



OVERBROOK SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

VOL. 70, No. 2, SPRING 2016

TOWERSNEWS

REACHING OUT



(left to right) Early Intervention and Outreach Coordinator Durrae Delp-Ducret, Lynne Williams, Administrative Coordinator for Early Intervention Services, and Marguerite Bradley, Early Childhood Program Coordinator, Center Based; Top right photo: OSB Teacher Anita Brophy with Liam P. Bottom right photo: OSB Therapist Jill Samberg with Dinushka P.

Within the past two years, OSB has collaborated with our region's school districts and charter schools to provide students with visual impairments the vital educational and supplemental services they need to become successful.

"School Age Itinerant Services is probably the fastest growing program in OSB right now," says Lynne Williams, OSB Administrative Coordinator for Early Intervention Services. "We are receiving a lot of referrals to do independent evaluations of students in distant communities like Lehigh County to southern New Jersey, and more."

Currently, a total of 32 students in the region are being seen by OSB professionals for vision services with six of those same students being seen for orientation and mobility services as well.

"Our goal is to provide vision services to students and families regardless of where their primary placement is," says Williams. "We want to make ourselves available as a resource to families and educators however possible, and this School Age Itinerant Program allows us to do that."

In addition to the Itinerant Program, the OSB Early Intervention Programs provide services to children and their families throughout Philadelphia and surrounding counties, and are delivered in a variety of ways. *The community based services* (ages birth to three) are typically provided in the home and occasionally in daycare settings. The three to five year-olds are usually seen in preschools/daycares and occasionally in the home.

"We train the parents," says Durrae Delp-Ducret, OSB Early Intervention and Outreach Coordinator. "We provide these families with the knowledge and resources they need to help them help their child. The more the family embeds the skills we've taught them in everyday practice with the child, the greater the outcome." The staff also supports families by going with them to doctors' appointments, organizing family support groups, and planning activities at OSB and in the community.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends:

With more than half of the 2015-2016 school year completed, I thought it was a good time to share a strategic planning update with you. If you recall, the four major areas of focus in the OSB Strategic Plan are:

- *Continue to Strengthen the Delivery of OSB's Comprehensive Services*
- *Continue to Develop, Support and Strengthen OSB's Board, Faculty and Staff*
- *Build OSB's visibility locally, nationally, and internationally through dynamic external partnerships*
- *Diversify and Expand OSB's Revenue Sources and Increase its Financial Sustainability*

Although I am hard-pressed to feature all of the current partnerships of our organization in a few paragraphs, I did want to share a few highlights with you. During this school year, we have:

- *Partnered with WHYY-TV12 on their Flash Media Labs, a media education program that teaches OSB students how to operate cameras, frame shots, conduct interviews, and edit film*
- *Partnered with General Electric Lighting, Vanguard Building Solutions, and the Foundation for Fighting Blindness (FFB) to improve lighting in our Field House, our covered walkway canopies, and in two Early Childhood classrooms*
- *Partnered with Comcast to bring their new voice guidance technology, called the "Talking Guide," to more visually impaired people in our region*
- *Enhanced our branding opportunities and have new "looks" for the TOWERS newsletters, the general OSB brochure, and our annual report*
- *Diversified our funding opportunities with events like the Overbrook Experience dinner*
- *Expanded our visibility, internationally, with OSB staff members Jackie Brennan, Dael Cohen, and Wenru Niu, recently presenting in China*
- *Engaged parents with the assistance of the PERC organization*

These collaborations with stakeholders will broaden our reach further into the community and strengthen our legacy of providing comprehensive services to students who are blind or visually impaired and may have other disabilities as well.

We still have several months left to demonstrate our capacity for collaboration and educational leadership for the benefit of our students. I look forward to sharing additional updates with you in the future about the progress and accomplishments of our adopted strategic plan.

"Mr. K"

Gerald Kitzhoffer, *Executive Director and CEO*

WELCOME NEW STAFF MEMBERS



(left to right) Patience Piesecki (School to Work Teacher), Ernest Grimes (Security), Carmelina Arias-Torres (Human Resources Specialist), Jeannette Davis (Teacher Sub), Erica Graves (Transition Paraeducator)



(left to right) Donna Cohen (Housekeeping), Sterling Hayney (Housekeeping), Nia Green (Middle School Intervener)



TOWERS NEWSLETTER

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FOLLOW US



OSB HUSKIES HAVE PRIDE!

Students and the entire OSB staff participated in the 2nd Annual OSB Spirit Week. The week-long celebration of school pride included fun activities like Crazy Hat Day, Mix It Up Day, Pajama Day, Philadelphia Sports Team Day, and Red and White Day, and culminated with a special pep rally assembly on Friday, February 5th in the Field House.



REACHING OUT

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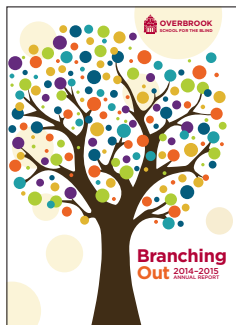


OSB Speech Therapist Laura Stephan with Daniel A.

