

Louisiana Special School District



District Report, 2021

Louisiana Special School District

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Superintendent's Message

It is an honor to serve the scholars and families of the Special School District (SSD). Together, with our families, stakeholders, and new Board of Directors, we will create life-changing opportunities and academic outcomes for scholars. The SSD team is committed to making visionary changes and improvements to the district to support the education of our scholars.

My vision for the SSD is an Education Without Limits. Education Without Limits is a shared vision where each individual learner's skills are respected and valued. To achieve this vision, a set of foundational commitments must be in place. These commitments include using actionable data to make informed decisions to drive academic achievement; providing educational equity and cultural responsiveness; and, striving for continuous improvement and collaboration.

The SSD is an educational service agency that oversees the Louisiana School for the Deaf, the Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired, and Special School Programs. We serve students with low incidence disabilities who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, Deafblind, blind, or visually impaired. We offer special education services to students in state facilities, and we offer outreach services in local school districts.

Modernizing the SSD by implementing transformational change will enhance these services. In turn, these enhancements will generate successful outcomes for our scholars as we focus our efforts on their success. Modernization of systems, social infrastructure, and key operational practices are major parts of the strategic plan designed for SSD's success.

This District Report provides information about the SSD. I hope this report is found to be resourceful as we work together to create a system where scholars can learn, grow, and enter the world of post-secondary education or the workforce successfully. The SSD is committed to an Education Without Limits!

Onward!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ernest E. Garrett III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a bold, slightly slanted font.

Superintendent Ernest E. Garrett, III
Louisiana Special School District

Historical Highlights of the Louisiana Schools for the Deaf and Visually Impaired

The Birth of LSDVI

1852 – General Assembly member Francis Dubose Richardson introduced a bill to provide \$25,000 and a seven-member Board of Administrators to oversee the Louisiana Institute for the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind. Some historical accounts state the school name was the Louisiana Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind.

1862 - During the Civil War, a Union gunboat fired a cannonball at the school. The principal and a matron ran out to the riverbank to alert the troops that they were firing upon a deaf school. The Union Army temporarily took over the school, using it as a hospital for federal soldiers.

1863 - Union soldiers seized Baton Rouge and again used the school as a temporary hospital. From 1863 to 1867, schooling continued. Throughout these four years, the soldiers provided food and fuel for the students while occupying the building.

Louisiana School for the Deaf

1885 – Superintendent John Jastremski appointed Edith S. Rambo as the first oral teacher.

1892 – The school expanded its print shop and sewing department and gave students an opportunity to learn carpentry, cabinet making, and glazing. The school introduced a shoe shop for more job skills training, and an articulation teacher joined the staff.

1908 - The school changed its name to Louisiana School for the Deaf.

Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired

1870 – The State School for the Blind established its own campus.

1978 – The State School for the Blind merged with the Southern State School for the Blind and its name changed to the Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired.

2009 – The school relocated to its current campus on Brightside Drive near LSU in Baton Rouge.



The original School for the Deaf (pictured above) was located just south of the LSU campus in Baton Rouge, where it stood for about 99 years. On July 21, 1857, an article in the Daily Gazette and Comet, the local newspaper, described the building as follows:

"Every citizen of the State who comes to the Capitol either on business or pleasure; should not fail to visit the proud monument to the Christian philanthropy of the Sugar Bowl State. There is no institute of a similar character in the Union of more beautiful proportions or greater extent. It stands out - on the landscape and is one of the first objects to strike the eye, either ascending or descending the river."

Segregation

1920 – Legislative Act No. 159 established a school for deaf and blind children of the “Negro” race. Located at Southern University in Baton Rouge, the school acted as a combination facility for both deaf and blind Black students until 1938.

1938 – Dr. Joseph S. Clark, then-president of Southern University and Superintendent of Schools for the Negro Blind and Negro Deaf, worked with then-State Superintendent of Education Thomas H. Harris to secure funding for a separate facility for deaf Black students. The 1920 legislation authorized construction of the building, but failed to provide funding for the project.

1978 – The Southern Schools for the Blind and Deaf merged with the State Schools for the Blind and Deaf.

2009 – The State School for the Blind relocated to Brightside Dr. in Baton Rouge and renamed to the Louisiana Schools for the Deaf and Visually Impaired.

Act 468 of the 2021 Regular Legislative Session

Gov. John Bel Edwards, in June 2021, signed legislation categorizing the Special School District as an independent state agency with oversight by a Board of Directors. Act 468 (HB 253), sponsored by Rep. Scott McKnight, passed through the Louisiana House of Representatives and the Louisiana Senate unanimously.

