

TRANSFORMING LIVES



2023–2024 ANNUAL REPORT



OVERBROOK
SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

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THE MISSION OF OVERBROOK SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND is to develop and deliver education that enhances the options available for persons with visual impairments, including those with additional challenges, so that they have the greatest opportunity to experience active and fulfilling lives.

THE VISION OF OVERBROOK SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND is to inspire individuals with visual impairment, including those with additional challenges, to achieve their highest potential, to share our culture that embraces their abilities; to be a dynamic and leading organization; and to use our expertise to positively influence our students, families, partners and peers, regionally, nationally and internationally.



Dear Friends:

It was quite a year for Overbrook School for the Blind. Our students' possibilities and capabilities emerged in exciting ways, much like our student's view of the newly formed butterfly on the cover photo.

Over the past year, our service to students underwent a chrysalis of change. OSB's well-regarded Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) program extended a more targeted curriculum to fit the unique needs of each student. Our Orientation and Mobility Services (O&M) expanded, better supporting our students' capacity to navigate their world. And we restarted several of our athletic programs affected by the pandemic shutdowns, and – importantly and thankfully – reclaimed a sense of community among students, their families, faculty, volunteers, donors and partners.

The lifeblood of our mission continues to pulse with a commitment to progress and improve for the benefit of our students. Our School-to-Work Program is being re-branded as STRIDE. Its metamorphosis better reflects the program's commitment to empower our older students with real-world workplace experience, leading to successful post-school outcomes.

Closely aligned is our new and novel partnership with the federally funded AmeriCorps program that benefited OSB students in myriad ways. Students gained work readiness skills and gained needed confidence and social skills important to the workplace environment.

We could not have done any of it without you. Your continued commitment has fueled our aspirations, and our success. So, on behalf of the students we serve, we proudly share the Overbrook School for the Blind's Annual Report with our family, friends, and supporters.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lyle Sine".

Lyle T. Sine
President, Board of Trustees

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Todd Reeves".

Todd Reeves
Executive Director and CEO

2023–2024 AT A GLANCE



174 STUDENTS



35

Blind



130

Visually Impaired



60

CVI



29

Hearing Loss

LITERACY MODE



42

Braille Users



57

Large Print



78

Objects/
Pictures

AMBULATION



100

Walker



53

Wheelchair



12

Adaptive Mobility
Device

RELATED SERVICES



135

Occupational
Therapy



93

Physical
Therapy



129

Speech



17

Audiology



104

Orientation
and Mobility

INSTRUCTIONAL CURRICULUM

Experiential: **75**

Life Skills: **33**

Functional: **37**

Academic: **19**

WORK EXPERIENCE

On Campus: **53**

Off Campus: **7**

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Intervener: **8**

1:1: **13**

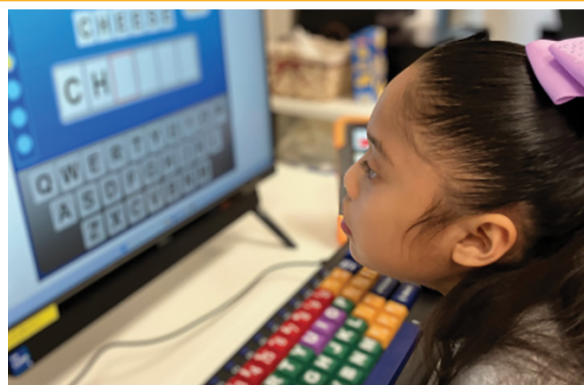
1:1 Nurse: **15**

BEHAVIOR SUPPORT

Counseling: **12**

Behavior Plan: **22**

OSB HIGHLIGHTS



Occupational Therapy

During her occupational therapy session, Primary student Jasmine uses a color-coded keyboard to type and match letters on the screen. For students with low vision, color and color contrast play an important role in identifying objects and letters. Lessons included in this activity involve Concept Development, Orientation and Mobility, and Social Skills.



CVI

Under Dr. Beth Ramella's leadership and expertise, OSB has quickly established itself as one of the country's premier schools for maximizing educational opportunities for students diagnosed with CVI -- a neurological visual impairment that traces to the visual pathways or visual processing centers of the brain rather than damage within the eye or ocular visual system. The diagnosis of CVI has increased exponentially over the last two decades among developed countries. Of OSB's 174 students, 60 have been diagnosed with CVI.



Assistive Devices

A day of learning for Early Childhood students might include the use of a tactile keyguard to communicate, working on cane skills, and employing assistive technology like the Jupiter CCTV.



OSB AmeriCorps

OSB began a unique partnership with the federally-funded AmeriCorps program in 2023-24, creating a virtual work readiness program called Next Steps Skills program. OSB's 10 inaugural AmeriCorps members received 375 hours of professional development through their term of service, 60 hours of 1-on-1 mentoring and 71 different work-readiness lessons and social activities. Their knowledge of work-readiness skills increased by 180 percent.

