

Arkansas School for the Deaf

www.arkschoolforthe deaf.org

2020-2021 REPORT to the PUBLIC



**Dr. Janet Dickinson,
Superintendent**



Students with Governor Hutchinson at a Press Conference

Report to the Public

I. Description

Founded in 1850, Arkansas School for the Deaf (ASD) is not only one of the Arkansas' oldest schools, but it is the oldest school for the deaf west of the Mississippi River. ASD has a strong legacy as the only school for students who are deaf or hard of hearing in the state of Arkansas. In this role, ASD serves as the main resource for parents, school districts and agencies regarding the topic of Deaf Education and the Deaf community in Arkansas.

ASD provides individualized education to students from throughout Arkansas, many of whom live on campus during the week in dormitories. ASD serves infants through age 21 years. Students who have graduated from high school can enter a comprehensive post-secondary program focusing on career and college readiness. The school also provides support for deaf and hard of hearing students in mainstream programs throughout the state and serves families of deaf children from birth until school age and also as a Part C Early Intervention provider.

ASD has a rich heritage of working together to create learning opportunities for academic excellence and personal independence. The staff of ASD supports this mission by providing students with dynamic opportunities for learning and delivering more equitable access to the world around them, truly instilling independence, autonomy, and confidence in all of our students. ASD is proud to be a leader in the field of deaf education nationwide.

Although ASD is a state agency, the school follows the same state mandates as public schools. As of July 1, 2019, ASD is considered a division under the hierarchy of the Arkansas Department of Education.

Characteristics of the Students Served by Arkansas School for the Deaf

Currently, our student population at the Little Rock campus ranges in age from 2 years to 21 years. Student placement and individualized programs at ASD is based fully on their assessed needs and their Individual Education Plan (IEP). It is designed to meet Federal and State mandates for a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for deaf and hard of hearing students in the state of Arkansas.

Statewide Services currently serves 75 infants and their families around the state. Young deaf children 0-5 years old may be served in their family home, their daycare, or in another setting chosen by their family.

The primary focus of Arkansas School for the Deaf is to provide an excellent education to every student enrolled in our program. The current enrollment is as follows:

ASD Student Enrollment Numbers Little Rock Campus 2019-2020				
		Students	Teachers	Teacher Assistants
Lower School		51	11	10
Middle School		29	5	2
High School		37	12	7
ADCC		7	1	1
TOTAL		124	29	20

All programs also share the following Educational Support Staff:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Audiologist | 1 Librarian |
| 4 Speech Language Pathologists | 2 LPNs |
| 2 ASD Teachers | 1 Occupational Therapist |
| 1 Counselor | 1 Physical Therapist |
| 1 Guidance Counselor | 1 Physical Education Teacher |
| 1 Dean of Students | 1 Art Teacher |
| 1 Job Coach | 1 Dance Teacher |
| 2 Registered Nurses | |

Unique Community Characteristics that Impact the School

The student body at Arkansas School for the Deaf is diverse in many ways. We serve students from every corner of the state. This geographical range spans the Ozark Mountains to the Little Rock inner city population, as well as the southern and Delta farming communities. Students stay in the dormitories from Sunday evening through Friday early afternoon. While most students communicate through American Sign Language, a growing percentage of students also use spoken English to communicate.

Leadership In Collaborative Partnerships

Arkansas School for the Deaf believes that by working together with national and local partners, we can greatly enhance the education, experiences, and lives of deaf children. Today, ASD's leadership is engaged in promoting strategic and valuable partnerships with many local agencies and corporations to meet the diverse needs of our student body. Collaborative initiatives include:

National Level

- Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools & Programs for the Deaf (CEASD): Arkansas School for the Deaf is a member of CEASD. This organization brings together a rich composite of resources and reaches out to both enhance education programs and influence educational policy.
- The National Association for the Deaf (NAD): Arkansas School for the Deaf maintains open communication with the NAD, which is the nation's premier civil rights organization of, by and for deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the United States of America.
- American Society for Deaf Children (ASDC): Arkansas School for the Deaf is a member of ASDC, a parent helping parent network that provides a tremendous support to families through conferences, support systems, and research-based information sharing. Our parents receive a free membership to ASDC, and the school is actively promoting the involvement of parents in this organization.
- Hands & Voices: Arkansas School for the Deaf is a member of *Hands & Voices*, a parent driven, non-profit organization dedicated to providing support to families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

