

Appendix E:

TEXAS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND & VISUALLY IMPAIRED

STRATEGIC STAFFING ANALYSIS AND WORKFORCE PLAN

I. OVERVIEW

Originally created by the Texas Legislature in 1856, the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired has been established as part of the public education system that serves as a special school in the continuum of statewide alternative placements for students who have a visual impairment. It is also a statewide resource to parents of these children and professionals who serve them.

Mission of TSBVI

The Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired will serve as a leading center of expertise and supports, working in partnership with schools, families and organizations to improve educational outcomes for students who are blind or visually impaired, including those with deaf blindness or additional disabilities.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

GOAL 1: Students who are visually impaired or deaf blind will demonstrate the skills and knowledge to lead vocationally, personally, and socially satisfying lives as demonstrated by academic success and successful transition to the community.

OBJECTIVE: Students will demonstrate increased knowledge and skills, increased participation and independence, and ability to generalize and apply their knowledge and skills in meaningful ways.

GOAL 2: Families, professionals, and paraprofessionals will have the knowledge and skills necessary to improve educational programming and other services for all Texas students who are visually impaired or deaf blind.

OBJECTIVE: Texas students, professionals, families, individuals, local school districts, and agencies will receive quality Outreach services or products from Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Main Functions: Direct and Outreach Services

- * To provide a free, appropriate public education that addresses the intense or specialized needs of visually impaired children and youth, including those with additional disabilities when the local school district and parents agree that such services are not available in a local program.
- * To conduct supplemental programs, such as summer school and short-term school-year programs, to students who are enrolled in their local school district during the regular school year.

- * To provide statewide services to parents of students with visual impairments, school districts, regional education service centers, and other agencies. These services include training, consultation, technical assistance, and developing and disseminating materials such as curriculum, instructional methodology, and educational technology.
- * To provide information about instructional resources and materials, including educational technology, related to teaching, assessment, and transition of students with visual impairments.
- * To lend educational and technological materials for student use to school districts and regional education service centers.
- * To partner with Texas Tech University and Stephen F. Austin University in preparation programs for teachers of the visually impaired.
- * To cooperate with public and private agencies and organizations serving students and other persons with visual impairments in the planning, development, and implementation of effective educational and rehabilitative service delivery systems.
- * To serve as leaders in the use of distance learning for teachers, parents, and students.

Anticipated Changes

It is expected that the primary functions of TSBVI will remain the same over the next five years; therefore, the mission, goals, and objectives of the School will remain relatively stable. However, the following types of changes will cause us to adjust some of our strategies, or at least the manner in which those strategies are executed:

- We are serving a significant number of students who have severe emotional and social support needs due to neurological disabilities, autism, cognitive disabilities, and difficulties associated with unstable families.
- In Comprehensive Programs, 36% of our students were 18 years of age or older. Because we are serving an increasing number of adult-age students, many of our programs are directed at transitioning to adult life, such as career education.
- The number of referrals to our Experiences in Transition (EXIT) program for older students continues to increase as local schools and families realize that their students' time in public education is nearing its final years, and the students lack the skills to live and work independently after high school.
- There are increasing requests for weekend and higher frequency local trainings that require staffing in Outreach for increased travel and flexible hours.
- Pursuing distance learning technology for providing anytime training on the website requires increasing staff with technical skills.

II. Current Workforce Profile

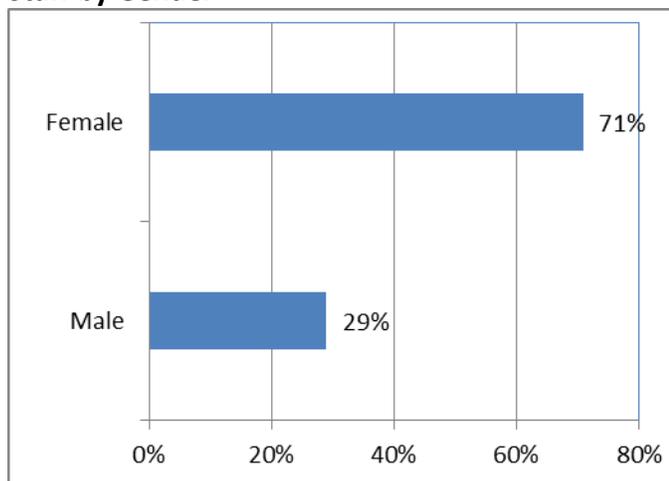
The staff of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired is comprised of 586 budgeted full- and part-time employees, including substitute employees, who work on an on-call, as-needed basis. Of these, 330 are classified and one, the Superintendent, is line item exempt. The remaining are teachers, principals, counselors, and other educational positions that, by statute (Texas Education Code 30.024(b) (1)), are paid in accordance with Austin Independent School District pay scales for comparable positions. Because the majority of our employees do not work continuously through the summer and other school breaks, our FTE count varies depending on the quarter. Our average FTE count for FY 2015 was 376.63.

