Executive Summary

Illinois School - Visually Impaired

Illinois School/Vis. Impaired

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Introduction

Every school has its own story to tell. The context in which teaching and learning takes place influences the processes and procedures by which the school makes decisions around curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The context also impacts the way a school stays faithful to its vision. Many factors contribute to the overall narrative such as an identification of stakeholders, a description of stakeholder engagement, the trends and issues affecting the school, and the kinds of programs and services that a school implements to support student learning.

The purpose of the Executive Summary (ES) is to provide a school with an opportunity to describe in narrative form the strengths and challenges it encounters. By doing so, the public and members of the school community will have a more complete picture of how the school perceives itself and the process of self-reflection for continuous improvement. This summary is structured for the school to reflect on how it provides teaching and learning on a day to day basis.
Description of the School

Describe the school's size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the school serves?

ISVI’s Vision Statement:
The vision of the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired is to provide a quality comprehensive education and serve as a statewide resource to students in Illinois with visual impairments assisting them in becoming personally productive and self-sufficient citizens.

This vision statement was developed with the input of staff, students, parents, alumni and members of our Advisory Council during the 2011 - 2012 school year and summer and the fall of 2012. Additionally an extensive mission statement was developed in the same process and our belief statements are included later in this document.

Overview of ISVI
ISVI is a state-supported residential/day school operated by the Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services. ISVI serves students in Illinois from birth through age 21 who are blind or visually impaired. ISVI was established in 1849 in Jacksonville, Il. The school currently serves approximately 130 students on a continuous daily basis and also provides short-term educational and outreach services to approximately 100 others throughout the state. ISVI is administrated by a Superintendent, two principals; one supervising the academic instruction and one supervising vocational instruction and the transition program, a Director of Support Services, and a Director of Residential Services. In addition, ISVI has department heads in Housekeeping, Grounds, Engineering, and IT systems. ISVI shares part of its leadership team with the Illinois School for the Deaf, also located in Jacksonville, Il. Those team members include a Business Manager and Personnel Director.

ISVI has an Advisory Council which is a group of individuals that are either directly or indirectly associated with blind or visually impaired individuals. The Advisory council serves to advise the ISVI Superintendent, Administration, Staff and/or the Department of Rehabilitation Services concerning ISVI and its facilities and services. The council is comprised of consumers and family members of consumers; persons from related agencies; and members of the statewide community which ISVI serves.

ISVI Programs

Educational Program - ISVI provides students with instruction in the same course work required of all school-aged children in Illinois. ISVI Academic Standards have been developed in alignment with Illinois Learning and Common Core Standards for content areas. When appropriate, modified academic programming is provided which meets the needs of students who are visually impaired and have one or more additional disabilities which prevent them from functioning on grade level. The curriculum is provided in a functional program which focuses on skills that are necessary for each student to begin to explore career and technical interests.

The Expanded Core curriculum for students who are visually impaired, or visually impaired and multiply disabled, is a set of eight skill areas which require direct instruction from specialists. The areas are Compensatory or Functional Academic Skills including Modes of
Communication; Independent Living Skills; Orientation and Mobility; the use of Assistive Technology; Social Interaction Skills; and Visual Efficiency Skills. This instruction is provided to ISVI students through direct services and real life opportunities.

The Transitional Living Center Program (TLC Program) serves students, ages 14½ to 21, who are blind or visually impaired. The program increases students' self-direction and independence in the community by facilitating development of their independent living skills and promoting greater independence in the community. TLC students are supported in employment opportunities and/or junior college coursework. Key features of the TLC Program and Curriculum include problem solving, organization, decision making and planning; personal and civic responsibility; assistive technology; community awareness and accessing resources; orientation and mobility; social skills; literacy; self-advocacy; and time management.

ISVI provides a structured and stimulating learning climate for students. The climate for learning at ISVI is enhanced by involved parents. Parents are encouraged to become involved in school communities and councils, to help with homework, and to encourage and honor their child's successes.

The Illinois School for the Visually Impaired is one of fifteen member schools in an athletic conference known as the North Central Association of Schools for the Blind (NCASB). ISVI also offers students opportunities to join High School or Middle School Student Council, High School Class Meetings and fundraisers

Residential Program - The dormitories are staffed twenty-four hours a day by fully trained residential care staff. The staff are trained in child development as well as other related areas. While in the dormitories, students develop both social skills and independent living skills. The dormitory tries to provide the students with a homelike atmosphere and a variety of family type activities i.e. trips to ball games, concerts, shopping malls, and other such activities.

Outreach Programs - ISVI is involved in several outreach opportunities. The Birth to Three program provides early intervention services for families whose children, from birth to age three, are visually impaired or blind. The Lions Low Vision Clinic brings comprehensive low vision services to children in southern and central Illinois. The Opening Doors conference is a four day event for parents/guardians and their children with a visual impairment ages birth to five. ISVI offers summer camps to bring together students who are blind and visually impaired who attend other schools throughout Illinois. ISVI offers array of workshops and seminars in the field of vision and related areas. These events are held in numerous locations and are open to parents, professionals and anyone interested.