State Level

- *Arkansas River Education Service Cooperative*: Arkansas River Education Service Cooperative operates within a network of 15 sister service agencies created to help schools meet accreditation standards, equalize educational opportunities, use resources effectively, and promote coordination of Arkansas Department of Education initiatives. ARESC is governed by a board of directors consisting of the Superintendent from each member school. ASD's Superintendent is a member of their Board. ASD's staff takes full advantage of the quality services and trainings offered by ARESC. Dr. Dickinson currently serves as the Secretary of the Board.
- *Public Schools and Arkansas Department of Education (ADE)*, Arkansas School for the Deaf is an active resource in areas relating to deaf education. Public school in Arkansas and the ADE reach out frequently to access information on deaf education and the deaf community at large.

Local Level

- *Metropolitan Career Technical School:* In a special agreement with Metro, our students are able to take vocational classes and earn certifications in vocational fields.
- *Assistive Technology:* Arkansas School for the Deaf offers as an assistive technology resource with local school districts, where participants can learn about tools and strategies to support students, including a wide range of assistive listening devices.
- *Youth Homes, Inc.: Mental Health Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing:* By partnering with these mental health experts, Arkansas School for the Deaf is better able to meet the needs of deaf students with emotional needs. We have a wonderful licensed counselor stationed on our campus. We are working together with Youth Homes, Inc. to create a group home for needy deaf children to open Fall 2019.
- *ASL Academy:* Arkansas School for the Deaf has an ASL Academy that offers ASL classes for the community on our campus, as well as ASL workshops out in the community for businesses, police departments, fire stations, and other community groups.
- *Little Rock Police:* Arkansas School for the Deaf maintains a strong relationship with the Little Rock Police. Not only have our facilities been used by the local police and SWAT Team for practice outside of school hours, but they also work closely with Arkansas School for the Deaf in training the staff and students in safety issues.
- *Many More Relationships...:* We have a growing number of organizations, schools, corporations, foundations, and professionals who are becoming more and more engaged with our school. We actively seek out opportunities to engage new “friends” and promote these relationships.

Parents– Relationships and Involvement

At Arkansas School for the Deaf, we value parents and their dual role as part of the community, and part of our team. We work to support and engage parents in the school. Some of our most important initiatives include:

- *American Sign Language Classes:* Free ASL classes are offered to all families of students enrolled at Arkansas School for the Deaf. If class times are not convenient for families, then families are offered individual tutoring sessions.
- *Very Import Parent (VIP) Meetings:* Parents are invited to meet with the Superintendent. This meeting often focuses on planning for upcoming family events. But also, it is an important time to gain the parents feedback on the school, and any perceived concerns they might have. Monthly speakers are chosen based on the parents’ requested topics. Parents work together to plan meetings and events for families that would be supportive and informative.
- *Statewide Services:* Arkansas School for the Deaf provides family support services for our youngest deaf children and their families. As one might imagine, we become quite close to these families, and in doing so, we become a resource to them as their children grow.

Internal Forces

The major internal forces that impact the school include:

Students’ Needs: Arkansas School for the Deaf serves a diverse population of students. Students have varying degrees of hearing loss, cognitive, academic and communication, social and behavioral skills and abilities. The needs of the student impact the instruction, the educational program, the development and implementation of curriculum and socialization within the ASD environment.

Board of Trustee Expectations:

Our Board meets monthly, and we are fortunate to have a team of dynamic, professional, and engaged Trustees. Their high expectations and guidance help to move ASD toward greater growth, effective practices, and prosperity.

Policies and Regulations as a State Agency:

As a state agency, we currently have many policies and restrictions that set us apart from other schools. For example, currently ASD has a cap on employees. Therefore, we only have the ability to hire staff that is essential and required regardless of student body or significant changes in student needs. We recently experienced a moratorium on hiring for certain positions. With the government transformation and with the support of Arkansas Department of Education, we have been able to continue our affected operations through Shared Services.

Budget Considerations as a State Agency:

Arkansas School for the Deaf is a state agency with a fixed allocation of 10.2 million per year. Funding is not connected to enrollment. The potential to undertake new initiatives and provide services that our students need, is directly impacted by the school's ability to fund such endeavors. Another unique policy related to financial processes is the process of moving funds from one budget line to another. For example, if we have salary savings, we must go before legislators to gain approval to move appropriation to another budget line.