Among the classified positions, the single largest staff group (138 positions) consists of residential instructors. Classified as Resident Specialists, these are the staff that provides care, instruction, and supervision of students in their non-school hours. Other classified positions range from nurses to maintenance mechanics, from accountants to technology specialists. The campus-based workforce is a small community with nearly every occupational field represented.

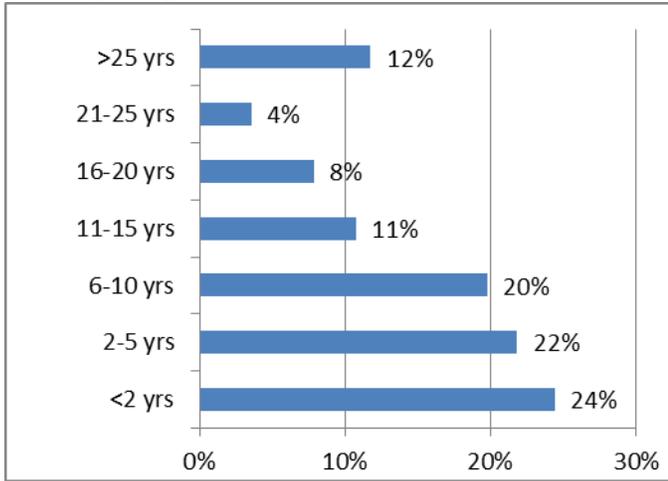
TSBVI's contract workforce provides services primarily in the following areas: Pediatric medicine, low vision services, psychiatry, dietitian, and linen service. The first four of these are specialized professional services that can be provided more efficiently by contractors. Linen service is contracted out for some, but not all linen use, due to the safety and equipment issues involved in laundering linens heavily soiled with bio hazardous substances. Contract workers are used to a lesser degree in the following ways: foreign language translation for documents required to be provided to parents in their primary language; presenters and guest speakers for Outreach conferences; temporary employee vacancies; specialized, non-routine repairs.

Demographics

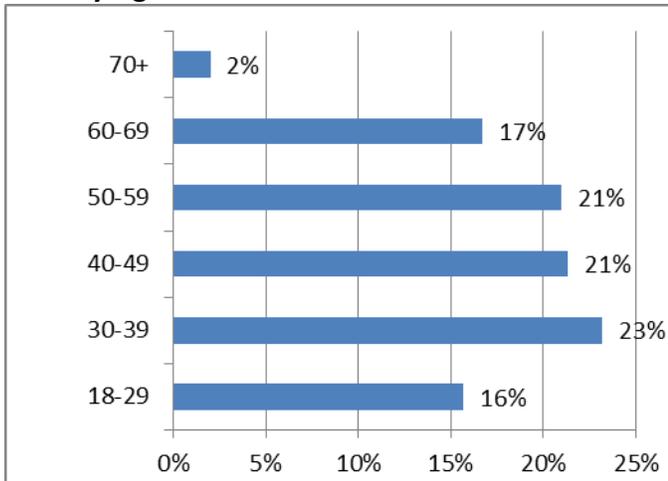
Staff by Gender



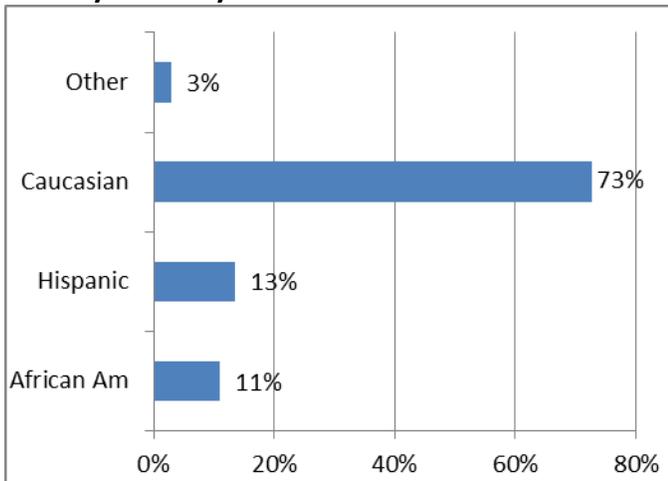
Staff by Length of Service



Staff by Age



Staff by Ethnicity



As is typical of an education setting, the majority of TSBVI employees are female (71%). Sixty percent of the workforce are over the age of 40, and 35% have more than 10 years of experience at this school.

