Annual Report
2013–2014

Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired

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Sally Gittinger
Administrator

In Collaboration with the Nebraska Department of Education and Educational Service Unit 4
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Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired
Overall Rating of NCECBVI Programs and Services

In this year’s annual report, data charts are included which have been collected from a variety of stakeholders at each workshop and events throughout the year. In addition to the annual data provided, charts have been included that show trend data over a number of years.

As NCECBVI and ESU 4 mission statements are to improve student learning through a commitment to communication, accountability and leadership, we believe this is important information to share with stakeholders, students, parents and educators statewide.

At each activity, participants are asked to rate their overall satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 4 with 4 meaning “excellent” or “strongly agree” and 1 meaning “poor” or “strongly disagree.” This is the information shared in this report. NCECBVI also collects more information related to specific activities, ideas on how to improve services, professionalism and timeliness. Overall, NCECBVI received high ratings on all programs and services this school year.
ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION SERVICES

Outreach staff traveled statewide to the following local school districts to provide a variety of assessments in areas such as functional low vision, technology, daily living skills, learning media, and functional environment.

29 assessments were provided  
29 students received assessments  
11 school districts received these services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessments and Evaluations Provided at LEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04-05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comprehensive evaluations were provided at the Center for students who stayed on campus, varying from one day to three days.

8 students received on-campus services  
6 school districts received these services

Outreach Assessment Rating 2013-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication prior to assessment:</th>
<th>Organization/Scheduling:</th>
<th>Professionalism of NCCBI staff:</th>
<th>Response time for services:</th>
<th>Usefulness of information provided:</th>
<th>Response time of written report:</th>
<th>Helpfulness of written report:</th>
<th>Rapport with the school and family:</th>
<th>Overall Rating of Survey:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: 1-Poor; 2-Fair; 3-Good; 4 Excellent
ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION SERVICES CONTINUED

31 students attended the low vision clinics
17 school districts received these services

Low Vision Clinics: The Nebraska Children’s Low Vision Clinics were held at NCECBVI in November and January. Services and assessments were provided in the area of optometry and neuro-ophthalmology. These clinics provided parents, teachers, and students an opportunity to work directly with the medical personnel and specialists to receive valuable information regarding the student’s vision and how the environment can be adapted to enhance visual learning.

Key: 1-Poor; 2-Fair; 3-Good; 4 Excellent
INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT

The Nebraska Instructional Resource Center (NIRC), located at NCECBVI, provided services related to the provision of adapted instructional materials for visually impaired students in Nebraska. These requests are made by special education consultants, teachers of the visually impaired, principals, superintendents, educational service unit personnel, and special agency personnel. NIRC also serves as a liaison with the American Printing House for the Blind, Louisville, Kentucky.

397 legally blind students registered in Nebraska
139 school districts received these services

Allen  Fremont  Papillion-LaVista
Alliance  Friend  Plattsmouth
Arlington  Fullerton  Ralston
Ashland-Greenwood  Gering  Ravenna
Auburn  Gibbon  Raymond Central
Aurora  Grand Island  St. Cecilia (Adams)
Bayard  Greeley-Wolbach  Schuyler
Beatrice  Gretna  Scottsbluff
Bellevue  Hastings  Scribner-Snyder
Bennington  Hay Springs  Seward
Blair  Humboldt-Table Rock  Sidney
Blue Hill  Kearney  South Sioux City
Boone Central  Lakeview  Southwest
Bridgeport  Lincoln  Springfield Platteview
Broken Bow  Louisville  Sterling
Callaway  Loup County  Superior
Cedar Rapids  Madison  Syracuse
Centennial  McCook  Umo Ho Nation
Central City  McCool Junction  Valentine
Chase County  Millard  Wahoo
Columbus  Minden  Wakefield
Conestoga  NCECBVI  Waverly
Cozad  NE Unified District 1  Wayne
Crete  Neligh-Oakdale  West Boyd
David City  Newman Grove  West Holt
East Butler  Norfolk  Westside Community
Elkhorn  Norris  Wilcox-Hildreth
Eustis-Farnam  North Bend  Wood River
Exeter-Milligan  North Platte  Wynot
Fairbury  Oakland Craig  York
Falls City  Omaha  Yutan

During the 2007-2008 school year, NCECBVI requested school districts to also register their partially sighted students. In the 2014 registry, we have 480 partially sighted students from 139 school districts. These students are in addition to the blind/legally blind students registered in the federal quota program.

