

SCHEDULE D: AGENCY WORKFORCE PLAN

Functions

Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI) has an array of programs that serve the almost 11,000 students identified blind, visually impaired and deafblind throughout Texas. Our goal is to transform educational outcomes for students, ages birth to 22. In some cases, we serve as a special public school for students ages 6 through 22 on the TSBVI campus. We also provide support in the form of online courses, consultations, publications, and in-person and virtual trainings throughout Texas, addressing the needs of students that may never set foot in Austin. Family education and engagement is at the heart of what we do.

Our employees are our greatest strength. We are blessed with direct care staff that are dedicated to improving the education and lives of students.

TSBVI has a strong reputation for our educational and outreach programs focused on students who are blind, visually impaired and deafblind. Schools, educators and parents across the state and even the world access our training, our curriculum and request to visit our campus.

Anticipated Changes over the Next Five Years

While it is expected that the primary functions of TSBVI will largely remain the same over the next five years, the complexity of the needs of students and educators across the state has grown and regulations continue to evolve and expand. For example, in the 2021-2022 school year, the required services under HB 4545 to be provided for students who did not take or failed STAAR greatly expanded. To reflect these changes, TSBVI had to expand our staffing to provide this support. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic greatly impacted teachers either retiring or leaving the profession. The pandemic also has significantly affected our application flow for our other posted vacancies, particularly Resident Specialist, Teacher Aide and Vehicle Driver III (requires CDL). These vacancies have resulted in delayed student admission as well as reevaluating who is eligible for residential services. For the 2022-2023 school year we will be limiting the area we accept students in our dorms. Those within 45 miles of TSBVI would be considered day students and no longer eligible to stay in the dorms. The pandemic has created a highly competitive recruitment environment where TSBVI is limited on competing on salaries.

Vision

All Texas students who are blind, visually impaired, or deafblind will be empowered to lead productive and fulfilling lives.

Mission

We serve as a leading center of expertise and resources, working in partnership with schools, families, communities, and organizations to transform outcomes for students, ages birth to 22, who are blind, visually impaired, or deafblind.

Philosophy

We believe in the independence of students who are blind, visually impaired, or deafblind. All staff at TSBVI collaborate to increase student potential every day.

We believe that our mission, established by the people of Texas through our legislature, is to serve all students in Texas through partnership with families and local educational teams. By doing so, TSBVI ensures that Texas receives the greatest value for its investment in the promising future of our students.

We believe that the expertise developed at TSBVI since 1856 continues to grow in its leadership for the entire state. We are committed to using this expertise to eliminate barriers through instruction in all areas of the Core and the Expanded Core Curriculum.

We believe that the State of Texas has established a statewide educational system for our students that is widely recognized as among the very best in the nation. TSBVI is honored to play a key role in the achievement of this recognition.

Additional Considerations

Lack of competitive salaries

Alignment to AISD for contract staff

TSBVI teacher and professional contract salaries are tied to Austin Independent School District (AISD) in state statute. AISD's payrates have not kept pace with other local districts resulting in a negative impact on TSBVI's competitiveness. The vast majority of students served on site at TSBVI have special education needs, so our teachers and professional contract staff must possess a more complex skill set than a typical school district. In addition to the typical subject and grade level certifications required by TEA, TSBVI teachers must be certified in both special education and visual impairment due to the wonderfully unique population we serve. This pay gap has worsened as a result of AISD's budget challenges along with the COVID-19 pandemic. It is particularly heightened with hard-to-fill positions (e.g. Licensed Specialist in School Psychology) where TSBVI is unable to compete with other school districts. This can result in overburdening our existing staff to ensure that TSBVI provides needed services for our students and meets our obligations under state and federal Special Education regulations. Salaries that are below the market value compromise our ability to attract and retain critical qualified staff. As a result, we struggle to compete with the private sector and other states for qualified staff resulting in shortages in critical positions such as Licensed Specialist in School Psychology, Educational Diagnosticians, and Teachers.

Non-contract staff

TSBVI has significant issues competing with other school districts and the private sector when recruiting and retaining staff. Over the last three years, school districts in Central Texas have given their non-contract staff annual across the board increases ranging from 1% to 6%. TSBVI was not able to give annual across the board increases so this has put the school very behind in the market. There is strong competition for workers and the private sector total compensation (pay and benefits) reflects that. This has only worsened with the COVID-19 pandemic.

