

Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING MINUTES

September 30, 2021 Meeting

Call to Order

Board President, Lee Sonnenberg called the Strategic Planning meeting to order at 9:06 a.m.

Introduction of Board Members and Audience

Board members present in person:

Lee Sonnenberg, Elaine Robertson, Brenda Lee and Beth Jones.

Board members present via Zoom:

Julie Prause, Ernest Worthington and Maghan Gautney.

Mike Hanley and Dan Brown did not attend.

Audience members:

Emily Coleman, Superintendent; Eric Grimmatt, CSR Director; Kate Borg, Outreach Director; Pam Darden, CFO; Miles Fain, Principal; Angela Wolf, Teacher; Cheryl Williams, Human Resources Director; Veronica Keating, Executive Assistant; Matt Schultz, Residential Director; Eden Hagelman, Principal; Shannon Darst, Stephen F. Austin State University Liaison; Rona Pogrud, Texas Tech University Liaison; Susan Houghtling, Planning and Evaluation Coordinator; Debra Sewell, Curriculum Director; Alex Arguello, Head of Community Engagement; and Bryan Maffett, System Support Specialist.

Audience members present via Zoom:

Barbara Knighton, Family Lynx Leader; Adam Graves, DB Education Consultant; Hillary Keys, TxSSN; Valerie Perwein, Special Education Director; G'Nell Price, Assistant Principal; Carolyn Heath, Behavioral Specialist; Chris Montgomery, DB Education Consultant; Dan Hampton, Information Resources Director; Daniel Wheeler, Instruction Technology Coordinator; and Scott Turner.

Strategic Planning Session with Stakeholders

Ms. Coleman reminded everyone of the COVID protocols and mask wearing to help prevent the spread of COVID.

Ms. Coleman shared a presentation she prepared for the strategic planning meeting. She stated that strategic planning is required of TSBVI every two years. She added that TSBVI uses the information gathered at the strategic planning meeting to request funding for TSBVI during the Legislative budget year. The items requested will help expand TSBVI's programs and resources. The strategic planning meeting for TSBVI two years ago was the first Ms. Coleman lead. She said she met with the Management Team and the Board. They focused on what the School needed internally in order to continue operating and updating the School. At the 87th Texas Legislature many of the exceptional items were infrastructure related, things like the website, information resources and safety and security upgrades. Those are things that TSBVI

needed to remain strong as an organization. She stated that because of COVID relief money, the School was able to receive most of the funds requested. Salary increases were one of the requested items as well. She said that was the only exceptional item the School did not get and it would be a topic discussed during the meeting.

She started her Google slide presentation. On the agenda was internal and external stakeholder feedback organized by topic. TSBVI employees had an opportunity to elaborate. Zoom participants were welcome to add comments or questions within the chat feature, which was being monitored and saved. Board members were welcomed to ask questions as they went. After pre-determined topics were shared, management team had an opportunity to bring up other topics for consideration. Everyone was asked to consider which three topics should be a priority. After lunch, the Board had an opportunity to reflect, comment, and elaborate on the topics discussed.

Ms. Coleman stated that she gathered information by facilitating an internal stakeholder group in the Spring called the Student Programs Cabinet. She met with administrators to share and discuss results. She compiled a report of their findings and shared the information for review and confirmation. Then, in August and September she facilitated six stakeholder focus groups to gather more feedback. Lastly, information was compiled from external and internal feedback. She shared 15 main topics with the management team that were then reduced to 11 topics that would be discussed during the strategic planning meeting. She thanked participants for all their work.

The list of participants that gathered data for the strategic planning meeting were as follows:

Student Programs Cabinet

Comprehensive Instructional: Paul Carlson, Carlotta Binns, Carolyn Heath

Comprehensive Residential: Daniel Butler, Adam Foose, Cory McKinney

Short-Term Programs: Nina Wibbenmayer

Outreach: Eva Thompson-Lavigne

Weekends Home: Andrea Harper

Health Center: Lizzie Horner

Curriculum: Shanna Hamilton

TEA/ TxSSN Focus Group

TEA: Nicholas Trotter

TxSSN: Stephanie Walker

TxSSN DeafBlind Lead: Hillary Keys

TVI/ COMS Practitioner Focus Group

Austin ISD: Renae Shepler

Prosper ISD: Scott Turner

Pecos-Barstow ISD: Michelle Urias

Corpus Christi and San Antonio Area CoOp: Michaela Zelmer

Hays ISD: Carolyn Mason

ESC Lead Focus Group

Region 10: Kelly Bevis

Region 12: Michelle Craig

Region 6: Michael Munro

Region 19: Richard Torres

Region 4: Sheryl Sokoloski

Region 13: Erica Cairns (emailed feedback)

Parent/ Family Focus Group

Family Lynx: Barbara Knighton

Family Lynx: Amy Potts

Family Lynx: Patty Bushland

DBMAT: Vivecca Hartman

DBMAT: Tish Smith

Conroe ISD: Shannon Coffel

Student Focus Group

Met September 7th, 2021

First TSBVI Student Council Meeting of the Year

Led by TSBVI teacher, Jenny Otto

About 20 students were in attendance

Consumer Organization Focus Group

National Federation of the Blind TX:

Daniel Martinez

Emily Gibbs

Kayleigh Joiner

Norma Crosby

TX American Council of the Blind:

Neva Fairchild

Peggy Garrett

Michael Garrett

Eleanor Coldwell

Kenneth Semien, Sr.

