Iowa Education for Deaf & Blind NEWS

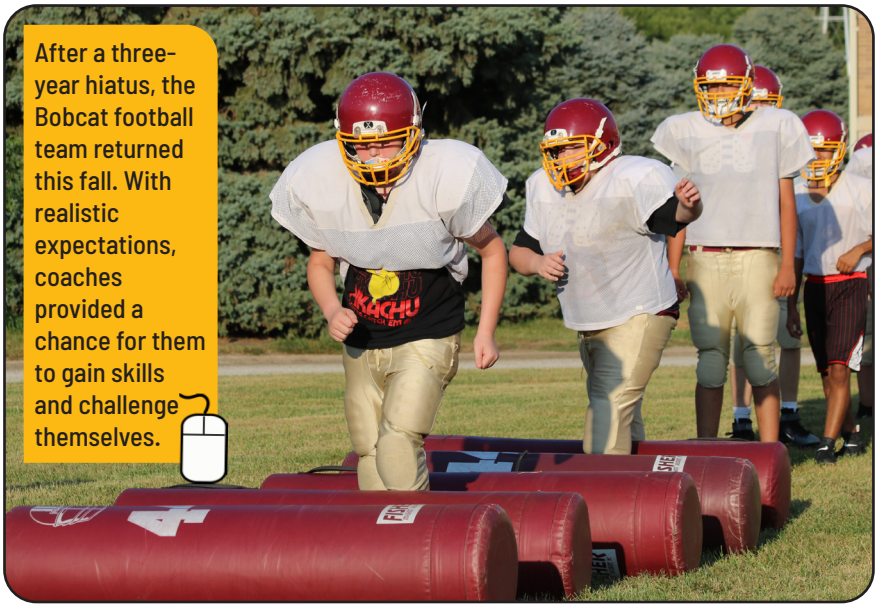
FALL 2023 • Iowa Educational Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired (IESBVI) • Iowa School for the Deaf (ISD)

Football returns to Iowa School for the Deaf

It's not whether you win or lose but **if** you get to play the game.

ISD's six-man football team rose again this fall after a pause due to a dip in enrollment and the pandemic. Twelve eager players took to the field and were missing only one important element: experience. Some didn't even know the rules of the game.

What the team didn't lack was direct communication with their coaches and each other through sign language. Learn the boys' perspectives and coach's goals for the season by clicking the mouse icon near the yellow box.

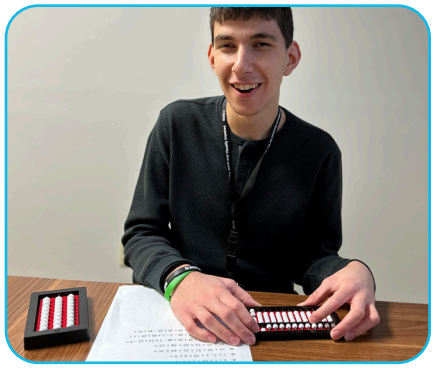


After a three-year hiatus, the Bobcat football team returned this fall. With realistic expectations, coaches provided a chance for them to gain skills and challenge themselves.

Click the mouse icon throughout the newsletter for more story details, or visit iesbvi.org and iowaschoolforthedeaf.org news pages. American Sign Language versions are added when available.

Abacus Bee challenges IESBVI student skills

Iowa is one of six competition sites in the nation

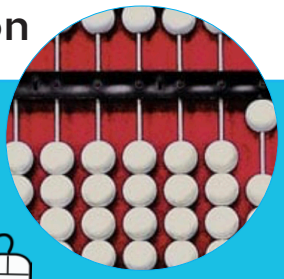


4PLUS transition program student Gent Wyatt from George will compete in the Abacus Bee. "I'm nervous because the abacus is new to me, but also excited because I love math," he said.

Iowa Educational Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired (IESBVI) students are counting on their math skills to advance them from regional to national competition using the abacus.

The Abacus Bee, a national program of the American Printing House, will host an inaugural event, with Iowa as one of six participating states. State contests are held to determine finalists who will advance to nationals at Tennessee School for the Blind next March.

Families attending the bee will learn about the abacus, and engage in other STEM-related activities, such as coding.



Bee basics

Iowa's abacus bee is Nov. 18 at Heartland Area Education Agency in Johnston. Twelve students will compete. They may use an abacus, finger counting, counting cubes or mental math but computation with pencil and paper or calculators isn't allowed.