Retirement Projections

In September 1994, the School moved from the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) to the Employees Retirement System (ERS); therefore, the data available from ERS about retirement eligibility is incomplete because it is based on ERS service only. We cannot reliably project retirements based on length of TSBVI service because our employees were able to withdraw their TRS service without terminating employment when we moved to ERS. We know that some, perhaps many, employees did so, but this information is not formally available to us.

According to a report from the Texas Comptroller's Office, approximately 35% of TSBVI's workforce, excluding Substitute employees, will be eligible to retire within the next five years. Whether those employees choose to retire or not is unknown.

Administrators and Department Heads: Nine (7) of the school's top 18 administrators or major department heads are return-to-work retirees who could leave at any time. It is unknown how many of these will retire (or, as return-to-work retirees, terminate) within the next five years. We lost 3 of these incumbents in 2016 but two positions have been filled and we are confident the other will also be filled in time for the 2016-17 school year.

Educational and Related Services Professionals: Teachers, educational diagnosticians, school psychologists, speech pathologists, social workers, physical/occupational therapists and similar professionals make up this group. Approximately 33% of them may be eligible to retire within five years. Due to the fact that the majority of these individuals are professional educators, these are the least likely staff to have withdrawn their TRS retirement.

Mid-managers and Non-educational Professionals: This is a varied group that includes smaller department heads, residential managers, front-line supervisors, programmers, and nurses among others. Approximately 12% are eligible within the next five years assuming they have not withdrawn their TRS service.

Instructional and Residential Paraprofessionals: Although this is our largest group of staff and consists primarily of Residential Instructors and Teaching Assistants, the anticipated retirement rate within it is negligible. These jobs are primarily held by younger individuals who will leave TSBVI employment well before retirement eligibility. Approximately 15% of our non-management, paraprofessional direct care staff has the age and length of service to retire within five years.

Technical/Clerical Support Staff: Less than 20% of this group will be eligible to retire within the next five years.

Other Support Services: This group includes maintenance technicians, cooks, drivers, and security personnel. Of these, it is estimated that one-third could be eligible to retire within the next five years.

In summary, within the coming five years, TSBVI is likely to experience the most significant losses through retirement among the top administrators, educational and related services professionals, mid-

managers, and non-educational professionals in the School. The fact that retirement eligibility is primarily concentrated among TSBVI's most experienced and highly skilled employees is of more concern than the actual number of prospective retirees. We know that this will be a "second and final" retirement for some individuals, but others will be interested in returning to work post-retirement and may be able to do so, which will mitigate some of the loss.

Turnover and Projected Attrition

During the 2014 fiscal year, our turnover rate as reported by the State Auditor's Office was 13.9%, excluding interagency transfers, compared to 17.5% turnover statewide, excluding interagency transfers. TSBVI's prior year's rate was 16.9% for FY 2013.

Critical Workforce Skills

TSBVI relies primarily on teachers and other educational professionals to carry out its core mission. Additionally, direct care paraprofessionals extend the capabilities of teachers during the school day and provide care, supervision, and instruction to students during non-school hours. Finally, employees with a wide variety of administrative, technical, manual and other skills provide the support activities that allow our campus to function programmatically and physically. As such, we consider the following skills and credentials to be critical to the performance of our mission:

- Certification as a teacher of visually impaired students.
- Proficiency in working with students with multiple disabilities, including autism, deaf blindness, and orthopedic impairments.
- Proficiency using and instructing students in the use of specialized technologies for the visually impaired, one of the most critical options available today for providing access to the world of information for blind learners.
- Certification or licensure in the professional areas that comprise special education related services required for our students: O&M Specialist, Licensed Specialist in School Psychology, Educational Diagnostician, Speech-Language Pathologist, Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Librarian, Social Worker, and Nurse.
- Knowledge of statewide services, regional programs and local school districts and how to work with them.
- Proficiency in training and consulting skills.
- Proficiency in instructing students in career education and other subjects related to transition to adult life.
- Proficiency in leadership and management skills, and educational administration certification if required for position.
- For direct care paraprofessionals, individuals who have:
 - A human service orientation with a sincere desire to work with children with disabilities.
 - Paraprofessional certification and qualified under No Child Left Behind Act
- Proficiency in database management, technology, and skilled trade areas that support all School functions.
- Proficiency in business and administrative support areas that support all School functions.
- Skill in working collaboratively as a team member