The total number served is 877 students from 139 school districts.
### Nebraska Instructional Resource Center—Registered Students in Nebraska

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Blind/Legally Blind</th>
<th>Partially Sighted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>384</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>389</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>391</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>409</td>
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<td>2001</td>
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<td>2002</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>423</td>
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<td>2004</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>442</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>439</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Nebraska Instructional Resource Center 2013-2014

- **3.82** NIRC’s Impact on student Educational Success:
- **3.86** Helpfulness of NIRC staff:
- **3.78** Timeliness of delivery of materials:
- **3.73** Overall Satisfaction:

One survey participant reported, “Without the braille materials, our students who need braille would have very little access to educational materials.”

**Key:** 1-Poor; 2-Fair; 3-Good; 4 Excellent
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

NCECBVI hosted the annual Fall Foliage Conference in October. This conference focused on products and services offered through the American Printing House for the Blind (APH). Kerry Isham presented an overview of APH and Dr. Derrick Smith presented “Adding It Up and Multiplying the Opportunities; Strategies for Teaching Math to Students with Visual Impairments.”

54 people attended this conference

The annual Spring Fling Conference was held at NCECBVI in March. Mary Nelle McLennan, American Printing House for the Blind, presented “Getting It Together ASAP: Developing Organizational Skills in Visually Impaired Learners” on day one and “Hat Tricks: The Roles We Wear as Professionals” on day two. Lou Tutt, Executive Director of AER, gave an overview of the organization to participants, while Teresa Coonts from Nebraska Department of Education, led a discussion about the verification of students who are blind or visually impaired.

49 teachers and support staff attended

NCECBVI outreach staff provided a “Learning Media Assessment (LMA) Workshop.” This presentation broke down the LMA into smaller pieces. They looked at various formats of assessments, considered the “must haves” and assisted teachers in creating a portfolio of resources to enable them to make appropriate decisions for students.

37 people attended this workshop

NCECBVI provided A Workshop for Paraeducators (and Teachers) of Students with Visual Impairments in January. The NCECBVI outreach team developed this workshop and traveled to ESU 7 in Columbus to provide this offering for staff in that region. Participants learned strategies for working with students in daily living activities, technology and more. They gained information about creative ways to adapt materials for students. Participants had opportunities to ask questions and share information with their peers.

25 people attended this workshop

The NCECBVI Outreach Team offered a webinar “Literacy for Students with Cortical Visual Impairments (CVI).” This was a 2 hour online course that provided individuals with practical strategies for building literacy skills for students with CVI and other neurological disorders. Participants were able to explore a leveled approach that uses a variety of techniques to build literacy skills for their students throughout the school day.

25 people registered for the webinar
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

NCECBVI coordinated with ESU 10 to provide the webinar “Evernote”. It was presented by a Teacher of the Visually Impaired in ESU 10 and provided an overview of this online software/app designed for notetaking and file organization.

7 people participated in the webinar

The Vision Workshop was held at one school district to offer basic information regarding education students with visual impairments. Participants learned strategies for working with students in living activities, technology and more. They gained information about creative ways to adapt materials for students. Participants had opportunities to ask questions and share information with their peers.

24 people participated in this workshop

“Regional Conversations to Discuss Best practices for Students with Visual Impairments” meetings were held two times during the school year; once in the fall and again in the spring and facilitated by the NCECBVI Outreach Department staff members. These meetings were held to provide an opportunity for professional development for all Teachers of the Visually Impaired across Nebraska, through conversation guided by an agenda as well as the needs of the group. Teachers of the Visually Impaired came together from the region to share ideas and resources for best practices for teaching students with vision impairments, problem-solve, discuss pertinent topics in the area of vision impairments, and learn about upcoming professional development opportunities. These conversations were held in Kearney, Lincoln, Norfolk, Omaha, and Scottsbluff.