The law creates a 12-member Board of Directors. Eleven members are appointed by the Governor and are subject to Senate confirmation, while the 12th member is appointed by the President of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE).

Act 468 allows SSD to focus its attention on scholars. Prior to its passage, the Louisiana Department of Education partially controlled the SSD's budget, with some overlap of business and Human Resource functions. Consolidating the budgets and administrative functions will streamline services such as purchasing, contracts, and hiring of staff.

The law also includes the SSD in the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP), a formula established to determine what it costs to provide each Louisiana student with the minimum educational foundation necessary for future success. The calculation is then used to help distribute funds among parish, city, and other local school systems.

Inclusion in the MFP is important. When there are downturns in the state economy, the State General Fund — the SSD's main source of funding — is subject to budget cuts. Conversely, the MFP does not typically undergo budget cuts. There are other funding sources in the program, including Supplemental Course Allocation that can be used for career and technical training.

The concept for the bill stemmed from an independent evaluation of the SSD in 2017 commissioned by BESE and the Department of Education. The findings recommended the SSD to centralize its key system functions and organize in a way that supports effective operations.

The SSD will continue as an "Education Service Agency," a regional public multiservice administrative agency authorized in state law to develop, manage, and provide services of programs to local education agencies.

The Louisiana Schools for the Deaf and Visually Impaired will remain a "Local Education Agency," publically authorized by the state to provide primary and secondary education.

Act 468 allows SSD to focus on scholars and their academic success. The passage of this law provides the makeup of a state school district and a board with vested interest in the success and growth of SSD.

2020-2021 Directory of SSD Schools and Programs

School/Program	City	Supervising Agency	Facility Type	Services Provided	Funding Source
LA School for the Deaf	Baton Rouge	Special School District	Special School	Pre-K to 12 education	State General Fund
LA School for the Visually Impaired	Baton Rouge	Special School District	Special School	Pre-K to 12 education	State General Fund
Central Louisiana Supports & Services Center	Alexandria	LA Dept. of Health	Developmental and orthopedic care	Special Education	Interagency Transfer/ Medicaid
Pinecrest Supports and Services Center	Pineville	LA Dept. of Health	Mental Health Treatment	General and Special Education	Interagency Transfer
Swanson Center for Youth at Monroe (Southside Alternative High School)	Monroe	Office of Juvenile Justice	Juvenile Secure Care	Special Education	None
Pinehill Alternative High School	Columbia	Office of Juvenile Justice	Juvenile Secure Care	Special Education	None
Bridge City Center for Youth (Riverside Alternative High School)	Bridge City	Office of Juvenile Justice	Juvenile Secure Care	Special Education	None
Acadiana Center for Youth	Bunkie	Office of Juvenile Justice	Juvenile Secure Care	Special Education	None
David Wade Correctional Center	Homer	LA Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections	Adult Prison	General and Special Education	None
Louisiana State Penitentiary	Angola	LA Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections	Adult Prison	Special Education	None
Dixon Correctional Institute	Jackson	LA Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections	Adult Prison	Special Education	None
Elayn Hunt Correctional Center	St. Gabriel	LA Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections	Adult Prison	Special Education	None

School/Program	City	Supervising Agency	Facility Type	Services Provided	Funding Source
Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women	St. Gabriel	LA Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections	Adult Prison	Special Education	None
Raymond Laborde Correctional Center	Cottonport	LA Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections	Adult Prison	Special Education	None
B.B. Rayburn Correctional Center	Angie	LA Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections	Adult Prison	Special Education	None
Renaissance Home for Youth	Alexandria	Private facility, authorized by Dept. of Children and Family Services	Non-profit, juvenile detention (awaiting court)/group home (long-term)/shelter care (Short-term)	General and Special Education	None
Methodist Children's Home of Greater New Orleans	Mandeville	Private facility, authorized by Dept. of Children and Family Services	Juvenile Residential Care, short-term, long-term care.	General and Special Education	None
East Louisiana Mental Health System	Jackson	LA Dept. of Health	Mental Health Treatment	General and Special Education	None
SSD Outreach	Statewide	Special School District	As requested by schools	Special Education	None

Special School Programs

The Special School Programs (SSP) is responsible for ensuring the provision of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for students identified as requiring special education and related services. These students reside, both long-term and short-term, in facilities operated by various state agencies and private facilities. The SSP oversees the delivery of special education services at these facilities where teachers provide instruction.

