FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SUMMER PROGRAMS

Some of my students’ families do not have a computer to look at the class descriptions. I would like to print some of the descriptions to send home. How do I do this?

The Academic Secondary Enrichment (ASE) program offers a range of classes to choose from. Click for a one-page document listing the classes in the ASE program, then print and send the page home. There is also a link to specific class descriptions on the application itself. If you want to send home detailed descriptions of specific classes, select the class descriptions your student is interested in, then copy and send home those pages. All other program descriptions fit on a single page and can be found on our Summer Programs home page.

Most of my students’ families have a computer and could fill out the "Needs, Communication & Behavior" page themselves. Do I really have to send the paper version home for their information, and then re-enter all that information myself?

Unfortunately, it is not possible for two different people to write to a student’s online application. Therefore you do need to get this information from the parents (either on the written form we created for you, in Spanish and in English, or by phone) and then enter it yourself. Please do not let this hardship deter you from asking for information that parents probably know better than you do. For example, teachers may lack information about the independent living skills of their academic students. But at TSBVI, we want to address the full range of Expanded Core Curriculum, including skills that may only be viewed at home.

Are all the classes in Austin? I’m not sure I can transport my child to or home from the summer program. Can you help us with transportation?

All summer programs are held on the campus of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI). Unlike our school year programs, we are not able to help students with transportation to Austin. Please make sure that you can provide transportation in both directions before you apply. We get over 500 applications and can accept only about 300 students. When a child says they are coming and then fails to arrive, it means another student did not get to come in that slot. If you need help, talk with your child’s Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) or DARS/DBS caseworker to see if they can help with transportation. Sometimes a local Lion’s Club can help.

My child has never been away from home before and I worry that s/he will become homesick or not get the help we provide at home. Can I come to the program too? How will I know that my child is safe and properly supervised?

Most children have some fear about being away from home, especially if it is their first time. Parents can also experience concerns about their children being away from them. Once children get here, they usually have a wonderful time getting to participate in a wide range of new and fun activities, and meeting other children (and adults) who have experienced similar visual and social challenges in school.
Children are permitted to call home any day after school, and parents can call the dorm. We encourage parents to use TSBVI to support their children’s beginning steps towards independence – one of the most important things we can teach our children over the course of their young lives! When parents provide support and encouragement to their homesick child, students usually thrive and feel very proud of themselves for succeeding on their own. TSBVI is likely one of the safest and most supportive places to do this. We provide supervision day and night, by staff that are employed here throughout the school year and are specifically trained to work with visually impaired students, including those with additional disabilities.

Does my student have a better chance of being accepted if I submit my application earlier?

No. You simply need to have a fully completed application and a fully completed Medical-Dietary form submitted by February 14. We appreciate getting the application early because it gives us more time to process it. But when it comes time to select students, all those in by the Valentine’s Day deadline are given the same consideration.

Note: although you may have submitted a Medical-Dietary form last summer, you must complete a new form for the current summer. Forms with last year’s dates will not be accepted.

Does my student have a lower chance of being accepted if s/he was accepted last year?

Not necessarily. Although we do take prior attendance into consideration, other factors have greater weight. Some programs have far more students applying than spaces to offer (e.g., Life Skills Camp). Other programs do not, and students might get to come repeatedly if (a) they remain available as other students drop out throughout the spring, or (b) they happen to request a spot where we have an opening. It varies every year, depending on who else applies. Please do not let prior attendance keep you from applying.

What can I do if you do not accept my child?

We send out our first round of acceptances around the third week of March. If those students’ families do not meet the deadline for notifying us that they will attend, we remove them and begin offering those slots to other students (around mid-April). Between April and the start of summer school, we are able to accept many more students. It is quite possible that your child will eventually be accepted, even if that does not happen in the first round.

Can a student who attends a private or home school apply? The student has no TVI.

Yes, any student who is a Texas resident and meets eligibility criteria for visual impairment can apply. We do not require a district referral in the summer as we do for our school year programs. However, we strongly prefer that, whenever a Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) is involved, they initiate filling out the application because much of the information we require is not known by the parent, or some parents may not be as accustomed to using
online applications. In addition, if the TVI submits the application, the student remains under that professional's account in our database, along with any other students who are ever referred to a Short-Term Program by that TVI. However if a student is in an alternative school, it is OK for the parent to function as the TVI for summer school applications.

**Can a student attend summer school if they have graduated? Can they go if they are over 18 years of age?**

Students can attend summer school the summer after they graduate from high school, up through their 22nd birthday. So if your student is under 22 years of age and will not graduate before summer 2015, you can apply.