The Early Childhood Program, led by Marguerite Bradley, is the *center-based* division of the Early Intervention Program. "We service children ages three through five at OSB," says Bradley. "The program is designed to give our students a fun and educational pre-school experience with a special focus on meeting the needs of children with visual impairment and possible additional challenges. The major objectives of the program are to prepare the children to enter school programs that are appropriate to their abilities and needs, that provide the experiences and opportunities enjoyed by their typical peers, and to become as independent as possible."

In some cases, children who begin here at OSB in the Early Childhood Program move to other school programs, and when their needs change, they return to OSB. "Once they learn about the comprehensive services we provide, which is all part of the Expanded Core Curriculum, they come back to OSB," says Williams.

Wherever the students are based, OSB seeks to empower families with the knowledge and resources needed to be advocates for their children. "At OSB, we provide a continuum of services," says Williams. "We go into preschools, we go into schools, we go into homes, and try to cover it all. I think that says a lot about how we want to help, on campus and in the community. Wherever the kids are that need services, whether they're here on campus or we're going to them, they're getting what they need from the dedicated staff at OSB."



"BRANCHING OUT," the 2014-2015 Overbrook School for the Blind Annual Report, is now available. If you would like to request a copy, please contact Maryann Flack in the OSB Development Office at (215) 877-0313, ext. 256.

The Annual Report is available in a variety of formats, including Braille, UEB Braille, and Large Print, thanks to Rebecca Illniski, OSB Braille Transcriptionist.

The Annual Report is also available on the OSB website at www.obs.org.



TVI

OSB Executive Director and CEO Gerald Kitzhoffer announced the dates of this summer's OSB Transition Vocational Initiative (TVI)

From July 10th to July 29th, OSB will present the TVI Program, a three-week residential summer program to prepare students (ages 16-21) who are blind or visually impaired for employment. Students who are planning to move on to supported or competitive employment, attend vocational training, or attend college after high school, may attend the TVI Program which focuses on building skills that are essential for employment and living independently. All TVI Program participants get to experience living with roommates in the White Hall Independent Living Apartments on the OSB campus.

The TVI Program is presented in partnership with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS) within the Department of Labor & Industry's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. To qualify for the TVI Program, students must be registered with their local Blindness and Visual Services agency.

FOR MORE INFORMATION or to apply for the TVI Program, contact Stephanie Hays, TVI Program Coordinator, at shays@obs.org or (215) 877-0313, ext. 350.



HAPPENINGS AT OSB



1. Lighting Improvement

OSB was the recipient of a significant on-campus lighting improvement, thanks to a Foundation Fighting Blindness collaboration with GE Lighting. The re-lamping effort replaced much of the school's existing lighting with energy-efficient lighting and fixtures throughout several classrooms, along the outdoor canopy corridor, and within OSB's Field House. GE donated new lighting products and all fixtures were installed by Vanguard Building Solutions, LLC. Representatives from GE Lighting, Vanguard Building Solutions, the Foundation Fighting Blindness, and other guests gathered with our students for a "Light Up" tour to see the upgrades and improved lighting quality firsthand.

2. Music Therapy

Congratulations to the Music Therapy Program which presented their first theater production ever here at OSB entitled, "The Snowman." There was dancing, singing, and musical instruments, with adaptations for those who needed it, and included about 50 OSB students from the Elementary to the School To Work Programs.

3. "Daredevil" Star Charlie Cox

stopped by on February 16th to speak with OSB High School and School to Work students about working in the entertainment industry. Cox depicts Matt Murdock, the blind lawyer-by-day, superhero-by-night Marvel comic book character on Netflix's new hit series, "Daredevil." Charlie worked with blindness consultant, Joe Strechay (from the Pennsylvania Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services), in order to get some experience of day-to-day life as a blind person. After an informative Q and A session, Charlie posed for photos with students and promised to return to OSB in the future.

4. Pancake Breakfast

Bring your appetite to OSB on Sunday, April 10th! It's our Annual Pancake Breakfast, hosted by the Overbrook School for the Blind District 14-A Cabinet Committee and the Philadelphia Filipino-American Lions Club. Beginning at 8 a.m., breakfast includes all you can eat pancakes, scrambled eggs, sausage, toast, potatoes, coffee, and juice, all for \$8 per person. Raffle tickets are \$1 each, and prizes this year are \$500 for first, \$350 for second, and \$150 for third prize. Tickets are available at the door.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Just For Fun



Students from Ms. Flail’s Early Childhood classroom dressed up as one hundred year-olds to celebrate the 100th Day of School at OSB. Hang on, *Old Timers*. Only a few more months to go!

SCHOOL CALENDAR

MAR	23	Wed	SPRING VACATION BEGINS SCHOOL CLOSED
	29	Tues	All Students Return. Classes resume at 8:15 a.m.
APR	1	Fri	12 Noon Dismissal for Students; Professional Development Day afternoon for staff
	4	Mon	SCHOOL IN SESSION
MAY	6	Fri	Prom at 7 p.m.
	19	Thurs	Spring Concert at 7 p.m. Auditorium. Public invited.
	27	Fri	Achievement Day at 9 a.m. Auditorium.
	30	Mon	MEMORIAL DAY SCHOOL CLOSED
JUN	6	Mon	Fun Day for all educational programs
	16	Thur	Commencement at 9:30 a.m. Auditorium.
	17	Fri	Last Day of School 12 Noon Dismissal for Students
	24–26	Wknd	Alumni Weekend