In 2020-2021, SSD staff offered these special education services to 408 students in 16 facilities across the state, located as far north as Homer and as far south as Bridge City. All of the students provided with special education services took the LEAP Connect, a computer-based test provided in a one-to-one setting.

Students that were administered the TABE (Test of Adult Basic Educations), a diagnostic test used to determine a person's skill level and aptitude in reading, math, and English, achieved growth. Students at Renaissance Home for Youth achieved 29% growth in reading scores and 36% growth on math scores. At Southside and Pinehill Alternative High Schools, 75% of students are on track to graduating through the April Dunn Act, which establishes alternative pathways for grade promotion and graduation for students who have not passed standardized tests.

Alternative School Performance Scores

School/Program	Performance Score
Riverside Alternative High School (Bridge City Center for Youth)	42.8
Southside Alternative High School (Swanson Center for Youth at Monroe)	34.6

Alternative schools and programs only receive a performance score if there are 40 or more testing units given.

Louisiana Schools for the Deaf and Visually Impaired

Performance Scores

The Louisiana Schools for the Deaf and Visually Impaired receive school performance scores from the Louisiana Department of Education through the state accountability system approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). The performance scores from the 2011-2012 school year to the 2019-2020 school year are listed below:

School Performance Scores by School Year									
School	*2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	**2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
LSD	42.8	15.8	21.8	26.6	21.3	20	37.6/29.5	32.8	N/A
LSVI	43.9	31.4	49.1	44.1	43.8	43.8	59.4/57.2	***N/A	N/A

*The 2011-2012 school year used a 200-point scale. In 2012-2013, the scale changed to a 150-point scale.

**During the 2018 Regular Legislative Session, Sen. Dan “Blade” Morrish authored Act 522 (R.S. 17:10.1) which requires side-by-side reporting of performance scores when there is any significant change in the criteria, methodology, or manner in calculating and determining school and district performance scores. The first score reflects what the performance score would be under the old calculations and the second is the score under the new calculations.

***In 2018, BESE made changes to the accountability system to align with the state’s Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan. One of those changes was to require a minimum of 120 testing units in any combination of LEAP 2025, LEAP Connect, English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) or ACT assessments. Due to this change, the Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired has not received a school performance score since the 2017-2018 school year.

COVID-19 and Performance Scores

Gov. John Bel Edwards, using executive privilege during a state emergency, declared on March 13, 2020, that all public schools shall close to contain the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. Students in Louisiana missed end-of-year assessments, causing an absence of school and district performance scores for the school year. School and district performance scores were waived by the U.S. Department of Education for the 2019-2020 school year.

In the 2020-2021 school year, as the COVID-19 pandemic continued, many school systems allowed students to learn virtually from their homes. LSDVI continued to house some students, but many participated in distance learning in compliance with social distancing rules for safety.

The Louisiana Department of Education has sought another waiver from the U.S. Department of Education on the distribution of performance scores for the 2020-2021 school year. School and district performance scores dropped across the state and in the U.S. because of the pandemic and quarantining protocols.

The pandemic also shined a light on the lack of reliable internet access across the country, particularly in rural areas, as students were sent to virtual classrooms. In Louisiana, many parishes also faced challenges with hurricanes and severe weather that destroyed their schools, businesses, and homes, forcing many students to other schools or school systems.

Assessments – LEAP 2025

Since 2012, BESE has been raising the bar to encourage higher academic attainment so students are college and career ready upon graduating high school. Students take the LEAP 2025 state assessments. There are five scoring elements a student may achieve on the LEAP assessment:

- **Unsatisfactory** – Students performing at this level have not yet met the college and career readiness expectations, and will need much support to be prepared for the next level of studies in this content area.
- **Approaching Basic** – Students performing at this level have partially met college and career readiness expectations, and will need much support to be prepared for the next level of studies in this content area.
- **Basic** – Students performing at this level have nearly met college and career readiness expectations, and may need additional support to be fully prepared for the next level of studies in this content area.
- **Mastery (Proficient)** - Students performing at this level have met college and career readiness expectations, and are prepared for the next level of studies in this content area.
- **Advanced (Proficient)** – Students performing at this level have exceeded college and career readiness expectations, and are well prepared for the next level of studies in this content area.

