

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT  
Charles C. Woodcock, Superintendent

This, the Twenty-Eighth Biennial Report of the Oregon State School for the Blind, located at 700 Church Street, S.E., Salem, Oregon, is submitted as an official report to the Board of Control and, also, submitted with the idea that it may be of general interest to individuals seeking information about the school.

It is interesting to note the origin of the school. The school was created by the passage of: "An act to appropriate \$4,000, gold coin, for the education of the blind of this state and to provide for the same", which was approved by Governor L. F. Grover in 1872. Following the provisions of this act, the State Board of School Land Commissioners arranged to open a small boarding school consisting of one teacher, Miss Nellie Simpson, and two pupils. The school was established at Salem in the Nesbit home in 1873. The next year, with seven pupils enrolled, the first Superintendent was appointed to take charge of this "Oregon Institute for the Blind." From 1879 until 1883, the school was closed; and then the school was moved to the Snowden Building on Twelfth Street near Ferry.

During 1894 a new building was constructed for blind pupils "on the Mute School Site", then at Church and Mission Streets, which remained until 1956 when it was replaced by new construction.

The school has developed over the years to the point where the campus now consists of seven modern buildings, a boiler plant and maintenance repair shop, including a series of storerooms and garages. These buildings, built on a seven and one-half acre campus just six blocks south of the State Capitol, are designed for 100 students.

The following paragraphs describe the climate in which children learn, the goals of the school, population served, admission procedures, and curriculum offered for a school of this type. This material is the result of planning done during this biennium.

A blind child living in Oregon lives in a state in which there is a widespread belief that a blind child is first a child. His emotions, desires, and needs are fundamentally the same as those of other children. At the Oregon State School for the Blind, the child will find companionship among playmates and stimulation from the physical environment and the activity program. He will soon learn that the adults associated with the program consider him as an individual person with the right and dignity that accompany such recognition. Because the adults around him believe in him, the child comes to believe in himself and will begin to meet the expectations of the various aspects of the curriculum. That he finds this quality of influence at the school is the result of much thought, experience, and planning directed toward just such an awakening.

BROAD OUTLINE OF GOALS FOR OREGON STATE SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

Education

To assist blind and visually impaired children to attain a level of individual mastery of their physical, social, emotional, academic, and spiritual world.

Interpretation

To assist the public to attain an informed status about the many visual deficit conditions and the implications of these conditions for personal adjustment and individual competence within the context of community living.

Leadership

To assist the staff to develop further their capabilities, attitudes, and level of satisfaction so as to promote the effectiveness of their performance in their many roles in the school.

Research

To provide a setting for the continuous exploration of problems associated with visual impairment, such setting to be used by school staff and other qualified investigators. The intent of such exploration would be discovering new knowledge, new approaches, new materials, and of perfecting existing methods and materials to enhance the community effort in behalf of blind and visually impaired children.

Participation

To contribute as an integral member agency to the community welfare.

## POPULATION SERVED BY THE SCHOOL

The population served by the Oregon State School for the Blind consists of blind and severely, visually impaired children. Most of these children are residents of Oregon. A few are enrolled by tuition agreement with other governmental jurisdictions, particularly Alaska. The blind population may be subdivided into those who were born totally blind (congenitally blind) and those who became blind after having seen to some extent at some time (adventitiously blind).

The severely, visually impaired population may be characterized as consisting of those children visually impaired to the degree that special materials and/or services are required. The vision of these children, for the most part, falls within the wide range indicated by the legal definition of blindness: "Central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with best possible correction, or a field defect in which the widest diameter of the visual field subtends an angular distance no greater than 20 degrees."

Populations of pupils in each of these visual classifications--congenitally blind, adventitiously blind, and severely, visually impaired--may be further classified by the addition of their physical disabilities, of emotional disturbance, or of retardation in development, or of any combination of these. The blind or severely, visually impaired child without additional complications is a rarity. In fact, a population of 100 at the Oregon State School for the Blind might represent, in terms of teacher load, an equivalent population of 600 pupils with normal vision.

Programs of the school provide services for children from pre-school age through age 18. The academic program of the school extends from kindergarten through the ninth grade. It may become apparent at any stage in participation in one of the curricula of Oregon State School for the Blind that more appropriate service could be rendered by another school or agency. In this event, procedures would be instituted for an orderly transfer. If students, in consultation with their parents, choose to continue their education beyond the ninth grade, they are referred to the Division of Special Education of the Oregon State Department of Education. This agency will make arrangements for their enrollment in public or private schools. If students choose to work after the ninth grade or after age 18, they are referred, again in consultation with their parents, to appropriate community agencies for vocational training and placement or for care.