On March 31, 2022, Round Rock ISD (RRISD) announced an immediate increase to their Teacher Aide positions. They moved their Special Education Aide (all TSBVI students fall under Special Ed) paygrade to \$17.94 to \$25.30 per hour. In addition, for the 2022-2023 school year, the following districts have indicated changes. RRISD will be giving their non-contract staff a 2% or 3% increase based on position. AISD will be collapsing all of their Teacher Aides into one paygrade at the AISD Teacher Aide III level.

When you take our starting wages and apply the mandatory retirement contribution, this moves further into a non-competitive position. This is particularly true for entry level positions, where the applicant is focused on paying their monthly bills versus having a longer term view of planning for retirement. We are particularly impacted in our hiring of Residential Specialists and Teacher Aides.

Registered Nurse (RN) is a key position where we are not able to compete with the private sector. Due to the medical complexity of our students, to include the amount of medications given, TSBVI targets experienced pediatric nurses. The COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened the competition for nurses as well as drastically increased the wages.

TSBVI must be funded in such a way to be able to respond to the market minimally on an annual basis. The school districts, and in many cases the private sector, that we compete with are making those changes.

Cost of Living

According to the Austin Board of Realtors the median home price has increased from \$318,000 in 2019 to \$624,000 so far from 2022. The Austin Business Journal reports rents in the Austin metro went up about 25% between December 2020 and December 2021. According to rentdata.org, “Compared to the rest of Texas, the Austin-Round Rock Fair Market Rent (FMR) is more expensive than 99% of the state.” This kind of exponential growth makes it very difficult for staff to afford to live in the Austin-Round Rock MSA. Since 2019 and compared to counties with more than 250,000 people that are seeing population growth, Travis County (listed as #3) and Williamson County (listed as #4) were recently labeled as “unaffordable” by MoneyGeek.” MoneyGeek also reported Austin as the 2nd most overpriced housing market in the US. As a result, we can’t compete for qualified candidates and lose employees when they realize what it will cost to live here as compared to the pay the agency can offer.

Current Workforce Profile

TSBVI is a 24/7 facility. For FY2023, our staff is comprised of 463 budgeted positions (293 full-time and 170 part-time employees). These numbers do not include substitute employees, who work on an on-call as needed basis. Of those budgeted positions 322 are classified and one, the Superintendent, is line item exempt. The remaining 140 employees are teachers, principals, counselors, and other educational positions that, by statute (Texas Education Code 30.024(b) (1)), are paid in accordance with AISD 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 FY2022 was 325.8.

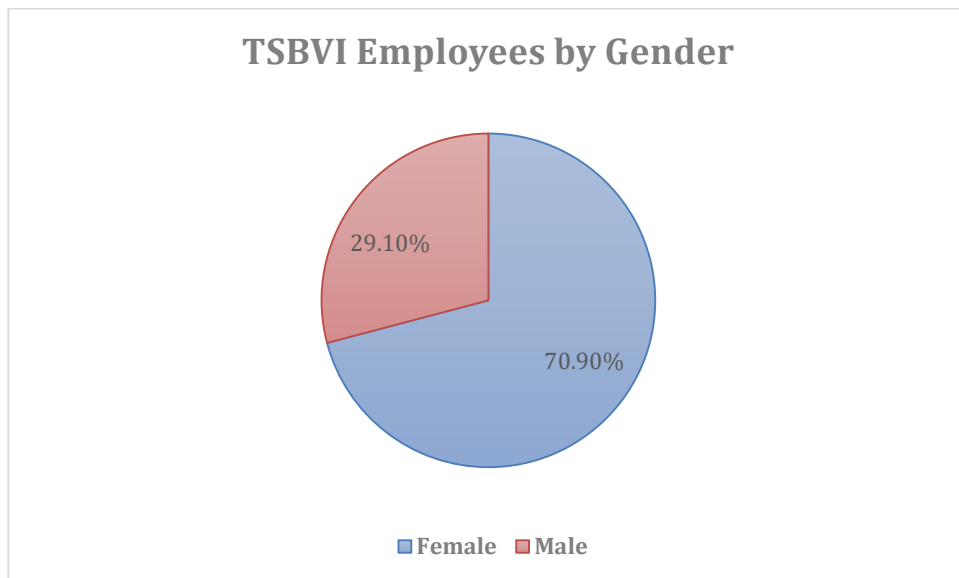
Among the classified positions, the single largest staff group (90 positions) consists of residential instructors (classified as resident specialists). As a residential school where students stay with us overnight and some on weekends, these staff are key to providing care, instruction, recreation and 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 has focused on increasing the diversity of our staff to include hiring of employees who are blind or visually impaired. Their personal experiences can connect to our students on a whole other level of understanding.

