



# Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services

Mike DeWine, Governor

Stephen D. Dackin, Director, Ohio Department of Education & Workforce

Dr. Lou Maynus, Superintendent

## **Testimony on the Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services Budget Provisions of House Bill 96, the FY26-27 Biennial Budget**

Ohio Senate Education Committee

Andrew Brenner, Chair

Louis Blessing, III, Vice-Chair

Catherine Ingram, Ranking Member

April 29, 2025

Lou Maynus, Ed.D., Ed.S.

Superintendent

Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 executive budget recommendations for the Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services. My name is Lou Maynus, Superintendent.

Who We Serve:

Our day and residential deaf school has been in operation since 1829, serving deaf and hard of hearing students, as well as those with additional disabilities. Currently, we have 129 students on our campus located on Morse Road, north of downtown Columbus. Our students travel from all across Ohio, representing 69 school districts in 36 counties this school year.

Established in 1837, our day and residential blind school was the first public school for the blind in the United States and is located adjacent to the deaf school. We currently serve 113 visually impaired and blind students on campus. Our students represent 66 districts in 37 counties throughout Ohio this school year.

We serve 24 deafblind students (students who are both deaf and blind). Our students use a wide variety of communication modalities across both campuses, such as: American Sign Language, spoken language, simple picture systems to make choices, specialized software systems on iPads and augmentative alternative communication methods. Many of our students have complex needs requiring intensive supports and benefit from the expertise of our staff.

#### Early Learning Services:

ODBES' Early Learning Services division serves 34 babies, toddlers and preschoolers on campus. We also serve 228 infants and toddlers ages 0-3 through our visually impaired early intervention program throughout Ohio. We know that early intervention for our deaf and blind students is crucial in fostering their development. Our deaf and blind babies and preschoolers develop essential communication, social, and motor skills that are vital for independence and academic success. Research is clear that reaching students during this critical early learning period far reduces the challenges they would face later in

life and promotes success for their lives. This work is in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY).

#### Statewide Services and Outreach:

Our Statewide Services and Outreach (SSO) Division provides specialized information and technical supports for students, schools, professionals and families across Ohio. This responsive work is framed according to district and family needs, and includes:

- 1-Student evaluations
- 2-District consultation & Support
- 3-Professional partnerships for community education
- 4-Family collaboration

This year to date nearly 1,500 services have been provided statewide to consumers:

- Northwest region: 206 services
- Central region: 542 services
- Northeast region: 354 services
- Southwest region: 186 services
- Southeast region: 210 services

Highlights from three of our Statewide Services programs include: 1) American Sign Language online courses serve 305 students across Ohio and continue to

be highly requested by districts, 2) we also provide specialized professional learning addressing the intensive needs of students with complex sensory disabilities through Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes in Education) in collaboration with the Ohio Center for Deafblind Education (OCDBE), 3) a 10-month program designed and tailored for educational interpreters working in K-12 classrooms throughout the state of Ohio. The program provides a statewide peer support and networking forum. Professional development includes monthly research and activity-based assignments, as well as in-person workshops.

Popular SSO short-term programming for students across the state this year included an accessible voting practices event and an accessible movie night program.

#### ODBES Vision:

For the Ohio State School for the Blind, the Ohio School for the Deaf, our Early Learning Services, and our Statewide Services and Outreach divisions, the Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services' collective vision is SUCCESS FOR LIFE. Our mission is MAXIMIZING SUCCESS FOR LIFE FOR ALL STUDENTS THROUGH RIGOROUS PERSONALIZED LEARNING. Our priorities developed through our strategic planning process are: 1) Future Ready Teaching and Learning Environments, 2) Community Engagement and Strategic Partnerships,

3) Student Centered Culture, 4) Student Growth, and 5) Operations and Resource Optimization.

#### Executive Budget:

Governor DeWine's executive budget recommendations align to his focus on supporting children and families. This budget will maintain current operations for the Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services. The structural move to one agency has provided for increased efficiencies while maintaining the unique needs of our diverse populations. A few examples include: 1) implementation of agency wide professional learning communities to prioritize standards, identify learning targets and further individualize instruction 2) our intentional scheduling of related services to work across campuses as appropriate. Our newest Orientation and Mobility specialist is serving blind school, deaf school, and early learning services. Deafblind services are also provided across the agency. 3) One Business Advisory Council supports all of our students with workforce readiness. We continue to see increased versatility within this innovative structure. Special thanks to the General Assembly for your support in transitioning ODBES to our modern structure.