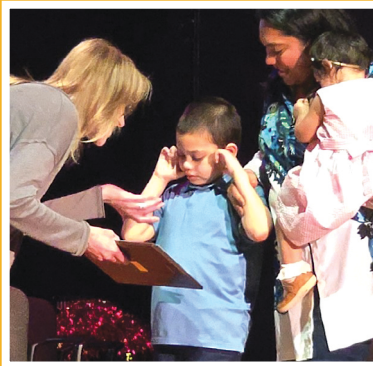
Dr. Ramella Selected as New Superintendent

After a nationwide search, we concluded there was no place like home to find our new Superintendent. Dr. Ramella was selected in June to replace Jackie Brennan, who retired after 44 years serving in various roles at the school.



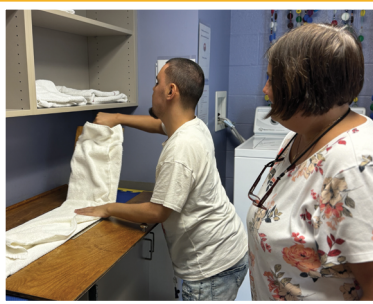
OSB International Program Visits United Nations, Asia

Representing both Overbrook School for the Blind and the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment, Executive Director and CEO Todd Reeves addressed The Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on June 13.



Legs to a Long Journey

For students who have navigated their educational journey with the challenges of visual impairment, graduation symbolizes the successful completion of a rigorous and often demanding program that incorporates not only academic success but also personal growth, resilience, and the development of skills essential for future independence.



Working at the KAC

Socialization, communication, teamwork, preparedness, accountability, following directions and instructions, signing in for work, getting paid monthly and keeping track of personal wages are all part of the KAC Skill for Transition to Independence, Education, and Employment program at the Kappen Aquatic Center. Some of the jobs STRIDE students participated in were: front lobby greeters, answering the phone, making copies, delivering mail and other items throughout the school, and collecting, washing and folding towels.



OSB Teacher Honored by NHL

Secondary teacher Kelsey McGuire was one of three finalists for the NHL's Willie O'Ree Community Hero Award for her efforts towards establishing a blind hockey program in the Delaware Valley. Her efforts created opportunities for dozens of blind children interested in trying the game and led to the formation of the 19th blind hockey team in the United States.



White Hall Living

One aspect of the expanded core curriculum is developing independent living skills. Food preparation, eating skills, personal hygiene, time and money management, household tasks and clothing care are just some of the skills developed through the White Hall Independent Living Program, enabling students to work and live on or off campus.



Obstacle Course Thursdays

In Katie Davis's Early Childhood "Obstacle Course Thursdays," students learned to navigate obstacles, take turns, and persist when they wanted to give up – mastering motor skills. Activities included jumping on a trampoline, walking on a balance beam, shooting basketballs, crawling into a body roller (pictured above) and many others. Additional challenges were added each week, developing and improving students' fine and gross motor skills.



O&M Excursion

In April, a group of students tested their independent travel skills by navigating the streets of Philadelphia to visit The Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University. Selected for their proficiency in cane use, phone skills, street crossing, and mass transit, the students used Apple Maps to plan their route, which included a trolley ride and two walks.



Color Sensory Days

Each month the Early Childhood Program celebrated Color Day by incorporating the color into lessons. On this day, brown was explored through the ingredients required to make brownies – and in the result! Students worked on their motor skills through the mixing process and experienced the different sensory components that went into making the brownies. They then enjoyed the benefits of their labor during snack time!



Athletics

The Athletics Program continued to regain its post-pandemic footing in 2023-24, hosting its first swim meet since 2019-20, and fielding teams in goal ball and track and field. The OSB team placed third in the EAAB Swim Tournament at the KAC and took home a Sportsmanship Award. In the spring, OSB's track team traveled to Maryland for its EAAB meet and several students won medals with third place finishes.



Horticulture Center Turns Five

This spring, the M. Christine Murphy Horticulture Center celebrated its 5th-year anniversary. In a relatively short amount of time, the greenhouse and the instructional opportunities it has provided have become an integral part of the OSB experience. In the photo, Early Childhood students wash and sort tomatoes in the greenhouse, using touch, motor skills, and social skills to complete a task.



Winter Concert

At the start of the 2023-24 school year, Ihama A. began the difficult task of playing the piano by learning how to transcribe chord progressions. He continued to develop throughout the year. By the winter concert, "Home for the Holidays," he was able to perform the complete melody to "Linus and Lucy" by Vince Guaraldi Trio.



Spring Concert

Students Andre N. and Jane C. use body percussion throughout their vocal solos in "Bhombela." This song was a big accomplishment for the choir, which learned to sing in Zulu, a South African language, and perform body percussion as an ensemble. It also electrified the students and family that filled the auditorium that night.