Governance changes for IESBVI & ISD

Services, school move under Department of Education

As part of Gov. Reynolds' state government alignment, Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Iowa School for the Deaf have moved under the governance of Iowa Department of Education, effective July 1. Previously, the special schools were governed by the Board of Regents, State of Iowa.

The change is being made as part of a broader state government alignment to bring together entities working with similar subject matter. Families and students should not experience any differences in programming or services as a result of these changes.

Quick flick?

Take a peek at these 30-second videos from Iowa School for the Deaf! Click to activate, or visit the iowaschoolforthedeaf.org homepage.

- **Communication**
- **Belonging**
- **Independence**
- **Opportunity**

Public offers preferences for next superintendent

When it comes to one trait of the next superintendent for Iowa Education for Deaf & Blind, 100 percent of survey respondents agree: being a strong relationship builder is key.

In late September, stakeholders of IESBVI and ISD expressed opinions on favorable characteristics and qualities of the next superintendent. These opinions could be expressed at one of three public forums, via survey or both.

Forty-two individuals responded to the survey. Twenty individuals provided live Zoom or in-person input at the forums.

Cody Kerekes, faculty at ISD, provides her views on characteristics of the next superintendent.

A search firm will lead the advertising and recruiting aspects. The goal is to offer the position by the end of April with a potential starting date of July 1, 2024.

Administrative staff named

Several individuals were named to academic posts at Iowa Education for Deaf & Blind this summer.

Jonathan Karli and Katy Ring, Ed.D., of Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, were named chief academic officer and regional director for western Iowa, respectively.

Tina Caloud and Trisha Waddell of Iowa School for the Deaf were named chief academic officer and secondary principal.

Left to right: Caloud, Karli, Ring and Waddell. A summary of background for each individual may be found by clicking the mouse icon or visiting iesbvi.org or iowaschoolforthedeaf.org.

Bliss recognized as national scholar

Congratulations to Jennifer Bliss, STEM consultant for IESBVI, on being named one of three national American Printing House (APH) scholars.

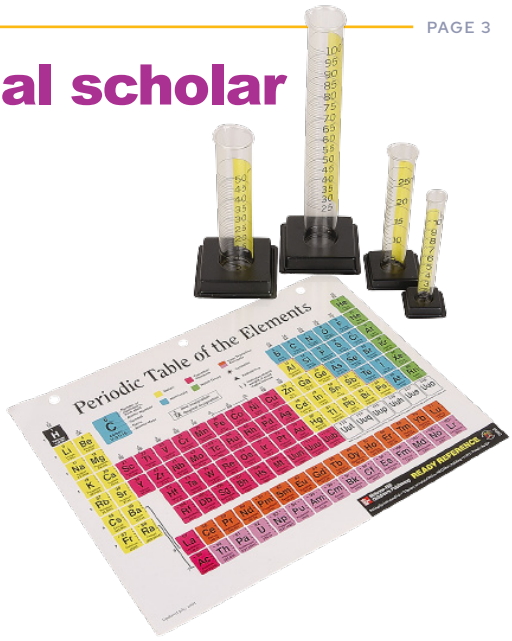
Bliss was recognized at the APH's Annual Meeting held in Louisville, Ky., as providing outstanding service in her region.

Bliss's work is featured on the Perkins website.

APH awards an expense-paid trip to the annual meeting for the winners in October.

Bliss contributes her knowledge of STEM resources for other teachers of the blind throughout the country. The Perkins School for the Blind, known internationally for its educational services for students who have visual impairments, added an article Bliss wrote to its website this summer. The article provided guidance for teachers to match accessible periodic charts for students who are blind or visually impaired.

Bliss is also featured on the Perkins website for her development of online resources for science teachers, which are useful for both itinerant teachers of the visually impaired and general education science teachers.



ISD staff present locally; globally

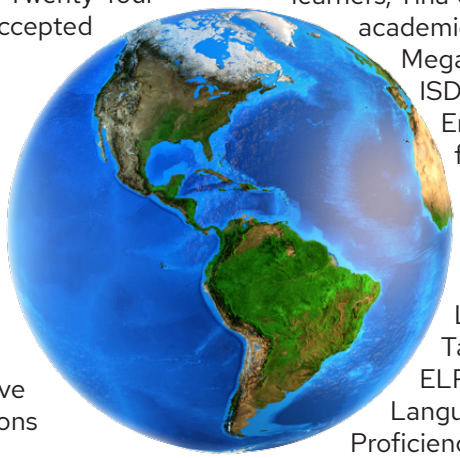
Research and best practices offered at summer conferences

International presentation
Two Iowa School for the Deaf staff members presented at the XIX World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf in Jeju, South Korea this July. Tina Caloud, chief academic officer and Deb Cates, Ph.D., language resources coordinator, lectured on "Language modeling intervention for STEM reasoning in deaf/hard-of-hearing students." Twenty-four presentations were accepted at the international conference.