## ADMISSION AND PLACEMENT PROCEDURES

Application for admission to the school is made in writing to the Superintendent. Upon acceptance for admission, extensive reviews and evaluations are made of the case to ascertain the initial placement of the child in the proper curriculum. This evaluation is accomplished by a placement team consisting of the Supervising Teacher, Director of Health Services, one or more teacher-therapists, one or more counselor-therapists, the psychologist, the parent counselor, and the Director of Dormitories. This does not mean, however, that the child must remain in his initial placement. If it seems advisable to shift the child to another curriculum level, such action is taken along with appropriate counseling to both the child and his parents. Not all applications for admission to the school come from Oregon children of pre-school age. Some will be transfers from other school systems. At whatever point in his educational experience a child comes to the school, the same admission and placement procedures apply.

The term curriculum is used in the broader sense to include all experiences of a child which are part of a plan for guided living. The school has three curriculum levels as described in the following sections.

A. Curriculum I

The primary objective of Curriculum I is to help each child learn to manage himself in terms of meeting the demands of daily living. These goals include:

1. Development of functional oral language skills.
2. Development of self-care so that others may be relieved of details of daily care.
3. Development of abilities in orientation and mobility, which would extend the child's environment.

The program is pre-designed in general terms only and with certain broad goals. The teachers and therapists working with these children understand that building an individual program for each child is a continuous procedure demanded by the complex learning system of each child. Realistic and meaningful day-to-day goals can be developed only after the therapist and the child have learned much from each other.

Time, patience, repetition, and keen observation may succeed in unlocking potentialities. The learning in Curriculum I is individually oriented.

B. Curriculum II

Curriculum II will contain the content of Curriculum I. Super-imposed will be the primary objective of Curriculum II which is to guide the child in his development of communication and socialization so that he may interact with others in a friendly and secure manner. In this interaction, he becomes better acquainted with himself in relation to others; he begins to recognize what he can do in terms of the skills and capabilities of others. He also begins to learn what not to do in terms of the rights and dignity of those about him. He is encouraged to develop a more realistic concept of himself through exploration of his non-verbal abilities such as those of performance, space, and memory. He begins to learn specific manual skills and their importance to him. Such training is included in each child's program whether or not the child evidences a potential for productivity in the future labor market.

Only that academic work which the child needs to make his living experiences more useful will be added in this curriculum.

While some of each child's learning needs still are met through individually oriented methods, there are more and more group-oriented learning situations utilized in Curriculum II.

C. Curriculum III

Curriculum III closely conforms to the Oregon State Department of Education Curriculum Guides for elementary and junior high schools of the state with appropriate adaptations in time and equipment to meet the learning needs of blind and visually impaired children. In addition to the academic preparation, the children receive organized instruction in learning to meet the demands of daily living such as self-care, orientation, mobility, social skills, grooming, basic housekeeping methods, and others as individual needs may indicate.

The usual organization of this program is group-oriented with individualized instruction when indicated.

As noted above, the school has as its aim the rehabilitation of visually handicapped children to the extent necessary to permit the student to participate in public school education. Every blind child in Oregon with the ability to learn spends a part of his school life in public school. The School for the Blind follows a plan of transferring each student in Curriculum III to his own home school district by the time he has finished the ninth grade. In addition, children in either Curricula II or III who have demonstrated a readiness for transfer to public or private schools prior to completing the ninth grade may be returned to such schools to complete their education.

The remainder of this report will mention:

- A. Staff Development
- B. Program Development, and
- C. Physical Plant Development

A. Staff Development

The intent in developing staff is to develop lines of communication among various "departments" so that departmental lines and interests disappear and allow the spotlight to be on the child. Constant talking and planning together, meeting to discuss needs of children, and the recognition of each staff person as an individual is the accepted procedure.

B. Program Development

The significant development in this area is the increased rate at which the program has changed to meet the needs of the children enrolled who are characteristically deficient in their ability to identify and relate to objects, persons, and activities. The educational talk with these children is to make such identities useful and desirable to the child, to help him associate the more meaningful attributes of objects, persons, and activities with their name labels, to perfect his recognition and retention capacities with respect to language symbols, and to encourage the realistic use of personal relations, activities, and objects in the child's daily adaptive behavior. This kind of programming must precede any "Academic" endeavor.

Another thrust of the program is increased training in skills of daily living and orientation and mobility. These two, coupled with a strong program of general concept formation, much of which must be done on field visits or during extended off campus study trips, continue to provide a challenge.

Planning for the needs of any blind child requires using relationship building, concept formation, living skills, and orientation and mobility as basic parts of the program. "Academic" learning will follow along with it.

C. Physical Plant Development

During the past two years, several significant developments have taken place in the area of physical plant development.

The Sensory Stimulation Center in the basement of Irvine Hall is proving to be a meaningful project. It is a room where everything is designed to provide sensory stimulation. It is a large playroom where children come into contact with many textures, odors, taste sensations, and sounds that increase their awareness of the world around them.

On the north side of the campus, our small park is taking shape. It is designed as an area where students can learn that it is fun to be busy and active -- boating, gardening, caring for animals. Areas such as this one and the Sensory Stimulation Center hopefully will aid in forming lasting attitudes and habits.

This school enjoys a good national image. We must continue to grow and develop. We must be ever mindful of changing needs and move to meet them.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles C. Woodcock  
Superintendent