When alumna Nanci Sumner met blind runner Jason Romero at the 2023 Overbrook Experience, she was awed. His 3,063 mile run from Los Angeles to New York City in 2016 to emphasize that “all things are possible” was, she said, nearly impossible for her to fathom.

But when she read his book, “Running Into The Dark,” recounting its challenges and perils, that awe morphed into inspiration. She couldn’t run very far, she thought, but she could and would walk miles for a cause she loved more than any others, dating back to her days as a student at Overbrook.

“I still enjoy going back and seeing the students,” she said recently while visiting the school for an event. “They seem so happy and the education they’re getting is really awesome.”

So, Nanci walked. And walked. And

walked. Strategically mapping it out amid two familiar Dunkin’ Donuts, she created her own 10-mile walkathon, soliciting sponsorships from her fellow parishioners at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, and family and friends as well.

The effort successfully raised \$1,000 for OSB, which she proudly presented to Executive Director Todd Reeves. “My legs got sore, and I was tired, but it was worth it,” she said of her trek. “I thought a lot about why I was doing it, about the students. Some of them have multiple disabilities and the teachers have to adapt to it. They have to know what they’re doing.

And they do.”

For Nanci, it was just the latest appreciative effort she has made on behalf of the school that embraced her as a child, taught her skills that translated into a 35-year career as a clerk/typist and is still an integral part of her identity.

A member of the Class of 1973, Nanci is still involved with the Alumni Association, serving on the Alumni Board and Social Committee. She is active in the Philadelphia Regional Council of the Blind and is a member of the South Philadelphia Lions Club, where she serves on the Board of Directors and also does photography and videography for the Club.

In 2019, Nanci received OSB’s Distinguished Alumni Award

She also offers her photography skills generously to the school when needed – which is often. “I would do anything for Overbrook,” she said while sitting on one of the picturesque benches. “It’s such a great place. I love my school.”

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Lehigh Area

Berks County

Muhlenberg

Bucks County

Bristol Township

Camden County

Camden City

Chester County

Avon Grove
Coatesville Area
Great Valley
Phoenixville Area
Tredyffrin-Easttown
West Chester Area

Delaware County

Chester-Upland
Haverford Township
Interboro

Marple Newtown

Penn-Delco
Radnor Township
Rose Tree Media
Southeast Delco
Springfield
Upper Darby
Wallingford-Swarthmore
William Penn

Lehigh County

East Penn

Mercer County

Ewing Township

Montgomery County

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Cheltenham Township
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Jenkintown

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Lower Moreland Township
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North Penn
Perkiomen Valley
Pottsgrove
Pottstown
Springfield Township
Spring-Ford Area
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Upper Moreland Township
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Wissahickon

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Cyber Charter School

Mastery Charter School -

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Mastery Charter School -
Grover Cleveland
Elementary
Mastery Charter School -
Hardy Williams High
Mastery Charter School -
Mann Campus
Mastery Charter School -
Pastorius - Richardson
Elementary School
Mastery Charter School -
Smedley Elementary
Memphis Street Academy
Charter School
Philadelphia Performing Arts
Charter School
Universal Alcorn
Charter School
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Charter School



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Thank you for your generosity and commitment to our students. As a donor, you are an essential part of our mission to enhance the lives of students with blindness, visual impairment, and other challenges. This list includes donors who made a gift between July 2023 and June 2024. We have made every effort to ensure accuracy. Please accept our apologies for an incorrect listing or omission, and let us know about the error by emailing development@obs.org.

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Overbrook School for the Blind is a private, non-profit educational organization that qualifies for tax-exempt contributions. There are many ways for individuals, families, foundations, and corporations to support the School and its programs, including:

Check: Please make your check payable to Overbrook School for the Blind and mail to the address below.

Credit card: Please visit our website at www.obs.org and click "MAKE A GIFT" to use our secure online donation form to make a one-time gift or set up a recurring monthly gift with your credit card.

United Way: Overbrook is a partner with United Way. Our agency number is 00816.

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Planned Giving: Overbrook accepts outright bequests and other types of estate gifts. For further information, please visit the "PLANNED GIVING" SECTION of our website.

For complete information about supporting the school please consult the "GET INVOLVED" section of our website at www.obs.org or contact:

Development Office, Overbrook School for the Blind
6333 Malvern Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19151
Tel: 215.877.0313, ext. 264
Email: development@obs.org

2023–2024 FINANCIAL REVIEW

OPERATING REVENUES

State & Local Tuition	\$23,007,110
Government & Grants	1,494,995
Gifts & Private Support	4,816,804
Other Income	563,802

TOTAL	\$29,882,711
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OPERATING EXPENSES

Early Intervention	\$1,110,699
Preschool	6,730,597
School Age	21,629,994
International Outreach	411,420

TOTAL	\$29,882,711
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