Demographics: Gender, Ethnicity, Age, and Tenure

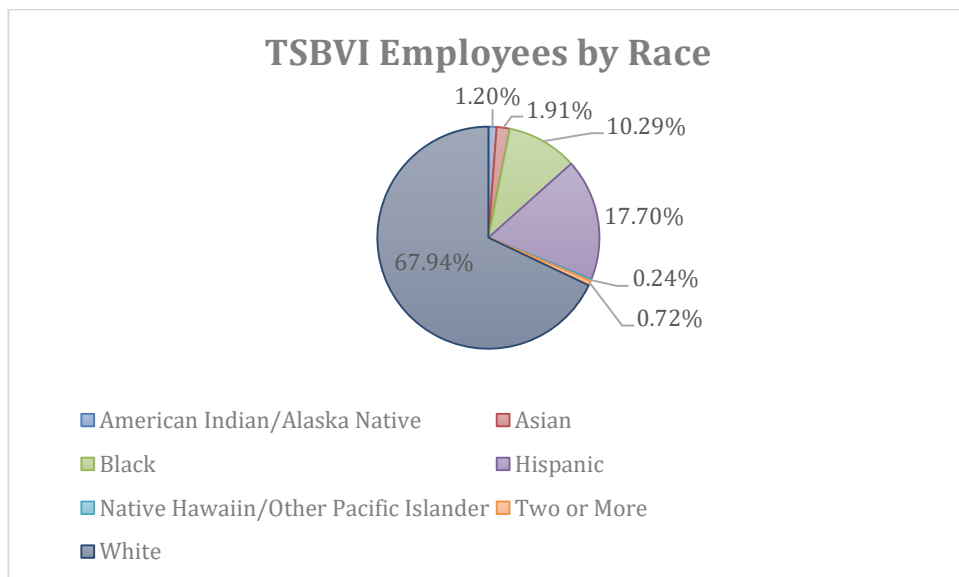
The workforce data presented excludes substitutes.

TSBVI Employees by Gender



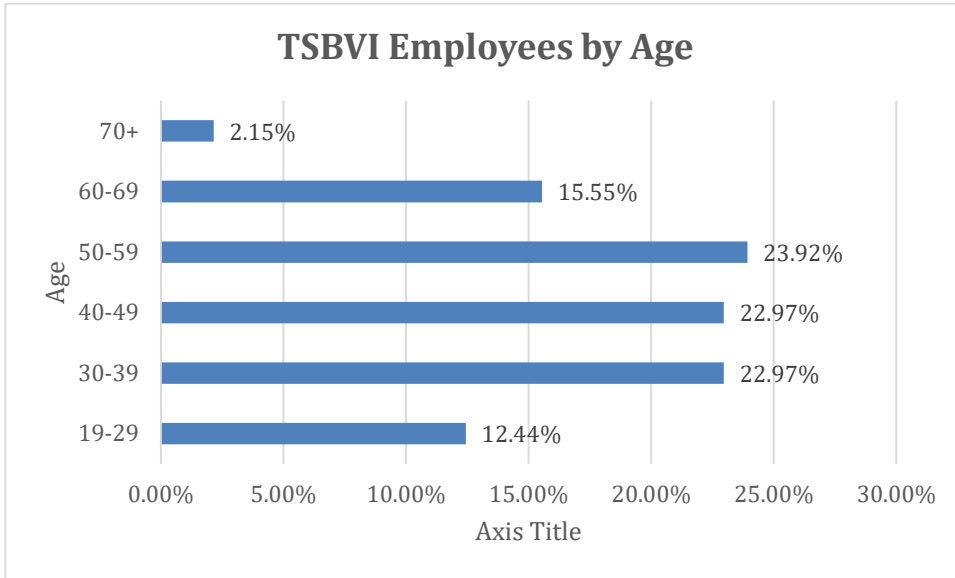
TSBVI has a higher percentage of female employees which aligns to the field of education but is different from other state agencies. The breakdown of employees by gender has stayed fairly constant.