**Can deafblind students attend?**

a. Students who attend TSBVI or the Texas School for the Deaf as full time students during the school year will not be eligible to also attend summer programs at TSBVI.

b. Deafblind students who do not attend TSD or TSBVI can apply. We will not form unique classes for deafblind students unless there are enough homogeneous applicants to form a viable class, including a wait list to replace students who invariably drop out of every class throughout the spring. If the student can participate without an interpreter, they will be considered for the best-fit class, the same as any other applicant. If they do need an interpreter, we will try to arrange a signing adult in the classroom and/or dorm if possible. If that is not possible, we may not be able to meet their needs.

**Will you accept 6-year-olds?**

We typically do not accept 6-year-olds, simply because we don't have enough room for all the applicants we get for the Elementary Summer Enrichment program, and we first offer slots to the older students. You can apply, and it is possible that circumstances would occur such that we could accept your student.

**Can my child attend two programs if they do not overlap?**

The only place this could feasibly happen is in the Academic Secondary Enrichment program, where a student could attend a one-week class followed by a two-week class. In reality, we often have more applicants for these classes than we have space. But as students begin to drop out as spring moves along, we do sometimes have openings. This is something you could request, but since we will initially only offer you one class, let us know which is your first choice and which you want to be on the waitlist for.

**I have a 12-year-old and I don’t know whether to request the elementary “Transition to Middle School” class or the secondary “Middle School Enrichment” class. Do you have any guidelines?**

In general, 12-year-old students who will enter Middle School for the first time in the fall of 2015 should apply to the elementary program. If they want to learn about what middle
school may be like, they can specifically request the elementary class called “Transition to Middle School.” Twelve-year-old students who will have completed their first year in Middle School by June 15 should apply to the Academic Secondary Enrichment program and request the class called “Middle School Enrichment.”

**My student wants to attend a class that he may not be eligible for but he loves the topic. Can we still request that?**

We carefully place students into classes with age-appropriate peers, and with peers who are at approximately similar learning levels. We have carefully defined the eligibility criteria for each program and for various classes. *Please read this and do not apply for a program that does not match your child’s age and level of function, as we will not place them in those classes and we may then not be able to offer an appropriate class.*

**Can students bring dog guides to campus?**

TSBVI has a policy that addresses the issue of dog guides on campus. Students 16 years and older who have been approved by a dog guide school for training or who already have a dog guide must, upon referral for admission, obtain approval from the Principal for maintaining the dog on campus. The Principal will approve the maintenance of a dog guide on campus if the student is able to demonstrate the ability to manage and care for the dog independently. Students with dog guides are responsible for adhering to any procedure governing the maintenance of dog guides on campus and for costs associated with the maintenance of the dog. Failure to follow the procedure may result in loss of permission to maintain the dog guide on campus.

**Do you let parents volunteer during summer school?**

In certain situations we allow parents to volunteer in our Life Skills Camps. If interested, please discuss this with Garner Vogt. We do not have parent volunteers in any other summer programs.

**Do you serve students in wheelchairs?**

All of our programs have served students who use wheelchairs. We do need to consider the amount and type of individual service a student requires, because we do not have the staff to provide frequent one-on-one or highly specialized support. Please describe on the application the situations in which the student does and does not require additional support, as well as the types of support needed. There is a specific section just for that purpose.

**We would like to take our child out of school for a day or two, for a special event. Will that be OK?**

The nature of the request will of course influence our answer. If it’s a two-hour dentist appointment, or a day off to attend a wedding or a funeral, we would excuse the student without further question.
Our application form requests that parents let us know in advance if they intend their child to miss any part of the program. We highly discourage absences for the following reasons:

- Our programs are short, and when a student misses even one day, it is a significant part of the time. The teacher has planned a unit that has continuity from day to day, so it’s a burden on others when one student misses. We want all the students to remain with the group the entire time, to maintain group cohesiveness.
- Some students can feel homesick or envious when one student gets to go home with their family and they do not.
- It can be disruptive to the class (or dorm) when they have to plan their activities around a parent pickup and return.
- The SWEAT program actually has a procedure for conditions when students can miss.

If you know that a student is going to miss any part of a program, or needs to leave early, please let us know when you submit the application, or as soon after that as you know. We will try to work with you to accommodate your needs.

My secondary student is on the borderline between academic functioning and what you refer to as Practical Academic. He is having academic difficulties in school, but socially he is totally equivalent to his same-age peers (independent, has lots of friends, very socially appropriate). Which program should I choose?

It’s hard to tell for sure. In the 6th or 7th grade, he might be OK in the “Middle School Enrichment” class (in the Academic Secondary Enrichment program). As he gets older, if he is 4+ grades behind, you might change to the Practical Academic Secondary Enrichment program. Especially consider what he is like socially. If he is socially similar to his academic peers (is independent, has lots of friends, is very socially appropriate) but just has learning challenges or difficulties, the Academic Secondary program may have more similar peers. The students in the Practical Academic program have more cognitive and developmental delays.

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