The executive budget recommends appropriations for our agency in the amount of \$36.1 Million in FY26 and \$36.9 Million in FY27. These numbers include General Revenue Fund growth of 6.7 percent in FY26 over FY25 and

another 2.3 percent increase in FY27 over FY26. GRF appropriations are necessary to maintain current service levels, as well as to support key priorities of each school's strategic plan.

The recommended funding increases included in the executive budget will allow students with visual impairments to have access to innovative technology described as multi-lined braille displays with tactile graphics. The tactile graphics provide immediate access to literacy concepts, illustrations, and mathematics concepts never before immediately accessible to blind students. This technology is a game changer. To see this technology first hand, follow [this link to a demonstration](#).

ODBES has engaged our stakeholders and larger community this past year in drafting our Portraits of a Graduate (included in your packet) to illustrate what success for life looks like for our students. We are proudly engaged in two rigorous national accreditation processes for deaf and blind schools that will be completed this summer and we are committed to high-quality continuous school improvement.

We are particularly proud to share that our students are learning critical independent living skills, such as learning to cook through dinner in the dorms,

learning to drive in school and during summer camps, learning to navigate public transportation during orientation and mobility lessons, participating in the best blind band in the land, studying for academic bowl competitions, winning athletic sporting events, and enjoying summer deaf and blind STEM camps.

#### Work Force Readiness:

ODBES has founded volunteer committees of experts related to career development for deaf, blind and deafblind students over the last two years to identify clear and actionable goals for workforce readiness. These committees have collaborated with partner agencies, including Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), the OCALI Center for Deafness and Blindness, and business partners such as BridgED. Our experts have analyzed current workforce trends, discussed student outcomes, and developed our Workforce Readiness Plan. This work also informed the establishment of our first ever Business Advisory Council (BAC).

The BAC convenes three times a year, bringing together business owners, state agency leaders, and educators to collaborate on workforce readiness initiatives. Teaching teams are invited into businesses for teacher externships to learn about the world of work and how to best prepare our students. Professionals from multiple industries provide online and in-person mentoring opportunities for our students. These personalized experiences are vital because they provide students with a significant opportunity to prepare for success for

life, giving them much needed self-advocacy practice and self-confidence in a hearing and sighted world. Chick-fil-A and Goodwill are two businesses near our campuses that have provided wonderful opportunities for our students.

What's next for ODBES?

- Student outcomes continue to increase in literacy and numeracy.
- Workforce Readiness programming that takes full advantage of the innovation waivers for high school courses and summer programming advancements.
- In response to student interest, our short-term programming will expand for students on campus and throughout the state both during the school year and the summer months.
- Our valuable partnerships with OCDBE, OOD, the Department of Defense Innovative Readiness Training (IRT), and other agencies will continue to strengthen.
- Our partnerships with higher education as a teaching school for educators of the visually impaired, deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind students will continue to thrive.
- We will maintain our commitment to listen to our stakeholders and will work to be highly responsive to their needs.