TSBVI Employees by Ethnicity



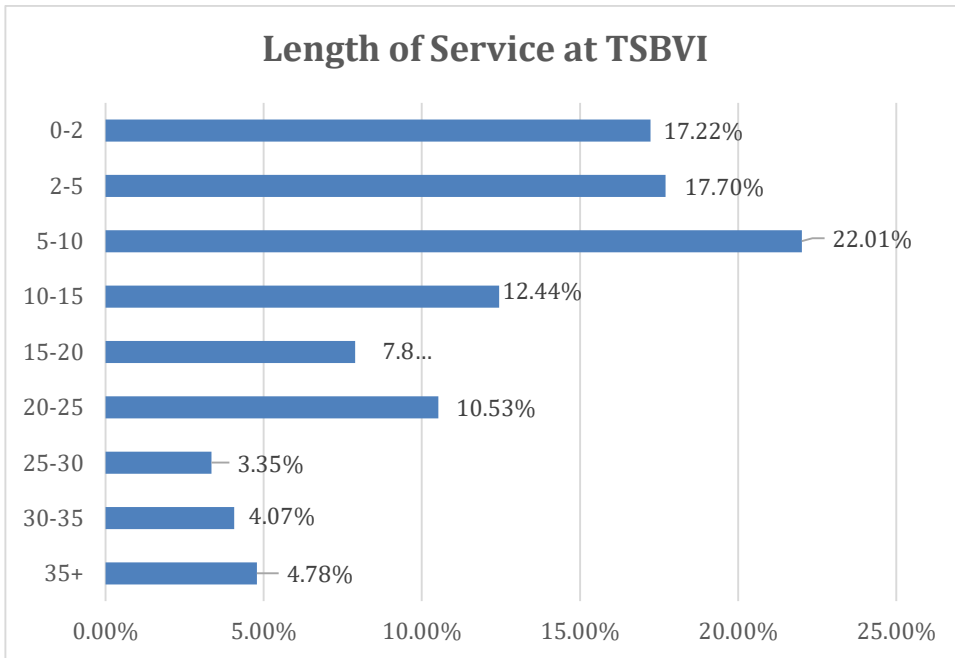
While overall TSBVI has a high percentage of white employees, we have focused on increasing diversity in all positions but specifically in our teaching staff to more align to our student population.

TSBVI Employees by Age



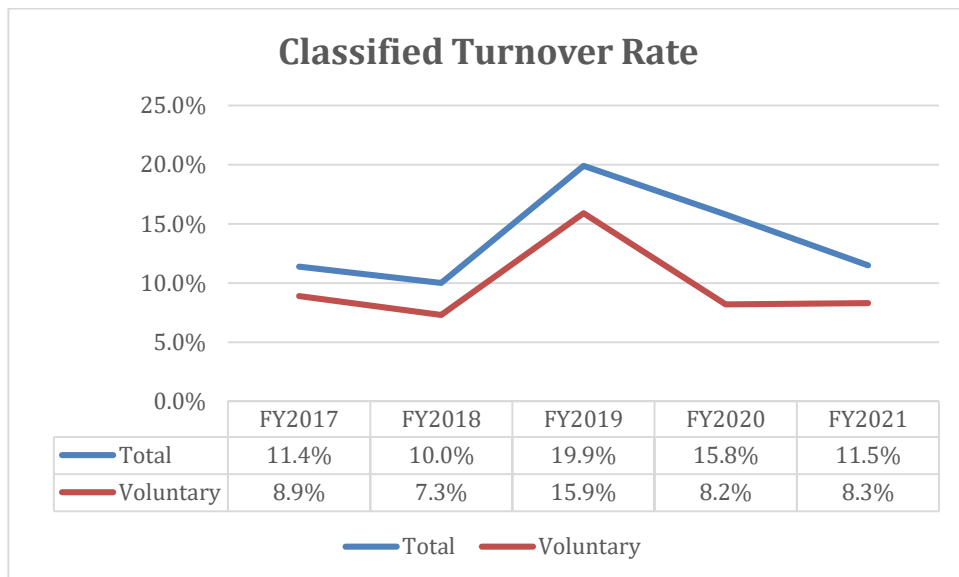
Approximately 65% of our staff are over the age of 40 which makes succession planning key.

TSBVI Employees by Length of Service



Around 30% of our employees have 15+ years of service at TSBVI, including more than 12% having over 25 years. Many of these employees have additional state service separate from their time at TSBVI.