The Community of Jacksonville

The city of Jacksonville, Illinois is located in Morgan County. Jacksonville is located in west-central Illinois on Interstate 72 approximately 35 miles west of Springfield, the state capital of Illinois. Jacksonville has a population of 20,000 and is surrounded by rural areas, small towns, and farms. It is a small city with a relatively low crime rate. The community is economically diverse. Jacksonville population is 90% white, 67% African-American, 1.5% Hispanic, and <1% Asian, American Indian, and Indian. The majority of jobs are labor and farming, along with a large number of professional jobs.

The city hosts a variety of business, services, and educational facilities. It is home to the Jacksonville Developmental Center, Jacksonville Public School System, Four Rivers Special Education District, The Illinois School for the Deaf, Lincoln Land Community College Western Region Education Center, MacMurray College, and Illinois College. In addition to employment opportunities in education agencies the
community is home to many small locally operated businesses and large businesses. Some of the major employers include Nestle Corporation, PACTIV, Hertzberg New Method Book Bindery, Bound to Stay Bound Books, Passavant Area Memorial Hospital, and a minimum security prison.

Jacksonville has several public parks, door-to-door public transportation, community chorale and theatre groups and productions, two movie theatres, a race track, and shopping. It also has its challenges including no commercial transportation hub, limited operation hours for public transportation, a limited selection of entertainment and shopping, and a 35 minute or more drive to a larger city. There is little ethnic diversity in the community and a lack of organized activities for adolescents and teens.

The entire State of Illinois is the "local community" for ISVI. However ISVI's educational and residential program indicate that ISVI is a community within itself. ISVI's multiracial/ethnic percentage fluctuates yearly depending on the number of students we serve from various areas throughout the state. The overall economic make-up of the community is lower to middle class. ISVI tracks this information via the school's database.

ISVI Facilities
The facilities at ISVI consist of nine buildings: 1) the Main which houses administration, core curricular and Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes; 2) Unit 17 which houses the media center, support services including speech and physical and occupational therapy, and Expanded Core Curriculum and services for the blind, including Braille, Low Vision services, and Orientation and Mobility; 3) Gym; 4) Dining Hall; 5) Bus garage; 6) Power plant; 7-9) residence halls. There are computer labs in the Main and Unit 17, and each student is provided a computer in their dorm room.

Current education staff consists of 26 professional including Educators, Low Vision Specialist, Developmental Therapists for birth to three, School Social Worker, a Orientation and Mobility Instructor, and Administrators. All educators meet No child Left Behind Highly Qualified status for their assigned position. Additional personnel include the school, secretaries, library technician, campus supervisors, and food services workers. Several bus drivers and utility workers also provide services to students.

Other support personnel available to assist in meeting the needs of ISVI students include contracted services from a School Psychologist; a Pediatric Psychiatrist; an Occupation Therapist; and a Physical Therapist. Services shared with Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD) include a speech and language specialist and an audiologist. ISVI shares vision services with ISD.

ISVI Students
The current enrollment at ISVI as of September 18, 2012 is 138 students. Of these students, 88 are served on campus as either residential or day students and 50 are served though our Birth to Three program. The following is a breakdown by some demographic categories.

Current students are from 36 different counties in Illinois. The ethnicity of ISVI students includes: White, 70%; Black, 20%; Hispanic, 2%; Multi racial, 2%; American Indian/Alaskan, 1%; not indicated 5%.
School's Purpose

Provide the school's purpose statement and ancillary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs. Describe how the school embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for students.

ISVI's Vision Statement:
The vision of the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired is to provide a quality comprehensive education and serve as a statewide resource to students in Illinois with visual impairments assisting them in becoming personally productive and self-sufficient citizens.

This vision statement was developed with the input of staff, students, parents, alumni and members of our Advisory Council during the 2011-2012 school year and summer and the fall of 2012. Additionally an extensive mission statement was developed in the same process.

Educational Foundation
During the development of the ISVI mission statement, ISVI staff, students, parents and stakeholders also identified the purpose of our school. Purpose was defined as the reason ISVI exists. It was acknowledged that ISVI exists to provide students who are blind and visually impaired an equal education and educational experience with their sighted peers. In addition, nine Belief Statements were established to determine the shared priorities and educational beliefs of the our school. Those Belief Statements are:

We believe children who are blind and visually impaired
1. Are entitled to instruction specially designed to meet their unique needs
2. Are entitled to direct instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum for Blind and Visually Impaired compensatory or functional academic skills, including communication modes, orientation and mobility, social interaction skills, independent living skills, recreation and leisure skills, career education, use of assistive technology, sensory efficiency skills, and self-determination
3. Are entitled to equal opportunity and access to information in all areas as sighted peers including adapted materials
4. Can become personally productive and independent
5. Are entitled to a safe, comfortable, positive and productive learning environment with competent, caring staff
6. Can make transitions to post secondary opportunities
7. Are entitled to receiving instruction from qualified educators
8. Are entitled to access to current technology
9. Opportunities to participate in extra-curricular and recreational activities as sighted peers, such as sports teams, student council, clubs and organizations, and social events.