Achieving a score of “Basic” used to be considered proficiency for students in Louisiana. However, other states raised their performance level for proficiency to “Mastery.” This meant that students from other states were learning more than basic grade-level academic skill sets. When students across the United States take the National Assessment of Educational Progress exam (NAEP), Louisiana students traditionally score lower than their peers. BESE decided to

raise the bar and Louisiana students now strive for “Mastery” or “Advanced” to be college and career ready.

Louisiana’s accountability system was designed for students to use curriculum and instructional materials that align to the Louisiana Student Standards (LSS) with the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) exams measuring student knowledge of those grade-level expectations.

ACT/WorkKeys Scores

Since 2013, Louisiana has offered high school juniors the ACT free of charge as a graduation requirement and an assessment included when factoring school and district performance scores. The ACT is an entrance exam used by most colleges and universities to make admissions decisions. The exam consists of five sections: English, Math, Reading, Science, and Writing (optional). The maximum composite score one may earn is 36. The average composite score is 21. The average composite score in Louisiana for the 2020-2021 school year was 18.4.

For purposes of accountability scores, current policy allows students to use their highest composite score earned by grade 12. The ACT WorkKeys assessment became a part of the component index in the 2015-2016 school year, and students are eligible to use their WorkKeys score if they achieve a higher index on WorkKeys than on the ACT for school accountability purposes.

WorkKeys assesses a variety of foundational workplace skills required for students to be successful. Students may earn a Platinum, Gold, or Silver score on the assessment, and may earn the National Career Readiness Certificate upon completion.

Graduation Statistics

School	% TOPS University Diploma	% TOPS Tech Jump Start Career Diploma	% Alternate Assessment – Jump Start Career Diploma
Louisiana School for the Deaf	31%	56%	13%
Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired	0%	80%	20%

The April Dunn Act was applied to 60% of the TOPS University diploma graduates and 100% to the TOPS Tech Jump Start Career diploma graduates.

The April Dunn Act, signed into law as Act 833 of the 2014 Regular Legislative Session, provides a pathway to graduation for certain students with disabilities. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) allows students with disabilities to take specialized courses to complete one of two graduation pathways: TOPS University or Jump Start TOPS Tech. The diploma is identical to the high school diploma students receive when completing a pathway in accordance with the state standards.

Students at the high school level who are assessed on Louisiana Alternate Assessment Level 1 (LAA 1) can pursue a diploma pathway by meeting alternate requirements.

Scholars enrolled in LSDVI often enter with language acquisition deficits due to their unique disabilities of deafness, hard-of-hearing, and/or visual impairment or blindness. They require skillsets such as learning and becoming proficient in American Sign Language (ASL), Braille and/or assistive technologies to aid in language skills.

Louisiana School for the Deaf

LSD received a school performance score of 32.8 (F) for the 2018-2019 school year, the last year with data available because of the pandemic. LSD's Student Progress score was a "B" (86). Student Progress measures the rate at which students are progressing toward mastering the key skills they need to be successful in the next grade level. This rating recognizes student growth achievement throughout the year, rather than just recognizing student performance on end-of-year assessments.

The school received approximately \$11,700 per pupil to educate students in SY 2018-2019. The average ACT composite score for LSD was 14. Fewer than 5% of students earned a "Gold" on WorkKeys or an average composite score of 21 on the ACT, and 65% of students completed their FAFSA. The state average ACT composite in SY 2018-2019 was 18.9. The state average for FAFSA completion was 85%.

Academics

The LSD uses Tier 1 curriculum across core content areas along with high-quality assessments used to inform daily instruction. All scholars learn American Sign Language (ASL) as part of their language acquisition. The LSD offers state-approved skills certificates in:

- Construction - NCCER
- Information Technology
- Graphic Arts or Digital Media Arts
- Automotive Services under Transportation, Distribution and Logistics
- Hospitality and Tourism (Customer Services and ProStart for Culinary Arts)
- Agriscience

Extracurricular Activities

The LSD offers several extracurricular activities to its scholars. Sports such as football, basketball, volleyball, cheer, track and field, and powerlifting give scholars an opportunity for physical education and sportsmanship. Scholars may also participate in the theatre program or Academic Bowl once they reach high school.

Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired

LSVI has not received a school performance score since the 2017-2018 school year due to the lack of testing units required. To receive a school performance score, there must be 120 testing units. LSVI enrollment includes approximately 70-80 students. The last performance score received was a 57.2 (D). The school received an "A" for student progress. Student Progress measures the rate at which students are progressing toward mastering the key skills they need to be successful in the next grade level.

