 9
Adults – 5
Total: 14

**Total Infants/Students Served: 321
Total Adults Served: 208
Total Persons Served: 529**

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES AND REVENUES

Revenues by Source:

Lease - Rent of Building (GFPS,NDSD,EHS)	\$	328,408.00
Donations		9,642.00
Admissions (Vocational Rehabilitation/Center Based Students out of state)		31,784.00
Lease - Rent of Land (UND)		5,800.00
Miscellaneous Revenue		112.00
Transfer from Common Schools/ Ellendale Fund		331,557.00
Braille Access Center		1,700.00
		709,003.00
Total Revenue for 2013-2015	\$	709,003.00

<u>Expenditures by Program</u>	<u>General Fund</u>	<u>Federal Fund</u>	<u>Special Fund</u>	<u>Total</u>
Maintenance & Utilities	\$ 3,665,976.00	\$ -	\$ 256,811.00	\$ 3,922,787.00
Administration	606,581.00	-	935.00	607,516.00
Adult Program	277,640.00	-	343.00	277,983.00
Outreach (Age 0-5)	187,245.00	-	6,119.00	193,364.00
Outreach (Age 6-21)	1,605,601.00	-	96,006.00	1,701,607.00
Technology	471,471.00	-	14,246.00	485,717.00
Short Term Programs (K-12)	259,098.00	-	27,547.00	286,645.00
Vision Resource Center	401,902.00	-	13,304.00	415,206.00
Braille Access Center	8,877.00	-	85,755.00	94,632.00
Summer Camps	1,402.00	-	60.00	1,462.00
Total Expenditures	\$ 7,485,793.00	\$ -	\$ 501,126.00	\$ 7,986,919.00

Breakdown of Expenditures by Line Item

Salaries & Wages

Salaries & Wages	\$ 2,656,608.00	
Temporary Salaries	99,940.00	
Fringe Benefits	1,260,753.00	
Total Salaries & Wages		<u>\$ 4,017,301.00</u>

Operating

State Employee Travel	\$ 164,102.00	
Utilities		
Electricity	54,622.00	
Water & Garbage	17,058.00	
Steam Heat	82,786.00	
Natural Gas	4,155.00	
Telecommunications	35,137.00	
Data Processing	60,199.00	
IT - Software/Supplies	6,894.00	
Postage	4,911.00	
IT -Contractual Services	6,487.00	
Lease/Rent - Equipment	9,425.00	
Lease/Rent - Bldg	37,293.00	
Professional Development	16,716.00	
Operating Fees/Services	5,408.00	
Repairs	42,293.00	
Professional Services	7,553.00	
Insurance	4,752.00	
Office Supplies	18,400.00	
Printing	3,315.00	
Profess. Supplies & Materials	9,704.00	
Food & Clothing	13,332.00	
Bld,Grnds,Vehicle Supplies	34,790.00	
Misc. Supplies	11,991.00	
IT Equipment under \$5,000	18,378.00	
Other Equip under \$5,000	10,747.00	
Office Equip under \$5,000	3,374.00	
Total Operating Expenses		<u>\$ 683,822.00</u>

Capital Improvements		<u>\$ 3,285,796.00</u>
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Total Expenditures		<u>\$ 7,986,919.00</u>
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RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

1. "Reaching Out" Newsletter – Published Semi-Annually
2. Store Catalog
3. Center Based and General Services Brochures
4. Website — www.ndvisionservices.com
5. Facebook

Materials published by the NDVS/SB are available in alternative formats (i.e., braille, CD, large print, audio recording) upon request.

CONCLUSIONS

ND Vision Services/School for the Blind has a strong history and foundation. We provide services on an outreach basis and at our training facility in Grand Forks that focus on essential life skills for our students of all ages. We also continue to adapt to new challenges to better meet the needs of students in modern classrooms and for adults who are losing vision in an increasingly technological society. Our students need access to the best educational materials and our adult clients need access and expert instruction to electronic media that surrounds them. The digital world is our reality and access to opportunity depends on it. We are responding to these new needs by maintaining qualified staff, investing in technology and our facilities and being fiscally responsible as part of a larger state system.

There is evidence of our success in reviewing our accomplishments and measuring a number of variables in the 2013-15 time frame.

- We executed a major renovation of our West Wing and added an elevator.
- We filled every critical, specialized position that was open.
- We increased collaborative efforts with the ND Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.
- We hosted two major workshops and a number of smaller events.
- We launched and increased public awareness to over 200 regular followers on Facebook.
- We developed a new tool to better measure student outcomes and program effectiveness.

The 2013-2015 biennium statistics illustrated slight increases in a number of service categories. Short-term programs for students held steady with a small increase. In every two year period in the past decade there were significant increases in this program, but it

appears that this is leveling off. The numbers of students that are currently participating allow staff to focus on quality of instruction which is our ultimate goal. Quality, individualized instruction is what we believe will lead to academic success and better employment outcomes for our students.

Outreach numbers for students and adults also saw slight increases but the percentage in every category was less than 1%. This comes after several years of steady growth.

The trends that have been noted in this report will require further attention and effective planning to make reasonable progress in managing them. The strategic planning that will occur in the 2015-2017 biennium will target any identified current weaknesses and address trends.



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