Caloud (left) and Cates presented in South Korea.

National presentation
"The Impact of Collaborative Practices in Whole-Child Education" was presented by ISD staff at the national virtual Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) conference in June.

Kristi Zimmerman, school counselor, and Hana Krommenhoek, reading specialist, both members on the PBIS team at ISD, presented. PBIS is an evidence-based, tiered framework which supports behavioral, academic, social, emotional and mental health.



Statewide presentation
For those who teach English learners, Tina Caloud, chief academic officer, and Megan Shama, ISD high school English learner faculty, presented, "Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing English Learners: Taking the ELPA (English Language Proficiency Assessment) and Classroom Strategies" at a conference hosted by Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency in Bettendorf in June.

The conference was attended by English learner teachers and families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Iowa Deafblind Project Updates

CHARGE families meet and connect

"Every parent should take time to listen how these individuals are not just living, but thriving at life," said a parent from Iowa who attended the national CHARGE conference in Orlando, Fla. this July.

The Iowa Deafblind Project provided financial support for families to attend, enabling them to learn from national experts and to connect with other parents who have children with CHARGE Syndrome. CHARGE Syndrome is a rare disorder which affects several parts of the body, including ear abnormalities.

Iowa Deafblind Project provides multiple trainings, presentations and support networks for its families. Social events are also facilitated through the project, including this summer's trip to the Science Center of Iowa, where turtles were a tactile hit with the children. Contact sarah.harms@iaedb.org for details.

5+ YEARS

Congratulations to the Iowa Deafblind Project which has been awarded another five-year grant to provide services to students, their families and educational teams in Iowa. Iowa Educational Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired administers the grant on behalf of the Iowa Department of Education. The voluntary, statewide deafblind registry has identified 110 students.

Voices-off event boosts interpreter skills

Putting students' needs first.

This is always the goal of the Educational Interpreter Immersion Conference for Iowa's K-12 educational interpreters, hosted by Iowa School for the Deaf (ISD). The focus of the ninth annual event, held in Ames for 25 attendees, was no different this June.

All sessions are conducted in a voices-off, ASL-only environment, to immerse attendees in the language their students use.

"This is especially helpful for interpreters who do not have other ASL-fluent adults with whom to converse throughout the year," said Deb Cates, Ph.D., language resources coordinator for ISD. "Many interpreters only use ASL for interpreting and not conversationally."

Left to right: Abby Harvey, Jake Rowat and Heidi Parrow participate in the 2023 Educational Interpreter Immersion Conference. The three are interpreters in Des Moines Public Schools.

"Educational interpreting is often isolating work."

– Deb Cates, Ph.D.
ISD language resources coordinator

Cates noted the conference stresses collaboration between interpreters and other members of the educational team to create the best educational experience possible for students who are deaf or hard or hearing.

As part of the outreach department at ISD, Cates offers a number of services for Iowa's educational interpreters, including intensive study and mentoring programs to support interpreters making the transition from temporary to permanent licenses. Cates offers on-site professional development for school districts which employ interpreters. School interpreter skill assessments are also provided. **Contact deb.cates@iaedb.org for details.**

Confidence in the classroom from Day One

Donna Hurd and Heather Crawley concur; learning braille in two hours at IESBVI'S Summer Institute jump-started their confidence to work with students who are blind, right from the first day of school.

The two are associates from Sheldon High School who attended past Summer Institutes. This free event is held annually to familiarize regular education classroom or special education teachers and paraeducators with resources and strategies for teaching their students who are blind or visually impaired.

Hurd and Crawley recall sessions in which they wore sleep masks or goggles to simulate vision loss and better understand how a student accesses a lesson or participates in sports.

"There is a way to present all materials so a blind student can understand."