External Forces

The major external forces that impact the school include:

School Districts: The student's local school districts has a certain amount of decision-making power in whether or not their students enroll in our program. Upon enrolling at ASD, the school districts are invited to IEP meetings and encouraged to be a valued part of the team.

Parent Expectations: Parents have expectations and desires for their children, which impact the programs offered at ASD. Parents are formally and informally asked to give input into the direction and plans of ASD.

Deaf Community: Many deaf adults throughout the state are alumni of ASD. They grew up in the dormitories, and therefore, feel that ASD is "home". ASD collaborates closely with many deaf community organizations, such as:

- Arkansas Association of the Deaf
- Little Rock Association of the Deaf
- Arkansas DeafBlind Community
- Arkansas Registry of Interpreters
- And...many deaf churches throughout the state



Schoolwide Decision Making Staff Opportunities

At Arkansas School for the Deaf, shared decision making is a collaborative process designed to improve the learning environment and impact student achievement. Overall, collaboration and teamwork is valued at ASD. We feel that multiple perspectives lead to richer decision-making and more effective practices.

Shared decision making occurs in the following ways:

Administrative (“A”) Team: This team includes the supervisors of all departments. This team meets with the Superintendent to report departmental news, collaborate on new initiatives, and to discuss best practices in leadership. This team meets every Thursday.

Educational Leadership Team: This team of administrators and lead teachers plans professional development, educational initiatives, and the ordering of learning resources. They also lead the curriculum development process. This team also discusses the detailed implementation plans of school improvement plans and looks closely at teaching and learning at ASD. This team meets every Wednesday.

Mental Health Team:

Our mental health team is comprised of members who focus on positive behavior interventions and support for our students, as well as monitor the interventions of student with mental health needs. This team reviews any red flag students and discuss current initiatives. This team meets every Thursday.

Safety Committee:

The ASD Safety Committee is comprised of staff members who help to maintain all aspects of health and safety on campus. Their focus on safety has had a positive impact on our school. Through their leadership, we now have many safety measures in place, including a visual alert system, fewer entrances, internal cameras, and external cameras. This team meets every other Tuesday.

PR & Media Team:

This team focuses on the public relations and media needs of the school. Topics for discussion include the website design, flyers for upcoming events, distribution of flyers, program brochures, and the semi-annual newsletter. It includes the Director of Technology, School designated Photographer, Media Specialist, Director of Communications and Superintendent. This team meets every Friday.

Technology Team:

This team focuses on the technology and 1:1 Laptop rollout throughout the school. Topics for discussion include 1:1 laptop rollout, internet issues, smartboards needing repair, etc. This team includes the Director of Technology, Principals, Media Specialist, Librarian, Director of Communications and Superintendent.

II. Purpose

MOTTO

Dream It! Believe It! Achieve It!

MISSION

The mission of Arkansas School for the Deaf is to empower Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing students to become highly effective communicators who are educated, motivated and independent. At ASD, students are transformed into confident young people inspired to achieve their goals with the skills to succeed in a competitive world.

VISION

Arkansas School for the Deaf is an inspired community committed to achievement, innovation, collaboration, and excellence.

Achievement

At ASD, students belong, excel and thrive. ASD prepares students from birth to age 21 to be college and career ready by ensuring students achieve the essential skills of a rigorous curriculum in a bilingual environment where ASL and English are equally valued.

Innovation

ASD implements bold and creative strategies, connecting ideas and technologies to meet the changing needs of our students, maximize their success, and enhance ASD's reputation as the Arkansas resource center on deafness, and a premier leader in bilingual education.

Collaboration

ASD nurtures interactions within our community, as well as creating partnerships locally and globally, to bring new opportunities to our students and to strengthen the future of ASD.

Excellence

ASD recognizes excellence as equipping a diverse community of promising young people to go out in the world with the confidence to lead lives of integrity, purpose and achievement in an increasingly global society.

WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT DEAF CHILDREN



Bilingual Belief Statements

Arkansas School for the Deaf is an accessible ASL/English bilingual community in which people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and hearing learn and work together without language and communication barriers. At Arkansas School for the Deaf, we have the following beliefs:

We recognize that students coming to Arkansas School for the Deaf have diverse cultures, backgrounds, and language abilities.

For some students, American Sign Language is their first language.

For some students, Spoken English is their first language.