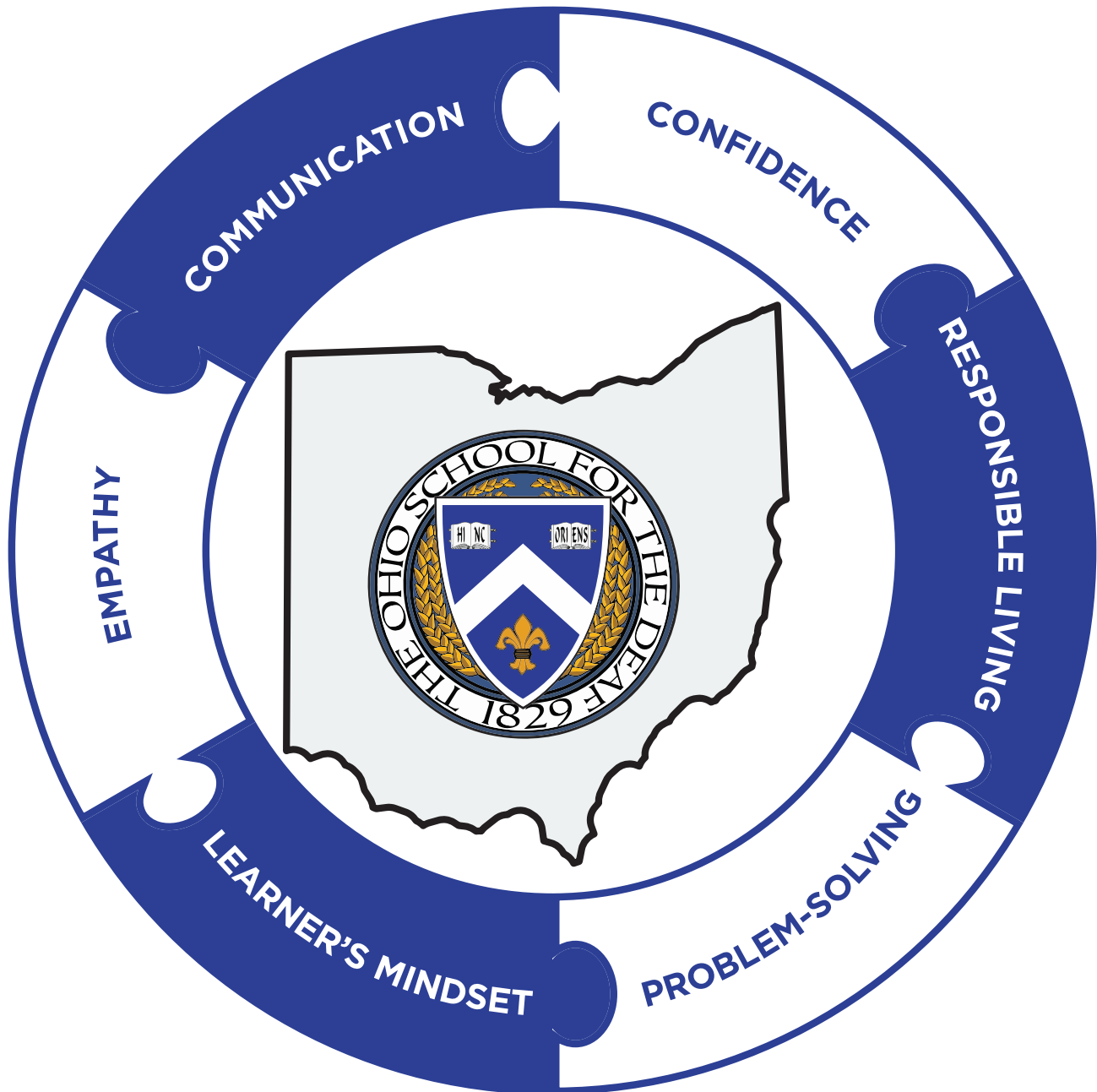


You are cordially invited to join our newly established quarterly virtual statewide community forums. Included in the materials packet you received is information on joining our meetings.

Thank you for your time and your work to serve. I am available to answer any questions.

# Ohio School for the Deaf

## PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE



**Ohio Deaf and Blind  
Education Services**



## Communication

- Express thoughts and ideas effectively using spoken language, ASL, writing/braille, and/or nonverbal communication (including AAC devices).
- Receive communication efficiently, including knowledge, values, attitudes, and intentions.
- Use communication for a range of purposes and audiences (e.g. advocate, inform, instruct, motivate, and persuade for personal and professional audiences).
- Model skills to engage in appropriate communication to resolve disagreements peacefully and productively.



## Confidence

- Model self-assurance and respect of one's own skills.
- Persist and advocate for one's rights and needs—including accessibility.
- Demonstrate strength during adversity to pursue meaningful personal goals.



## Learner's Mindset

- Engage self and others while utilizing a collaborative process in developing learning strategies.
- Possess the desire to learn, collaborate, actively listen and embrace diverse perspectives from others.
- Utilize and adapt to new technology throughout life.
- Knows one's own personal strengths and needs.