Academics

LSVI strives to empower blind and visually impaired scholars through educational experiences that foster the development of skills, knowledge, and character needed to lead independent and fulfilling lives.

LSVI provides Tier 1 curriculum in core content that aligns to the Louisiana State Standards. Additionally, LSVI provides expanded core classes to incorporate Braille, assistive technology, orientation and mobility, and life and self-advocacy skills to promote independence and prepare scholars for post-secondary success.

LSVI offers the following programs for career opportunities:

- Information Technology
- Automobile Service Repair
- Hospitality/Tourism, Culinary and Retail
- Digital Media and Entertainment Technology
- Agriculture Technology

Extracurricular Activities

At LSVI, scholars can participate in music, wrestling, cheer, powerlifting, and track. The school also celebrates White Cane Day and holds the Braille Challenge where scholars can show off their reading skills.

Special School District Enrollment for the 2020-2021 School Year

Enrollment counts:

School/Program	October 1 count, 2020-2021 School Year	February 1 count, 2020-2021 School Year	Difference
LA School for the Deaf	97	103	+6
LA School for the Visually Impaired	61	69	+8
LA School for the Deaf Parent-Pupil Education Program (PPep)	203	214	+11
LA School for the Visually Impaired Outreach	72	92	+20

Special School Programs served 408 students for the 2020-2021 school year. **Total – 886.**

Enrollment by grade level:

Schools	Grade Level	Enrollment, 2020-2021 School Year	Cumulative Enrollment 2020-2021
Louisiana School for the Deaf	PreK-5	31	103
	6-8	24	
	9-12	48	
Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired	PreK-5	29	72
	6-8	13	
	9-12	30	

Enrollment by gender:

Gender	Percentage
Male	74%
Female	26%

Enrollment by Ethnicity:

Ethnicity	Percentage
Black/African American	59.6%
White	35.6%
Hispanic	3.1%
Asian	.8%
Native American	.67%

Special School District Employee Demographics for the 2020-2021 School Year

The Special School District employed 351 staff professionals for the 2020-2021 school year. The statistics on those employees are provided in the tables below.

Staff Professional Education Level:

Certification and Educational Level Attained	LSD	LSVI	Shared Services
Teachers with Certification	46	37	11
Educational Level Attained			
Total Degrees (All Listed below)	47	42	28
Associate in Arts	7	0	2
Baccalaureate	15 (+10*)	13 (+2*)	3 (+12*)
Ph.D.	3	0	1
Education Specialist (EDs)	0	2	2
Master's	22 (+6*)	20 (+2*)	5 (+3*)
Master's +30	4	3	0

**non teacher positions*

Age of Staff:

Age Range	LSD %	LSVI%	Shared%
18-24	5%	2%	3%
25-39	42%	37%	17%
40-60	44%	46%	59%
61-70	8%	12%	21%
70 +	1%	3%	0

Race of Staff:

Race	Percentage
African American	41%
Asian	1%
White	53%
No Answer	5%

Gender of Staff:

Gender	Percentage
Male	25%
Female	75%

Staff with Disability:

Nineteen percent of the staff have a disability. Of those 19%, the disabilities are as follows:

Type of Disability	Percentage
Deaf or Hard of Hearing	99%
Blind or Visually Impaired	1%

Student Support Services

Accessible Educational Materials Center

The Accessible Educational Materials (AEM) Center provides accessible materials and equipment to students at the SSD and across the state. These materials include Braille books/documents, large print materials, and electronic publications.

During the 2020-2021 school year, AEM distributed over 2,700 materials designed for training, assistive technology, and technical support for students and educators.

The AEM Center staff collaborated with the Department of Public Safety and Corrections to develop a Transcribing Certification course for incarcerated individuals to become certified in creating Braille materials. There are currently 20 individuals in the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled's Transcribing Certificate program. Upon completion of the course, individuals will be qualified to create Braille as a career post-incarceration. The national average annual salary for a Braille transcriber in the U.S. is \$42,875.

AEM also provides onsite training and embedded coaching with local education agencies contracted through the Partnership of Success Vendor Guide with the Louisiana Department of Education.

Exceptional Service Supports (ESS)

The ESS team provides assessment services for students who are identified or suspected to have low incidences disabilities, including those who are deaf, blind, hard-of-hearing or visually impaired. The staff offers statewide support services and provides assessment services to referred students from local education agencies, charter schools and non-public schools throughout the state.