For some students, another cultural signed or spoken language is their first language.

Some students come to ASD with no language.

We believe that American Sign Language and English are equal and separate languages. Both languages allow Deaf children the ability to access academic information, interact effectively with others, and express themselves creatively.

We believe that every student has a right to a language rich learning environment, where he/she has full access to clear communication and language.

We believe students need to learn how to interact successfully in both Deaf culture and hearing culture. Culture and identity development are important for every child to develop self-worth and self-confidence.

We believe Deaf students need real life exposure to experiences in order to increase their understanding of and ability to successfully interact in the hearing community.

We believe Deaf students need Deaf role models and experience in the Deaf community to increase their understanding and ability to successfully interact in the Deaf community.

We recognize and respect each student's individual needs and abilities. We believe that everyone is equal and important, regardless of hearing levels, their preferred communication mode, and their cultural identity

We believe that in order to optimize student achievement, Deaf children must have early exposure to a rich and comprehensive language. Therefore, it is our priority to:

- Meet these needs on our campus by providing programs, resources, and support to families of young Deaf children to foster their exposure to a full language.
- Meet these needs through a responsive and supported Statewide Services program.

2. Research shows that there are significant advantages to being bilingual, and we believe that Deaf children have a right to be bilingual.

- Students should have access to meaningful instruction in both ASL and English (written & spoken).
- Both languages should be equally celebrated, and students should be equally proud of their achievements in both languages.
- Gaining fluency in ASL has a positive impact on the language and conceptual development of all students. Students should have access to quality curriculum and instruction in the linguistic structure of ASL, designed to increase both incidental and academic ASL. Students should also have quality assessments to monitor their progress in acquiring language.
- Students with the ability to communicate through spoken English should receive quality instruction to increase their skills in both incidental and academic spoken English, as well as quality assessments to monitor their progress. Lip reading can also serve as an additional tool to increase the child’s communication opportunities.
- To the greatest extent possible, students from other cultural families, such as Spanish speaking families, should receive support for learning their family’s heritage language.
- Technological devices (hearing aids, cochlear implants, etc.) serve as tools to help students achieve more success in gaining listening and spoken English skills. We believe it is important to provide our students up-to-date information and support in accessing and maximizing the success of these tools. We respect students’ and families’ decisions to choose either to use or not to use technological devices.
- We believe Deaf students need strong English skills to function independently in a hearing world, and to maximize their future success. Mastery of written English includes both being able to read and comprehend complex texts and being able to express oneself through written English.

We believe that Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing children benefit from interaction with Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing peers and role models. Access to Deaf role models enhances their understanding of the language, culture, and gives them a view of what success looks like as a Deaf adult.

We believe that to successfully meet the diverse needs of future generations of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students, the following are essential:

- Comprehensive state-of-the-art classrooms, instructional strategies, and resources to maximize each student’s learning of ASL
- Comprehensive state-of-the-art classrooms, instructional strategies, and resources to maximize each student’s learning of English.

We, the staff and faculty of ASD, believe that to foster double pride in our students, we must first have double pride ourselves. We realize that it is essential that we have fluent skills in both our native and non-native languages to provide a high quality bilingual instructional environment.

CORE ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

STAFF:

Communication

- We believe good communication is multi-faceted and respectful.
- We establish clear communication channels so information is heard first hand, not through the “grapevine”.
- We work constantly to keep each other informed and connected.

Collaboration

- We work together as a team toward a common goal by utilizing each other’s expertise and talents.
- We are team players and know how to compromise. We don’t have a “my way or the highway” approach.
- We believe understanding multiple perspectives leads to better decision-making.

Respect

- We value different cultures, languages, and opinions. We continue to learn from each other.
- We treat each other professionally and with kindness, even when we don’t agree.
- We value each person regardless of their job title.

Open Minded

- We are receptive to new and different ideas, including those that necessitate leaving our comfort zone.
- We believe that by embracing change, rather than avoiding it, we have an opportunity to significantly improve our future.

Professional

- We maintain a positive image and attitude, acting in a professional & dignified manner – regardless of whether we are happy or we are not happy.
- We use good judgment and do what is right for each other and our students.
- We keep abreast of significant changes within our fields, and continually strive for excellence in all we do.

Support

- We focus on the good in ASD, our students and our colleagues.
- We are supportive and nurturing of each other. We support each other by being there to help, having each other’s back.
- We promote upbeat and positive thoughts for the future, and support each by believing in each other.