The NCECBVI Outreach Department offered a Mentoring Program for Teachers of the Visually Impaired in regards to the professional development training needs assessed by the Teachers of the Visually Impaired and the Outreach Consultant. The NCECBVI Outreach Team also partnered with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln VI Program to assist with mentoring/supervising student teachers. The NCECBVI outreach staff members mentored teachers from the following: Aurora, ESU 10, Fullerton, Millard and Omaha.

NCECBVI hosted teachers enrolled in the vision endorsement program through the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Teachers from Nebraska and Kansas participated in the course, Orientation and Mobility, and stayed on campus.
**Nebraska Deaf-Blind Project:** During the 2013-14 school year, NCECBVI partnered with the Nebraska Department of Education in providing statewide deaf-blind services. The NCECBVI Outreach Director served as Project Coordinator. Activities included:

- Hosted the DB Advisory Meetings
- Held numerous planning meeting for implementation of grant to be implemented through NCECBVI/ESU4
- Promoted DB activities and services at NASES meetings and in statewide communication with teachers and administrators
- Attended the Deaf/Hard of Hearing SEAC meetings
- Updated brochures and implemented new website
- Implemented new registration process for annual DB Summer Institute at UNL
- Planned, promoted and assisted with DB Summer Institute at UNL

### Professional Development and Training 2013-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall Foliage Conference</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Fling Conference</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Media Assessment Workshop</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para &amp; Teacher Workshop</td>
<td>3.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision Workshop</td>
<td>3.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key:** 1- Poor, 2- Fair, 3- Good, 4- Excellent
CONSULTATION SERVICES

NCECBVI outreach staff attended individual education planning meetings, multi-disciplinary team meetings, and individual family service planning meetings statewide.

33 meetings were attended
31 students were served
8 school districts received these services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outreach Staff Attending Student Meetings at LEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>03-04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 meetings for 21 students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NCECBVI outreach staff provided on-site observations/program consultations at the local school district, home environment, and/or community setting.

172 consultations were provided
40 students were served
10 school districts received these services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outreach Staff Provided Consultations at LEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>03-04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162 consults for 39 students</td>
</tr>
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</table>
**CENTER-BASED PROGRAM AND RESIDENTIAL SERVICES**

NCECBVI provides a variety of educational programs within the center-based school setting. NCECBVI worked closely with each student’s local school district to determine course credit and assessment needs. Residential services are also offered at NCECBVI which provides a comprehensive program for students with extended training opportunities in the area of independent living skills.

**19 center-based school students**
**9 of the center-based students received residential services**
**12 school districts received these services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Center-Based Enrolled Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>03-04</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** This data does not reflect the number of students graduating, exiting or returning to their local school district as well as the number of new students enrolling each year.
**Key:**

1-Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3-Agree, 4-Strongly Agree
**Key:**
1-Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3-Agree, 4-Strongly Agree
STUDENT AND FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

NCECBVI sponsored the 8th annual Braille Challenge on campus. Students were invited from Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota to participate and celebrate literacy, reward academic competition and to encourage all Braille-reading students to excel and to believe in their vision for the future. This national event was sponsored by the Braille Institute of America. Students competed in various events such as spelling, reading comprehension, proofreading, and speed and accuracy. One Nebraska student earned a trip to the national completion due to her high score. This event was held in June in Los Angeles, and NCECBVI sponsored this student and parent to attend.

26 students participated from 14 schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Braille Challenge Students</th>
<th>06-07</th>
<th>07-08</th>
<th>08-09</th>
<th>09-10</th>
<th>10-11</th>
<th>11-12</th>
<th>12-13</th>
<th>13-14</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students</td>
<td>students</td>
<td>students</td>
<td>students</td>
<td>students</td>
<td>students</td>
<td>students</td>
<td>students</td>
<td>students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In June, 59 students from the United States and Canada participated in the 2014 National Braille Challenge in Los Angeles, California, at the Braille Institute of America. These students placed as finalists in their regional Braille Challenge in such skill areas as speed and accuracy, proofreading, chart and graph reading, and reading comprehension. A student from Syracuse, Nebraska qualified to attend this national competition as a guest of the Braille Institute and NCECBVI. This student and her family enjoyed the competition, the awards ceremony and the many honors and activities provided. Sally Giittinger, NCECBVI Campus Administrator, now serves on the advisory committee for the Braille Challenge and was honored to be in attendance to support our Nebraska student.
NCECBVI hosted “Candy Land Prom.” Special education students were invited to attend from school districts in the ESU 4 area. This overnight experience included a social skills workshop, formal dinner, limo rides, a prom/dance, and the crowning of a king and queen.