Student Health Center

The LSDVI campus houses a student health center operated by licensed nurses 24 hours a day while school is in session and during special weekend events. Staff treats minor illnesses, makes appropriate medical referrals when necessary, provides a system for managing crisis medical situations and emergencies, provides mandated school screenings, and develops and maintains Health Care Plans for students based on their individual needs.

The Student Health Center nursing staff play an instrumental part in keeping scholars and staff safe and healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nurses act quickly in identifying individuals who contract the COVID-19 virus and conduct contact tracing and quarantine measures to prevent spreading the virus to others.

The Student Health Center recently underwent renovations to modernize and make better use of the center for scholars needing healthcare.

SHC Beds



Student Health Center Check-in/Waiting Room



Security and Operations

The SSD employs security staff who work on campus to ensure the physical safety of scholars and staff. The security staff works with all departments and are available day and night to maintain oversight and reporting of all campus events.

Operations staff are responsible for maintaining the buildings and grounds at the SSD. The 116-acre campus, equipped with multiple buildings, requires consistent monitoring and maintenance. The staff is responsible for the grounds and landscaping as well as the cleaning and maintenance of all buildings. During the pandemic, the staff played an instrumental role in keeping people and the campus safe — and sanitized!

Dormitory Services

Living in a dorm setting requires scholars to exhibit self-discipline, independence, and a high degree of personal responsibility. The residential program is geared toward promoting scholars' personal growth and needs during the after-school hours based on the collaboration of school and dorm staff.

The residential program highlights student support mechanisms such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS), and Learn, Experience, Achieve & Do (LEAD) Community life skills and other components that lead to independent living. After-school counseling, nine-week theme workshops, awareness weeks, and after-school activities are also available.

In the last year, the SSD staff began updating the residential dorms. The dorms were freshly painted in fun colors for scholars. New, longer beds for the middle and high school scholars were purchased so their feet no longer hang off the end. All dorms received new curtains and bed coverings. The furniture is being replaced with colorful and fun, modern furniture. In the future, the floors will be replaced. These changes make scholars feel more like they are "at home" while they continue their educational instruction.

Boys Remodeled Dorm, LSVI



Girls Remodeled Dorm, LSD



Nutrition

The Food Service staff prepares breakfast, lunch, and dinner each day. These meals include a variety of fruits and vegetables, as well as proteins and other foods that promote a healthy diet. Nutritious and healthy meals provide scholars with the fuel they need to be their best both in and out of the classroom. Weekly meal menus are posted on the LSD and LSVI websites so parents can see the meal options served to their children when they attend school.

After-School/Summer Programs

The SSD offers after-school programs to scholars, including both academic tutoring and athletics. Scholars may receive assistance in Braille, assistive technology, and expanded core concepts, as well as participate in school-sponsored sports.

During the summer, scholars are offered instruction with Tier 1 curriculum that aligns with the Louisiana State Standards. Scholars were offered a robust summer program in June of 2021 to make-up for learning loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fiscal Operations

Act 468 of the 2021 Regular Legislative Session, authored by Rep. Scott McKnight, categorized the SSD as an independent state agency. Prior to the passage of this law, the SSD budget fell under agency code 19-699 in the appropriations bill under the Louisiana Department of Education. The Schools for the Deaf and Visually Impaired were listed under agency code 19-653, classified under Special Schools and Commissions. Combining the two agencies (SSD and LSDVI) necessitated a new agency code, designated as 19-656 under Special Schools and Commissions in the appropriations budget.

The majority of funds currently appropriated to the SSD are state general funds. There are also interagency transfers and self-generated funds in the SSD budget. The total budget allocated to the SSD for Fiscal Year 2021-2022 is \$33,767,167. The fiscal year for the state of Louisiana begins on July 1 and ends on June 30. There is often a lag of budgetary services and purchasing, other than payroll, during the latter part of July and the month of August each year in order to close out the previous fiscal year and prepare the budget for the following fiscal year. This time to close out the previous fiscal year and prepare for the new fiscal year is required of all state agencies by the Legislative Fiscal Office in order to balance the budget.

Since the SSD's annual budget is appropriated by the legislature, the funds must be spent in accordance to the legislation's budget allocation. The majority of these funds are dedicated to employee salaries and the number of positions the SSD can hire is listed in the budget.

Act 468 requires the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to include the SSD in the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) formula. Act 468 made it through the legislative process after the MFP senate concurrent resolution, SCR 21 by Sen. Cleo Fields. Therefore, the SSD was not included in the MFP for the 2021-2022 school year. The SSD is expected to be included for school year 2022-2023.