Overall Turnover Rate



The numbers above are from the Texas State Auditor’s Office (SAO). SAO reports TSBVI’s turnover rate for FY2021 as 11.5% overall and 8.3% voluntary. However, the SAO data only includes Classified employees (excludes substitute employees as well as contract staff turnover) so does not provide a full picture of our agency’s turnover.

TSBVI saw a marked increase in turnover from FY2018 to FY2019 that is largely attributed to the Residential Specialist position. Often these employees change to a substitute status and remain employed to fill as needed and available. We have had significant difficulty retaining (and recruiting) these employees who are critical to our student care in Comprehensive Residential Programs including Weekends Home.

Critical Workforce Skills

TSBVI’s teachers and other educational professionals are at the core of what we do. Additionally, direct care paraprofessionals (e.g., Teacher Aides) extend the capabilities of teachers during the school day and provide care, supervision, recreation, and instruction to students during non-school hours. The remainder of our employees work in support of those that work directly with students. This final group of employees offer a wide variety of administrative, technical, and other skills paramount to our school/agency’s success. Based on our wonderfully unique school/agency, the following skills and credentials are critical to the performance of our mission:

- A human service orientation with a strong desire to work with or in support of children and students with disabilities from birth to age 22.
- Proficiency in working with students who are visually impaired, blind or deafblind as well as may have multiple disabilities, including autism and orthopedic impairments.
- Proficiency using and instructing students in the use of specialized technologies for the visually impaired - one of the most critical options (and ever changing) available today for providing access to the world of information for blind learners.
- Proficiency in instructing students in career education and other subjects related to transition to adult life.
- Specialty certifications dependent on position:
 - Certification as a teacher of visually impaired students and special education.

- Paraprofessional certification and qualified under No Child Left Behind Act.
- Certification or licensure in the professional areas that comprise special education related services required for our students: Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Specialist, Licensed Specialist in School Psychology (LSSP), Educational Diagnostician.
- Other professional licensure to support our students: Speech-Language Pathologist, Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Librarian, Social Worker, and Nurse.
- Educational administration certification
- Knowledge of statewide services, regional programs and local school districts and how to collaborate with them.
- Proficiency in training and consulting skills.
- Proficiency in leadership and management skills.
- 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/Agency functions.
- Skill in working collaboratively as a team member.

Future Workforce Profile

Expected Workforce Changes

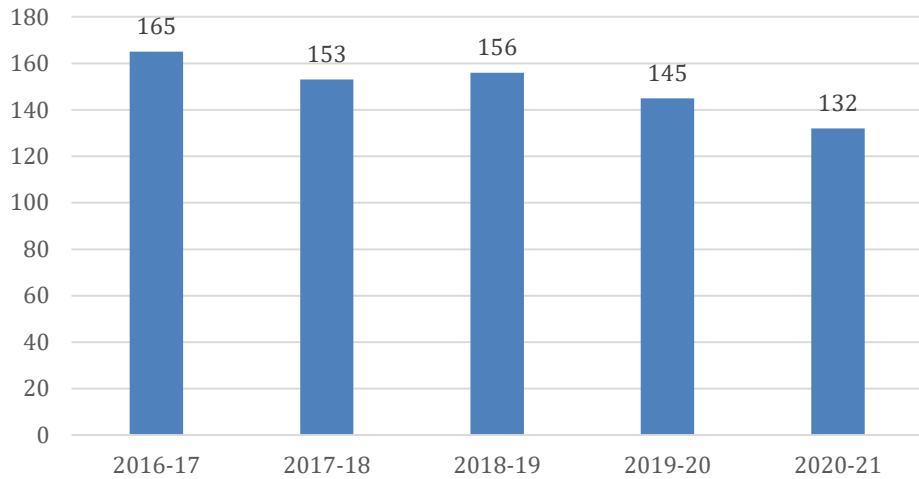
Comprehensive Programs (regular school year) has seen regulatory changes in the services to be provided to students which has resulted in hiring additional targeted positions to meet those new requirements (e.g., tutor support for HB 4545). We expect these types of regulatory changes to continue. At times the changes are immediate and at other times they are for the next school year.

Short-Term Programs (STP), the area that provides TSBVI Summer School, saw a decrease in summer school students during Summer 2019. This was largely driven due to lack of Residential Specialist staff available to support students. We had plans in Summer 2020 to increase enrollment and were on track to do so and then COVID-19 hit. We instead offered a virtual summer school. We saw an increase in the numbers for Summer and 2021 and expect the numbers and weeks offered to increase for Summer 2022.