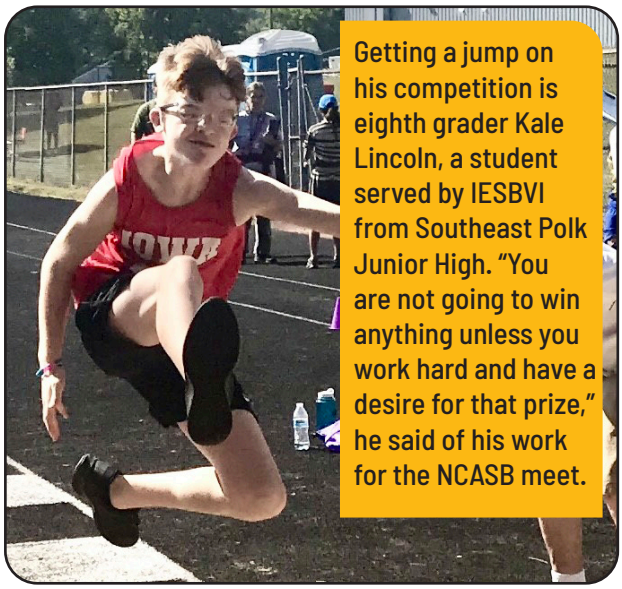
– Donna Hurd
Paraprofessional
Summer Institute Participant

Nearly 130 Iowa teachers and paraprofessionals who may be new to working with blind students attended the institute, held July 31 and August 1 this summer in Ankeny. IESBVI staff and a few outside presenters provided more than 30 topics in 90-minute or three-hour time slots. Participants may choose topics such as literacy, STEM, assistive technology, adaptive physical education and more. Information on 2024 Summer Institute will be available this spring. **Contact susan.brennan.org@iaed.org for details.**

Attendees learn how blind students can comprehend 3D objects.

Miles apart, Rams pull together at track meet

Regardless of what track and field events the IESBVI Rams athletes choose, miles are what both unite and divide the team.



Getting a jump on his competition is eighth grader Kale Lincoln, a student served by IESBVI from Southeast Polk Junior High. "You are not going to win anything unless you work hard and have a desire for that prize," he said of his work for the NCASB meet.

Each of the Rams lives in a different community across Iowa. Through careful planning, IESBVI's expanded learning department unifies them, even when these students practice individually at their local schools throughout the state.

The shared goal is participation in the annual North Central Association of Schools for the Blind (NCASB) track meet, held late September this year in Nashville, Tenn.

IESBVI is unique at the NCASB events, said Crystal Beighley, IESBVI's athletic director. Other teams are from state residential schools for the blind, which practice together every day.

Knowing their competition has an edge didn't deter the 11 IESBVI students who earned personal bests and even medals in Nashville. Individual results can be found at the iesbvi.org news page.

"They each give it their all every time they compete," said Caitlin Laudick, IESBVI orientation and mobility specialist who coaches the Rams track team. "They love setting goals and accomplishing them."

Contact crystal.beighley@iaedb.org for details about Rams sports and activities.

IESBVI campers 'feel more like everybody else'

Most kids just want to fit in with their peers, and in the summer, that includes attending summer camp.

IESBVI offered more than a dozen day and overnight camps across Iowa this summer. The expanded learning department facilitates summer, weekend and extracurricular events for IESBVI students. Although they've offered Camp Sunnyside as an IESBVI option in the past, this summer they added a day camp for high-level needs campers: Camp Courageous in Monticello.

There is no charge to attend IESBVI's camps. Transportation for camps is provided, which reduces barriers to attend.

IESBVI staff work at its own regional camps, while Camp Courageous and Camp Sunnyside employ their own summer staff, who may not be familiar with the needs of IESBVI campers.

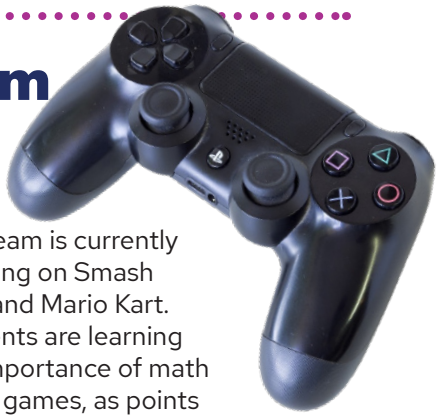
IESBVI provides training to these staffs about visual impairment, cortical visual impairment, and safety considerations like the importance of keeping kids with albinism out of the sun.

Raelyn Miller-Ramirez of Davenport isn't afraid of the fox snake she met at Winding Woods camp held in Wapello.

"The slate of camps offered through IESBVI are a great opportunity for campers to interact with children who have similar visual challenges," stated a parent in a post-camp survey. "It provides a chance to feel more like everybody else in a way they can't with most peers."

2024 camp information will be available early winter.

First year for ISD esports team



Beginning this fall, students at ISD have another option if they aren't interested in traditional sports: joining the ISD esports team. Dorm staff were inspired to start the program after learning of success from another school for the deaf.