III. Future Workforce Profile

Factors Driving Expected Workforce Changes

- Comprehensive Programs (regular school year) anticipates a slight increase in enrollment.
- Short-Term Program (STP) classes have proven to be a highly effective method for serving students from across the state. During the 2014-15 school year, 205 grade-level students attended a STP 3–5 day class on our campus between September and May. Our greatest challenge is that many young students lack the resources to maintain newly learned skills once they return home from a class. At this time, our primary goal is to improve methods for students to retain skills after participating in a class. We need to increase our ability to continue contact with local teachers of the visually impaired throughout the year, via online distance learning. This can include ongoing instruction, sharing resources, and building local districts' capacity with regard to serving an even larger number of students. In order to add the capacity for ongoing contact with local teachers throughout the school year, without reducing the number of classes we currently provide, we will need two additional teachers of the visually impaired who have strong technology skills. They would need to be supported by a technology infrastructure of professionals and hardware/software that serves our entire school.
- Students will continue to present severe and complex disabling conditions, particularly emotional and behavioral disorders, along with visual impairment. They will have intense needs while enrolled at TSBVI, and will require more indirect services to help ensure their success in local school districts.
- The proportion of students who need vocational instruction and independent living skills will increase.
- Federal and state education and special education regulations will require more emphasis and instructional time on the regular core curriculum subjects while students are often referred to the School for increased emphasis on an expanded core curriculum focused on the students' needs related to their blindness and other disabilities.
- The new facilities at TSBVI require a higher level of technical expertise for building systems such as security, building controls, plumbing, mechanical and life safety. There are additional state required inspections and service by licensed professional for elevators, plumbing, fire protection and suppression, natural gas line (both exterior and interior), boilers, pest control and food services as well as best practices inspections for electrical, air conditioning and plumbing systems. With the legislative transfer of maintenance responsibilities to the Texas Facilities Commission (TFC), all facility maintenance is handled by professional staff from TFC.
- There is a critical need for database management and process automation at TSBVI. Coupled with increased reliance on technology, both to execute the school's core mission and to assist in all support activities, the School continues to require highly skilled technical staff.

Future Workforce Skills Needed for Critical Functions

The mission of TSBVI and its key goals are unlikely to change in the coming years. The critical functions will continue to be the direct and indirect provision of services to the visually impaired, school-aged children of Texas. While the mission will remain the same, it will be implemented with a changing student population and within a changing regulatory environment, by an evolving staff. As such, we anticipate the following future workforce skill needs:

- TSBVI will continue to have a steady demand for certified VI and O&M teachers, but will also need teachers who are certified in VI along with auditory impairment, math, science, ESL, and geography.
- We will continue to need certified or licensed professionals in the related services areas, but with particular emphasis on counseling and assessment personnel because of (a) anticipated attrition through retirement in this area, and (b) the need for more intensive services related to student behavioral disorders and severe emotional needs.
- We will need educational administrators with a strong background in education of the visually impaired as well as administrative and leadership skills.
- We will need managers in non-educational areas with strong leadership skills in addition to expertise within their own functional areas (business, facilities, human resources, technology, etc.).
- All staff providing direct services to students, whether professional or paraprofessional must develop skills to manage students' behavior and emotional problems.
- All staff must have an adequate working knowledge of technology appropriate to their assignment.
- TSBVI will need staff with bilingual skills and cultural awareness.

Anticipated Changes in the Number of Employees Needed

TSBVI anticipates a need for targeted skill areas, including staff with bilingual skills and cultural competence, staff with systems analysis and database management expertise, and training staff with expertise in creating computer-based distance education geared toward visual impairment as well as more general staff development. We are also working with the Comptroller's office to request approval to implement CAPPs. This will require additional FTEs.

It is difficult to forecast future enrollment, because we cannot ordinarily predict how many or which students will be referred to TSBVI, and we cannot know the extent of their needs until they have been assessed. A referral from a local district to TSBVI can take place at any time, and it is a complex, highly regulated process which does not give us much flexibility to decline to accept students we do not feel adequately staffed to serve. Nevertheless, we do not expect a decline in enrollment or demand for other services.