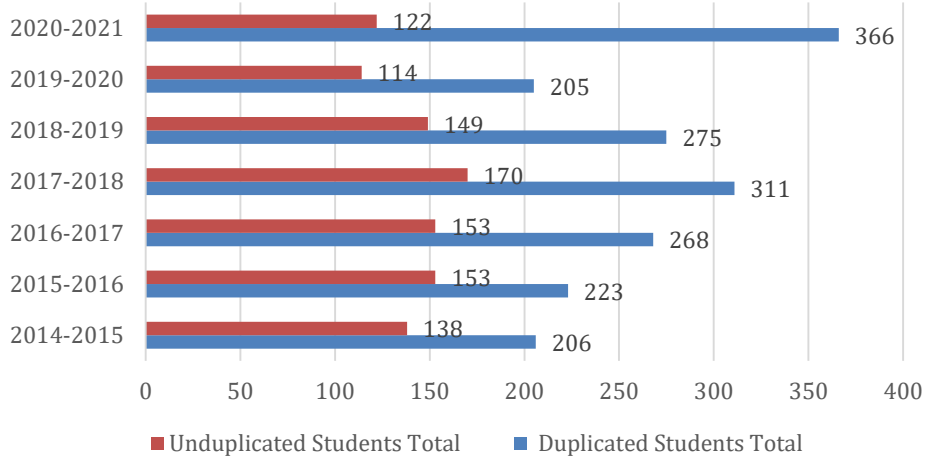
We have seen an increase in the amount of training staff are required to participate in due to regulatory changes (e.g., Trauma-informed Care, Seizure Recognition, and Bleeding Control). This has resulted in turnover becoming even more costly. When we hire an individual and they complete the required training only to leave TSBVI for a higher paying job, that training time (and the expense of them completing) is lost.

TSBVI has an ever expanding reliance on technology, both to execute the School's core mission and to assist in all support activities, resulting in the School needing to have employees proficient in the use of technology as well as highly skilled technical staff to support it.

School Year Total Students

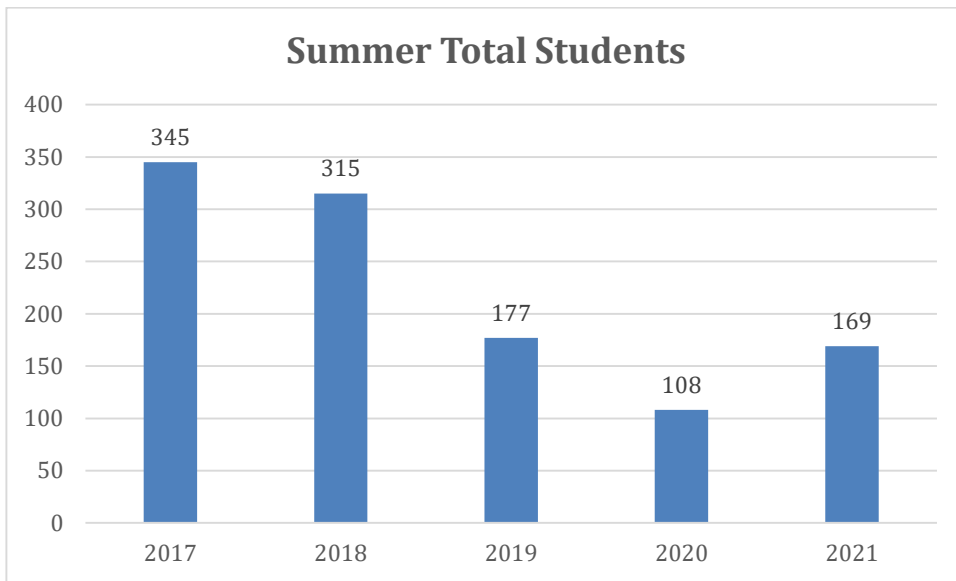


Short-Term Programs Attendance



Some students attend multiple Short-Term Program sessions so both totals are reflected.

- Duplicated students refer to total students in all sessions.
- Unduplicated students account for the number of unique students attending any session.



In Summer 2019 student enrollment was down due to staffing issues in the Residential Specialist position. In Summer 2020 student enrollment was down due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Future Workforce Skills Needed

Many things about the TSBVI workforce will stay consistent however our staff’s skills must continue to evolve to respond to the complexity of our students, their mental health needs, and new regulatory requirements such as more of our teaching staff requiring English as a Second Language (ESL).