"Having esports allows tech savvy students to learn team skills, be competitive and still dive into a subject they are passionate about," said Kevin Boyce, ISD residential manager. "Esports is not about sitting and playing games in front of a tv, it's a whole section of learning that kids can pull from."

There is currently a core four-member team, although there can be teams of six. Boyce hopes to eventually see multiple teams. ISD competes against local YMCA teams, and are looking to branch out with a local high school and then to other state schools for the deaf. According to Boyce, YMCA teams helps ensure the online experience is safe.

Practice involves using four Nintendos, on four separate tvs.

"They're not here, and we're not there. It's different, but it's cool."

– Oley Rooney
ISD esports team member

The team is currently focusing on Smash Bros and Mario Kart. Students are learning the importance of math in the games, as points will help or hurt the team.

"We still want kids to get outside and play, but we also want to embrace their interests," Boyce said. "We live in a technology-centered world, so let's get on board, make it healthy and use it as an avenue for teaching!"

Families of young children learn importance of ASL

Families practiced sign language under the direction of a Deaf mentor.

When a baby who is deaf is born to hearing parents who do not know sign language, the struggle to communicate can be overwhelming.

> "If we can teach him signing, he can sign and speak and be less frustrated with me trying to understand him."
>
> – Chantelle Broome
> Parent of 3-year-old

A new free overnight experience provided by ISD and Early Hearing Detection and Intervention of Iowa was held this June on ISD's campus. Parents of children aged 2-to-5 years old learned some basic American Sign Language (ASL) vocabulary, became familiar with state resources and learned from Deaf mentors.

Deaf mentors interacted with the children, demonstrating for hearing parents how to get a child's attention, how to read with their child and engage them in play. Deaf mentors help parents learn and use visual learning strategies.

Stacey Morgan, ISD family resources coordinator, wants the families to connect with resources introduced to them.

"We hope parents will realize how important it is to continue exposing their children to language at home, telling children what they are doing, what they are seeing and thinking, and be more confident to read books aloud with their children," she said. **Contact Morgan for details about family resources.**

Students make their mark on White Cane Day

A chance to celebrate, a chance to learn. IESBVI students from across the state recognized annual National White Cane Safety Day with three events this year. The official day, observed Oct. 15, raises awareness of those in the blind and visually impaired community for their declaration and pursuit of independence.

At White Cane Day events Oct. 14 at Living History Farms in Des Moines and Oct. 15 at Bloomsbury Farms in Atkins, IESBVI children and their families gathered to create 16-foot murals of their unique cane sweep patterns using a construction grade paint stick tied to each cane.

Patterns from the cane sweeps will be enhanced by Iowa artist Casey Slack. Families who attended will receive a piece of the mural suitable for display.

Susan Rolinger, director of IESBVI's expanded learning program, addressed the need for events like White Cane Day celebrations.

"These kids like to be around other kids who are blind or visually impaired, who are the same as them," she said. "Being part of a community is important. We host fully accessible events, which means they don't have to ask for access." **Contact Rolinger for information about Expanded Learning.**

Martin Dobson Grier of Johnston and Brian Werts, IESBVI orientation and mobility specialist, trace Grier's sweep patterns onto a giant mural.

Eastern Iowa students celebrated White Cane Safety Day early with a tour of Red Rock Farms in Oelwein, where there were plenty of social, navigational and sensory efficiency experiences.

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This is how we thrive.

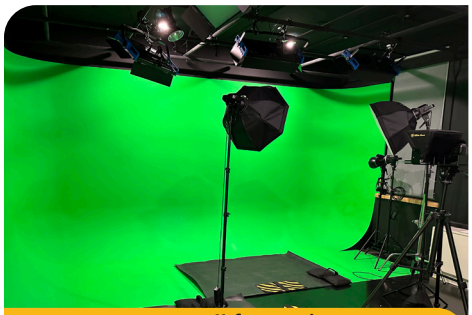
ISD Outreach finds its home

Stacey Morgan became a champ at getting steps in when her office was housed on a floor separate from others in Iowa School for the Deaf's outreach department. Five interpreters who were officing in another building across campus made for an even greater logistics challenge for the department.

As the department planned to expand, they needed a comprehensive space.

Through the renovation of the former infirmary building, outreach moved to a unified home for nearly all of its staff. The 5,000 sq. ft. area includes the rooms featured at right, as well as four offices, a conference area, kitchen and ample storage.

assessment room with one-way observation window



custom green wall for optimum videography

interpreter space

family-friendly reception area