IV. Gap Analysis

Anticipated Shortage of Employees and Skills

The following gaps are either likely or possible based on a comparison between the current staff profile and anticipated future staffing and skills needs:

- Staff will need to continue to increase the knowledge and skills required to work with students who are presenting increasingly challenging disabilities.
- We will have an insufficient supply of VI teachers, educational administrators and related service professionals due to retirement and other attrition.
- We will have an insufficient supply of professionals in the fields of visual impairment and deaf blindness available to travel as statewide consultants.
- To maintain our new buildings and grounds to a high standard, it may be necessary to reclassify existing staff in addition to hiring additional custodial, and grounds staff.

- The need for data management and process automation will require us to either hire additional technical professionals or contract for this service.
- As technology becomes more integral to most jobs, staff will need to increase their technical competence accordingly. In addition, in some jobs, the required competence level will be quite high due to the complex technology related to visual impairment.
- To ensure that training needs related to behavior, technology, VI core curricular areas, and other content are met, we need to utilize computer-based training rather than traditional instructor-led training to reach more staff at times convenient to their schedules. We also need for staff to have time to be trained.

V. Strategies for Workforce Transition

Succession Plan

The core of TSBVI's institutional knowledge is held by (1) its professional staff members who provide direct services to students on campus and indirect services to students throughout the state through families and other educators; and (2) its administrators and managers. Emphasis in this succession plan is given to those two groups.

At TSBVI, we take a three-pronged approach to succession planning:

- (1) We believe that a diversity of professional educational approaches enriches our programs; therefore, we strive to recruit broadly to bring highly qualified professional staff from outside our school.
- (2) The large number of paraprofessional positions at TSBVI provides a supply of staff with demonstrated good basic skills and a genuine interest in working with children with disabilities. Some of these individuals decide that they want to make a professional career of teaching visually impaired children, which we encourage and support. Our VI teachers can pursue further career development, with our support, by obtaining additional subject matter certification, becoming administrators, or becoming related services specialists.
- (3) We seek to disseminate key institutional knowledge throughout the organization both laterally and vertically by means such as cross-training and documenting work processes. There are key positions at our School that, because of the nature of the job and the size of the department, do not have potential internal successors.

Direct Instruction and Service

1. VI Teachers

Action steps to ensure adequate supply of VI teachers:

- a. Continue to administer the VI teacher preparation project established by legislative rider. This includes continuing to financially support the Texas universities (Texas Tech and Stephen F. Austin) that offer VI teacher preparation in return for their assurance of a minimum

number of graduates per year, providing mentors for teachers in training, and providing workshops for new teachers to minimize attrition.

- b. Work to assure the continued funding of the VI teacher preparation project by documenting the outcomes of the program and communicating them to the funding sources.
- c. “Create” VI teachers from within TSBVI:
 - (1) Identify and encourage degreed paraprofessionals (e.g., teaching assistants) who could complete alternative teacher certification in Special Education through the Region XIII Education Service Center program. After completion of this program, employ them (if vacancies occur) as first year classroom teachers to fulfill their internship.
 - (2) Hire promising teacher candidates who already have Generic Special Education or other related certification.
 - (3) Require all teachers hired under both circumstances to obtain VI certification over a designated period of time. Provide tuition reimbursement for those who complete coursework toward VI certification.

2. Related Service Professionals and Teachers with Additional Certification

Action step to ensure adequate supply of related services professionals (e.g., Educational Diagnosticians, Speech/Language Pathologists) and specially certified teachers (e.g. English as a Second Language, Science)

- a. Continue to identify “high need” credentials based on actual and expected attrition.
- b. As funding permits, utilize the existing procedure that provides for teachers to receive tuition reimbursement for completing coursework toward credentials designated by the School's management as "high need."
- c. Actively solicit interest among current VI teaching staff in these opportunities.
- d. Actively recruit and train interns.

3. Outreach Specialists

The majority of outreach specialists are highly experienced VI teachers or professionals in the field of deaf blindness. A person would typically progress to this position from an earlier successful career as a provider of direct instruction; in other words, they are nearer retirement age than the average employee. It is estimated that a significant number of staff in this group will be eligible to retire within the next five years, whether they choose to do so or not. The classroom teacher staff at TSBVI provides a natural “training ground” for future outreach specialists; however, many teachers would not be interested in this role due to the extensive travel and longer work year. Generally, vacancies in this area require a national or at least statewide search. Fortunately, the very nature of the outreach specialist job involves extensive networking in the fields of visual impairment and deaf blindness, both on a state and national basis. Our Outreach program is well known, and potentially suitable candidates for vacancies in this area are usually well known to us.