## Responsible Living

- Act with integrity and demonstrate care for the interests of the community and greater good.
- Honor commitments and own the outcomes, whether positive or negative.
- Master individual knowledge of financial systems including community assistance, employment, social security.
- Confidence to make appropriate financial choices, able to utilize appropriate level of support if/when appropriate.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical, legal, and humanistic behavior surrounding the access and use of technology, assistive technology, and human-machine interaction.



## Problem-Solving

- Work effectively in a climate of ambiguity, demonstrating flexibility to various roles and situations.
- Demonstrate an understanding of problems while being able to self-advocate.
- Respond productively to feedback, praise, setbacks, and criticism, while exhibiting the ability to self-advocate.
- Identify, understand, evaluate, and prioritize solutions to difficult or complex situations.
- Reflect critically to reach a workable solution.



## Empathy

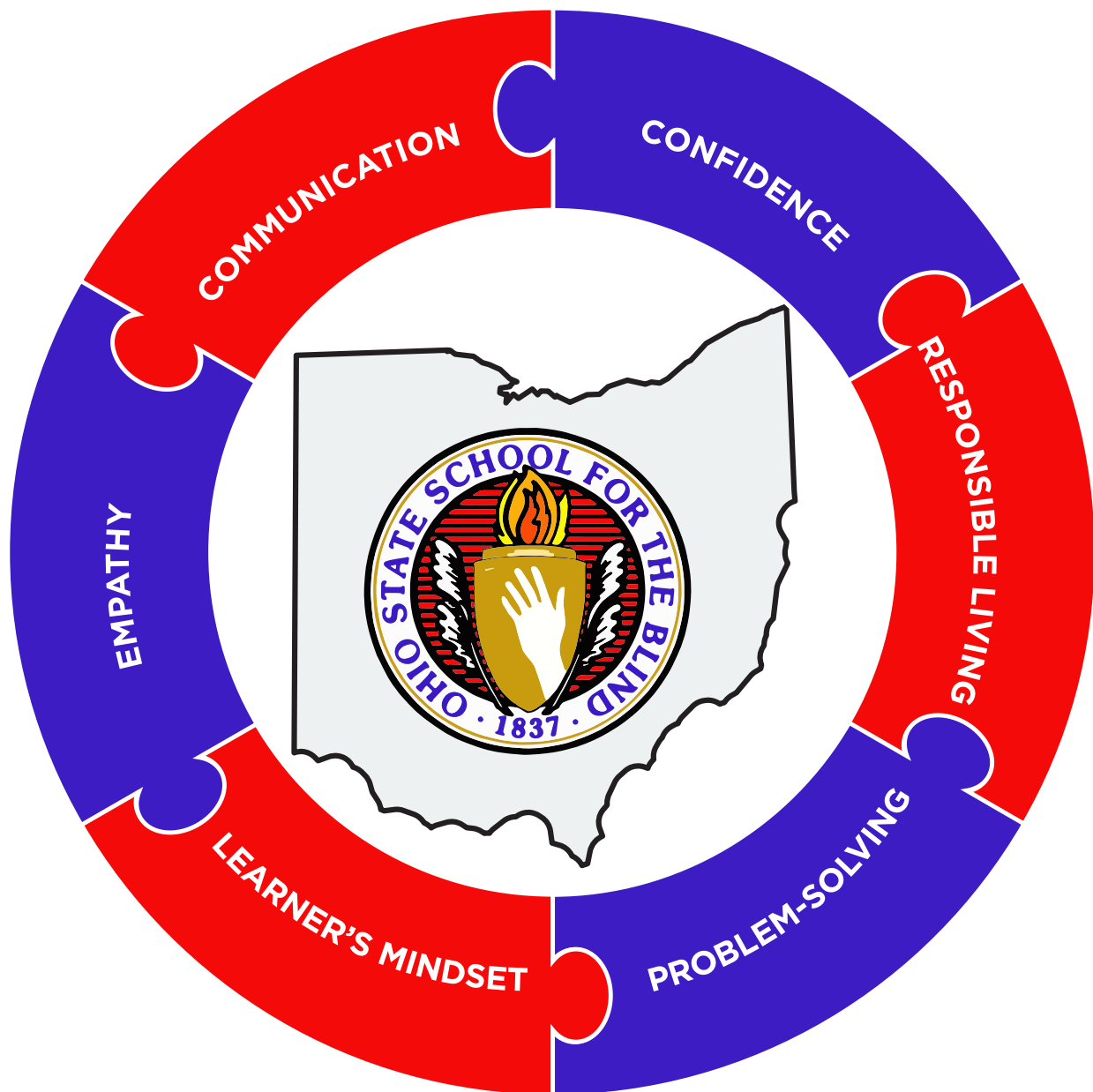
- Demonstrate global awareness and openness to connect to the opinions, experiences and cultures of others.
- Demonstrate personal, civic, social, local, and global responsibility through ethical decision making and actions to make the world a better place.
- Ethically contribute to society.
- Value and embrace different cultural and unique perspectives with mutual respect and compassion.