TSBVI will continue to have a steady demand for certified VI teachers and O&M instructors, but will also need teachers who are certified in VI along with auditory impairment, ESL and subject specific (e.g., math, science, 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 to respond to the need for more intensive services related to student behavioral disorders and emotional needs. Related to this need, our staff providing direct services to students, whether professional or paraprofessional, must expand their skills managing students' behavior and emotional needs.

Anticipated Changes in the Number of Employees Needed

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 review process. Our goal is to have the student remain in the home district with their family and friends when possible. Students come to TSBVI, when their local school district is not able to fully support their educational needs. We strive to support the education of the almost 11,000 students in Texas whether it is through attendance at our school or through additional support to their school district. Nevertheless, we do not expect a decline in enrollment or demand for other services.

Workforce Gap Analysis

Anticipated Surplus or Shortage of Employees

We anticipate shortages of employees in the following areas:

- Teaching and related services to include LSSP
- Teacher Aide
- Residential program (Residential Specialist)
- Weekends Home program (Residential Specialist, Vehicle Driver)
- Substitute employees

Anticipated Surplus or Shortage of Skills

We anticipate shortages of skills in the following areas:

- We will continue to have an insufficient supply of VI teachers and related service professionals due to retirement and other attrition.
- As technology continues to become more integral to most jobs, increasing technical competence (and comfort with technology advancements) is key. In addition, in some jobs, the required competence level increases with technology related to visual impairment.

Strategies for Workforce Transition

Succession Planning

One of our focus areas is ensuring we consider succession planning and that processes are documented by our management team. We have potential for retirement in some key roles and want to ensure the valuable institutional knowledge is not lost and ensure the smoothest possible transition to successors.

For many years, TSBVI has benefited from a staff committed to working with our students. Many of these staff started in our Residential Program and went on to further their education to move into a teaching and management role. This career progression gives the opportunity for a rewarding professional career.

Direct Instruction and Service

Visual Impairment (VI) Teachers

Action steps to ensure adequate supply of VI teachers:

- 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.
- 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.
- Grown our own VI teachers from within TSBVI:
 - 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.
 - Hire promising teacher candidates who already have Special Education or other related certification.

- 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.

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)

- Continue to identify “high need” credentials based on actual and expected attrition.
- 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."
- Actively solicit interest among current VI teaching staff in these opportunities.
- Actively recruit and train interns.

Outreach Specialists

The majority of outreach specialists are highly experienced VI teachers or professionals in the field of deafblindness. Most of our current employees have progressed to this position following a successful career as a provider of direct instruction. Based on that 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 deafblindness, both on a state and national basis. Our Outreach program is well known and respected so there is an increased chance to recruit candidates from a wide pool and many are usually well known to us.

Management

Educational administration

Several employees in this area have already retired and returned to work. It is expected that succession will be accomplished through filling from within or conducting a national search for outside candidates. Our practice of developing lead teachers helps ensure our future supply of educational leaders.

Management of Support Functions

The non-programmatic management positions are currently staffed with competent, experienced professionals. 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 or the private sector. Should one of these position come vacant, we will follow our normal recruitment approach.

Recruitment and Retention

Residential Instructors

Following the promotion of the new Residential Director a review of the program occurred and is ongoing to identify opportunities to improve our recruitment and retention of Residential Instructors (classification Residential Specialist) for both Comprehensive Residential and Weekend Home Programs.

General Recruitment

TSBVI has had great difficulty getting a sufficient number of applications. Some of this is due to the time it takes to initially register for a WorkInTexas account as opposed to the private sector. Following TSBVI going live with the new WorkInTexas product in August 2019, we have seen a marked decrease in submitted applications. The

decrease was so dramatic that went back to accepting the fillable State of Texas Application (SOTA). Over 50% of our applications are the fillable SOTA. We saw an even further decrease in application due to the pandemic.

TSBVI developed a recruitment plan which includes a focus on increasing our presence in various forms of media which had been used on a very limited basis previously related to recruitment.

General Retention

In November 2021, TSBVI asked UT's Institute for Organizational Excellence to administer an engagement survey. We had a 73% response. Questions could be scored between 100 and 500 points with 350 being the tipping point that determined a positive response. Of the 12 overall areas rated, "Pay" was rated as the most negative with 249 points. This aligns to what we have experienced with recruitment and retention.