![Prom Student Survey 2013-2014](image)

**Key:**
1-Strongly disagree,
2-Disagree,
3-Agree,
4-Strongly agree

The *Sizzlin’ Summer Camp* was provided for school-aged children with visual impairments. The theme of the week was “Ocean Commotion”. The NCECBVI teachers and staff, along with the assistance of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Vision Endorsement student teachers, developed lessons and activities which included the core and expanded core curriculum. Students gained new experiences, learned and applied social skills, made new friends, participated in various community experiences, and applied their daily living skills.

**20 students participated from 14 school districts**

![Summer Camp Student Survey 2013-2014](image)

**Key:**
1-Strongly disagree,
2-Disagree,
3-Agree,
4-Strongly agree
NCECBVI hosted the **Family Feud Weekend** in June. A variety of informational sessions were provided for parents along with a weekend full of opportunities for networking between families. The students enjoyed a variety of arts and crafts activities, water fun in the sun, and snacks and games.

**5 families attended from 4 school districts**

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**Family Weekend Parent Survey 2013-2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Night of Arrival:</th>
<th>Sessions with Jayme Alexander</th>
<th>Final Parent Session</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key:**
1-Poor
2-Good
3-Fair
4-Excellent

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**Family Weekend Student & Sibling Survey 2013-2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Night of Arrival:</th>
<th>Morning Activities (Saturday):</th>
<th>Afternoon Activities (Saturday):</th>
<th>Morning Activities (Sunday):</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUMMARY: NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED

Outreach Services
(Assessments, Evaluations, Planning Meetings, and Consultations)
51 Students
18 School Districts

Nebraska Instructional Resource Center
397 Blind/Legally Blind Students
480 Partially Sighted Students
139 School Districts

Center-Based Program
19 Students
12 School Districts
OTHER NOTES OF INTEREST

2013-2014 Theme

“Winning Team”– served as the year’s theme. Theme ideas were implemented into staff meetings, building decorations, and various activities with the students.

A Winning Team

Through every curve and straightaway,
A powerful force propels us past the competition. Teamwork is that accelerator,
fueling us on the fast-track to success like a well-oiled machine. Because we all work together, there are no limits to how far we can go!
When we win, we win as a team!

NCECBVI staff members attended the national meetings for the Council of Schools for the Blind and the American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville, Kentucky. Joan Schroeder, Homelife Supervisor, received national recognition as the 2013 Outstanding Residential Life Staff Member.

NCECBVI staff and students celebrated White Cane Day in October. Cargill Cares Education Committee sponsored t-shirts for the day. Employees from Cargill came to NCECBVI to celebrate with the students. The employees were given numerous tasks to do under blindfold to simulate various visual impairments. Cargill served as a great partner for this event.

NCECBVI hosted a graduation program and party for 3 students who completed their educational program. A representative from their resident school districts participated in the ceremony to present them with their diplomas.

The NCECBVI Go To Crew (administrative team) participated in the annual ESU 4/NCECBVI Data Retreat. The retreat provided staff the opportunity to review data and base decision making around the data that we collect.
ESU 4/NCECBVI VISION STATEMENT

_Courageously leading a dynamic revolution in education._

NCECBVI MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of NCECBVI is to improve the learning of children who are blind or visually impaired through a commitment to communication, accountability, and leadership.

NCECBVI BELIEF STATEMENTS

We believe, as advocates for children who are blind or visually impaired, that …

- Communication is key to effectiveness.
- Honest, accurate, and accessible communication enables quality statewide services.
- Effective partnerships between families and professionals ensure accountability.
- All children must have meaningful experiences and appropriate services.
- Local, state, and national leadership is essential in developing and providing educational best practices.

May, 2007

ESU 4 MISSION STATEMENT

Impacting student learning through communication, accountability and leadership.

January, 2014