In summary, effective succession in this area will be accomplished by a combination of drawing upon a pool of highly qualified internal applicants and cultivating a ready-made network.

Management

1. Educational and residential program administration:
 - a. Superintendent: The Superintendent was hired within the last nine years and is expected to remain in this position for the foreseeable future.
 - b. Principals/Assistant Principals/Outreach Director/School & Student Services Director: Several employees in this area have already retired and returned to work. It is expected that succession will be accomplished through (1) re-organization or consolidation of some functions or (2) filling vacancies with current employees who will meet MQ's or (3) conducting a national search for outside candidates. Our practice of developing lead teachers helps ensure our future supply of educational leaders.
 - c. Residential Directors/Dorm Managers: Attrition at the residential director level is not expected within the next five years. Turnover among dorm managers is routine and

succession is expected to be accomplished through the competitive selection of outstanding Residential Instructors.

2. Management of Support Functions:

Two of the top five non-programmatic management positions were replaced with competent, experienced professionals when the incumbents retired in 2016. Although these are critical and highly skilled positions, they – unlike the educational administrator positions – do not require educational certification, and they have counterparts in other state agencies. It is expected that both internal and external applicants will compete for most of these positions. Meanwhile, the emphasis in these areas is on documenting institutional knowledge to ensure the smoothest possible transition to successors.

Other Goals for Workforce Transition

The first three goals below concern staff training. The first one addresses: 1) the need for training concerning students with increasingly challenging disabilities. Workers, even professionals, do not arrive at our doorstep with these skills. It is imperative that we are able to rely on our own training to meet the complex needs of the students we serve. 2) The need for annual supervisory training for all dorm managers, supervisors, and department heads. It is imperative that decision-makers receive the latest information concerning employment laws that affect every day personnel decisions. Even the most seasoned managers need a refresher to minimize legal risk.

The second goal will facilitate having an involved and well-informed staff by ensuring that 1) all staff receives information in an accessible format, and 2) all staff acquires the technical skills to use computers in their jobs.

The third goal considers the possibilities for expanding internal training efforts.

The fourth goal focuses on retention through continuing development of career and salary progression.

The fifth and final goal recognizes that we cannot meet all of our needs by training, promoting, and retaining our existing staff. The expanding and changing needs of our school will demand that we add staff in certain areas. This goal does not necessarily imply that the overall staff or contract workforce size must increase, since some positions may be able replace other, less critical ones.

**Goal 1: 1) Ensure that all staff who works with students has adequate knowledge and skills in working with students with increasingly challenging disabilities.
2) Ensure that all employees in a supervisory role receive employment law training on an annual basis to minimize potential legal pitfalls.**

**Goal 2: 1) Ensure that all employees in all departments receive information in an accessible format.
2) Ensure that all employees have the technical skills and the access to consistently use the intranet and e-mail for necessary information.**

Goal 3: Explore the possibility of establishing a comprehensive staff development program that would serve the needs of TSBVI staff at all levels as well as non-TSBVI professionals.

Goal 4: Improve our ability to attract and retain staff.

- A. Continue efforts to develop career progression programs tied to training completion and/or education advancement.
- B. Continue to develop criteria to utilize our authority to make salary adjustments for purposes of internal and external equity, particularly for under-compensated job groups such as nurses.
- C. Work to identify more funds for merit salary increases so that deserving staff can be moved upward through the salary ranges for their jobs.
- D. Continue to follow our Highly Qualified Recruitment and Retention Plan, which provides incentive for teachers to obtain visual impairment certifications.
- E. Increase marketing efforts on the benefits of employment at TSBVI.
- F. Encourage paraprofessional staff interested in a career path as a Teacher of the Visually Impaired or Orientation and Mobility Specialist to pursue the required credentials and experience.

Goal 5: Assure we are sufficiently staffed for new or expanded initiatives.

- A. Continue to refine our determination of areas in which we will need to add staff as funding permits, and then prioritize those areas (e.g., training, direct care, technology (including implementation of CAPPS)).
- B. For each identified need and in order of priority, works toward a decision of whether and how to fund staffing for the need or how to meet the need in an alternative way.