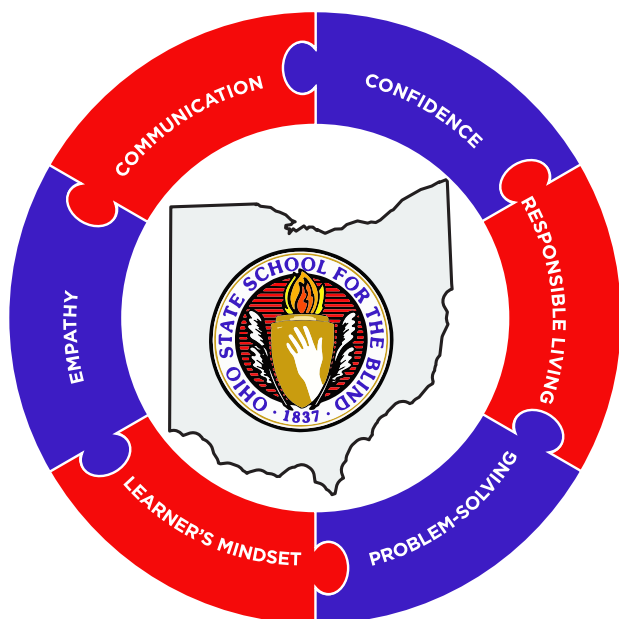
**Ohio Deaf and Blind  
Education Services**

# Ohio State School for the Blind

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**Ohio Deaf and Blind  
Education Services**



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**Ohio Deaf and Blind  
Education Services**



**Ohio School for the Deaf**  
**Workforce Readiness (WRF) Committee Goals**

Goal One-The committee will design curriculum and programming for grades 6-12 relevant to student interests, abilities and the current and future job market.

Goal Two- The committee will recommend content for the literacy plan relevant to work force readiness.

Goal Three-The committee will make recommendations to the Business Advisory Council (BAC) on selecting members for the newly established council.

Goal Four-The committee will highlight and promote our current resources statewide through various avenues (social media, webpage, tours, in person site shadowing). The Ohio School for the Deaf will promote new avenues for employment and life skills training through current program opportunities.



Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services

**Ohio State School for the Blind**



## **Ohio State School for the Blind Workforce Readiness Committee (WFR) Goals**

Goal One-The committee will identify high school programming relevant to student interests/abilities and the current and future job market.

Goal Two-The committee will recommend content for the literacy plan relevant to work force readiness.

Goal Three-The committee will provide resources to educate employers in supporting future employment of individuals who are Blind/Visually Impaired, and Deafblind.

Goal Four-The committee will make recommendations to the Business Advisory Council (BAC) on selecting members for the newly established council.

Goal Five-The committee will develop a schoolwide portfolio of students' current work skills to share with community employers with current programming.

Success for Life



# Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services Community Forum

## Agenda:

Welcome  
Recognitions  
Workforce Readiness  
Accreditation  
Facilities  
Community Comments  
(up to five minutes per community member  
who signed up by April 21, 2025)

**Thursday, May 1, 2025**  
**6:00 – 7:30 PM**

Click on the link below to join in Zoom

[Zoom link to ODBES Community  
Forum](#)

Meeting ID: 864 4668 7242  
Password: ODBES

Questions, comments, and requests to comment:  
Lynda McChesney, [mcchesney@osdb.oh.gov](mailto:mcchesney@osdb.oh.gov).