These beliefs are the foundation of the programs at ISVI.
Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement

Describe the school's notable achievements and areas of improvement in the last three years. Additionally, describe areas for improvement that the school is striving to achieve in the next three years.

Goals - ISVI is aware that the unemployment rate for visually impaired adults is above 50% according to the National Federation of the Blind. One factor influencing this rate of unemployment is low reading skills of the visually impaired population. The ISVI has targeted reading as one of the areas to concentrate efforts for our students. Improving reading has a direct effect on academic achievement and will have a direct effect on improving employment skills and increasing students' opportunities for employment after they leave.

ISVI conducted several surveys of students, staff and parents and assimilation of data to identify an area of needed improvement specific to our students. The survey revealed a weakness in time management and organizational skills. This area was also addressed as a goal for ISVI. This area of improvement will also have an impact on increasing employment skills for our students.

Interventions - ISVI has supported the achievement of these goals with in-service programming. In-services for educators targeting incorporating reading and comprehension instruction and practice in all content areas as well as, instruction of time management and organization skills in the residential and educational setting have been provided.

Opportunities - In spite of the challenges faced by ISVI we still see continuing and new opportunities through which to serve and benefit students and accomplish school goals. Opportunities include:

**Student enrollment has increased gradually over the past two years.**

**Students and families from around the state continue to seek admission and rely on outreach services.**

**The ISVI Parent Association is active in on-going fundraisers and planning events for students, families, and community members.**

**A historical collaborative relationship between Illinois State University and ISVI developed into a three member team last year with the addition of MacMurray College to the collaborative relationship.**

**Through on-going initiatives student-centered IEPs which are recommended best practice by ISBE are becoming the norm. After limited trials last year the process is in place for over half the student population. Our goal is to have a few students present on the process to education oriented groups.**

**We have tentative plans to expand outreach opportunities for students statewide by hosting a “Braille Challenge” this winter, and to educators state-wide by hosting a one-day workshop in the spring.**
Additional Information

Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.

Individual Needs - Students attending ISVI display varied and unique individual qualities. All ISVI students have a diagnosed visual impairment that impacts their educational achievement and each student has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Many students have one or more additional disabilities including Mental Retardation, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Speech and Language Disorder, Specific Learning Disability, Traumatic Brain Injury, Developmental Delay, Hearing Disorder, Deafness, Deaf-Blind, Orthopedic Disability, Emotional Disorder, Other Health Impairment. Parents or guardians participate in the IEP process yearly and receive quarterly updates from educators. Educators also communicate with parents on a consistent basis through phone and email communication. ISVI provides educational programming to best meet the inclusive needs of individual students.

Assessments - Students attending ISVI are involved in a variety of assessments and evaluations. In the elementary and middle school program, students are assessed in the fall and again in the spring using the Terra Nova Standardized test. This process allows educators to mark growth for each student as well as assess any regression students may have experienced over the summer. This assessment is currently being reviewed and research is being conducted to update this process and assessment. Students reading and comprehension skills are assessed in the fall and spring with the STAR Reading Assessment through the Accelerated Reader program. Elementary and Middle School students also participate in ISAT and Alternate Assessment as determined appropriate at the IEP. High School students are involved in standardized testing through the PLAN, the EXPLORE and the ACT/PSAE. During all standardized testing experiences ISVI students are provided with the allowed accommodations as stated on their IEP. In addition, ISVI students are regularly evaluated in the following areas: Assistive Technology; Low Vision; Orientation and Mobility; Cognitive Functioning; Braille Proficiency; Speech and Language; Children served through the Birth to Three program are assessed using the OREGON Project for Visually Impaired Preschoolers. The information gained through evaluation and assessments provides valuable information to educators as they plan instruction and instructional delivery.

ISVI is a state-supported residential/day school operated by the Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services which serves students in Illinois from birth through age 21 who are blind or visually impaired. ISVI has an Advisory Council comprised of consumers and family members of consumers; persons from related agencies; and members of the statewide community. The Advisory council serves to advise the ISVI Superintendent, Administration, Staff and/or the Department of Rehabilitation Services concerning ISVI and its facilities and services.

ISVI provides instruction to a diverse group of students all who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and receive Special Education Services. Students receive instruction in core curricular areas and they have access to general education curriculum utilized by non-disabled peers. Students also receive instruction in Expanded Core Curriculum for students with visual impairments, based on individual needs revealed through assessment data. The Expanded Core Curriculum subjects include skills directly impacted by vision loss and blindness which are imperative to academics, communication, independent living, and social skills. All of the teachers and related services professionals at ISVI hold valid certificates through the Illinois State Board of Education and are highly qualified. ISVI boasts many strengths, identifies weak areas as challenges to improve, and recognizes multiple opportunities for our future. As a school our primary focus is serving students to the best of our ability and we approach that through good direct instructional strategies, continuing staff development, communication to all stakeholders, and sound utilization of our resources.