STUDENTS:

R - Responsibility

O - Organization

A - Achieving

R - Respect



What Makes Us Unique

Facts to Know:

- We are a Residential School
- 97% of our students have an IEP
- Many students enroll at ASD with little or no language
- Students receive education in their native language
 - direct communication in ASL and/or Sign Language
- Understanding of how Deaf students learn
 - Eye contact
 - Visual learning
 - Language differences
- Additional Services include
 - ECE-Early Childhood Education
 - ADCC- Arkansas Deaf Career Center
 - Statewide Services Outreach
- Services Communicating Directly with Students
 - Mental Health
 - Audiologists
 - Speech Language Pathologists
 - Physical & Occupational Therapists
 - Health Services including access to physician and dentist



Our Curriculum

To meet Arkansas State Standards, Arkansas School for the Deaf currently implements the following curricula:

Mathematics

- Envision Math, Arkansas state standards

English Language Arts

- Step Up To writing K-12
- Reading A-Z curriculum and materials for K-5, supplemental materials for 6-12
 - Science A-Z
 - Vocabulary A-Z
- Elementary- balanced literacy
 - Guided reading, shared reading, independent reading, phonological awareness (auditory and visual), fluency, comprehension, word study, reading and writing workshop
 - Centers
 - Scholastic book sets/Storia books
- Middle School Literacy - Daily-5 center
 - CAFE Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency and Expand Vocabulary
 - Literature circles
- HS Edge (literacy curriculum)
- HS Writing lab, student blogs

Science

- Elementary- adapting Springdale curriculum
- MS/HS Arkansas standards from NGSS currently looking for curriculum

Social Studies

- Arkansas Council for the Social Studies pacing guide
- MS/HS AR standards, teachers are currently researching new curriculum in the PLC collaborative teams with Solution Tree.



Progress Monitoring

At ASD, we monitor the progress of our students. We also give students opportunities to track their own progress. Progress monitoring efforts include:

Elementary and Middle School

- STAR math, STAR reading, Developmental Reading Assessment
- Reading A-Z benchmarks, running records
- SUTW assessments with rubric
- Group 2 and MS
 - Accelerated Reading and Math
 - Celebrations and rewards for progress and growth
- NWEA Map Testing
- IXL

High School

- Star Math and Star Reading Assessments
- Chunk testing
- Entrance and Exit tickets, poll everywhere self-assessment
- NWEA Map Testing
- IXL

Current School Initiatives

Professional Learning Communities

- Curriculum alignment & development
- Skills Checklists

Ready For Learning Plan – This consists of safety measures during Covid-19 including Virtual Learning.

Targeted Training – Professional Development based around the Science of Reading as well as Visual Phonics and Virtual Learning.



Pursuant to Act 35 of 2003, the Arkansas School for the Deaf (ASD) is releasing the following information regarding ASD programs, services, and student achievement for the 2019-2020 school year. Given small class size and grade-level enrollment figures, release of student test data is restricted due to concern that individual students could be identified. Therefore, the statistical results given should be interpreted with caution and with consideration of this and other special factors in mind.

During the 2019-2020 school year, Arkansas School for the Deaf students did not participate in the ACT Aspire testing at grades 3-10 because of the COVID-19 school closures. However, ASD students did participate in the Star Reading and Math. The scores are given in levels aligned to grade-level readiness are as follows: At/Above Benchmark, On Watch, Intervention, and Urgent Intervention.

No students at the Arkansas School for the Deaf are enrolled in advanced placement courses. Therefore, no advanced placement examinations were taken by students this year.

Five students completed their educational programs during the 2019-2020 school year, all of which graduated with diplomas. After graduation, sixty percent (60%) returned for post-secondary education with the 18-21yrs program at Arkansas Deaf Career Center and forty percent (40%) sought direct employment on their own after graduation.

Achievement is vitally important to the faculty and staff of ASD, and while there is continued effort to improve state-mandated assessment results, outcome data must be scrutinized in light of their applicability to our student population. The data obtained does not adequately represent the achievement or abilities of our students and shows less performance growth because it compares Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing students to their English speaking, hearing peers. The assessments required are not validated or normed on students who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing. Additionally, these English-based state assessments prove to be a challenge to not only ASD students but to Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing students across the nation.