Ms. Coleman asked the meeting participants to write down issues they perceive as a barrier to student achievement throughout Texas for students who are blind, visually impaired, or deafblind. She shared Statewide Census information from January 2021. There were 10,892 total students, 21 percent were students on 504s (2,333), 804 students who were deafblind, 455 students listed as braille readers (4 percent), out of the 8,559 students on an IEP 42 percent had at least one disability in addition to visual impairment. Comprehensive Programs Census from January 2021 included 121 total Students (1.6 percent of students with VI ages 6-22 on IEPs), 21 students who were deafblind, 74 percent had at least one disability in addition to visual impairment, 44 percent were braille readers, about 36 percent who were Hispanic/ Latino, about 20 percent who were Black/ African American.

Ms. Coleman received feedback from TSBVI's Student Council. She mentioned that they gave their insight on the great things about TSBVI. They said there is a lot of diversity. The students and staff are like family. They respect and help each other. There are a variety of clubs. The teachers and staff give the students confidence. Students learn new things and have fun. They said TSBVI feels like a second home. Lastly, students find ways to get along even when they are not getting along. The Student Council also gave feedback on areas of improvement for TSBVI. A new student said it can be hard to make friends. They would like to have access to sweet tea if under 18 with parent permission. Students would like coffee in the morning, longer lunches, new vending machines, more free time, a TV in the cafeteria, an escalator on campus, an end of the year field trip for high school students and the right to pass in the lunch line. Ms.

Coleman added that these things didn't address the topics to be discussed but she wanted to give the Board the chance to hear from TSBVI's Student Council.

Ms. Coleman reminded the participants to write down the topics they thought would be the most important to TSBVI. She added that the first topic would take the longest to discuss and that is why she chose to put it at the top of the list. Recruitment and retention high areas of need were: residential instructors, Weekends Home staff and drivers, teaching assistants, Health Center; nurses and medical assistants, teachers and ASL interpreters and interveners. The statewide/external high areas of need were: shortage of TSBVI's and COMS statewide; many on emergency certification, Outreach Program is too small to support Texas and teachers of students who are deafblind. The internal stakeholder recommendations were to move 9.75 month employees to 11 or 12 month status (TSBVI implemented), extend summer programs to offer more work opportunities, provide extra pay or bonuses to employees providing ASL or Spanish interpretation (TSBVI implementing), provide employee recognition aside from pay increases (TSBVI implementing), continue to request increased pay as an exception item, offer sign-on bonuses within hard to fill positions (TSBVI implemented), provide guidance on how to achieve merit increases, increase advertising and recruitment (TSBVI implemented), increase number of qualified subs, hire more ASL and Spanish interpreters and provide a career ladder for teachers (TSBVI implemented). Recommendations from external stakeholders were: universal stipend for those certified as TSVI, COMS, or TDB, work with career counselors and public schools to bring awareness to our field, increase mentoring and coaching opportunities and increase funding to university training programs. Ms. Coleman clarified that some districts give a stipend for the TVI, COMS and TDB positions and others do not. Ms. Darst said that was true. Ms. Coleman said that the districts giving the stipend are getting the staff and the ones that do not are losing them. They came to the conclusion that funding would need to be increased in order to increase TSBVI's staff and resources.

Ms. Coleman introduced Texas Tech University liaison Rona Pogrund and Stephen F. Austin State University liaison Shannon Darst. Ms. Pogrund stated that Texas Tech University has three personnel preparation programs. They are the Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments Program, Orientation and Mobility Program and Deafblind Program. The types of degrees you can get in each program were as follows: Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments Program- Rona Pogrund, Ph.D.- Coordinator (VI certification, Master's in Special Ed, Ph.D. in Special Education), Orientation and Mobility Program- Nora Griffin-Shirley, Ph.D.- Coordinator (O&M certification, Master's in Special Education, Ph.D. in Special Education) and Deafblind Program- Phoebe Okungu, Ph.D.- Coordinator (TTU Graduate Certificate in Deafblindness, Master's in Special Ed, Ph.D. in Special Education). Ms. Pogrund went on to explain the VI and O&M personnel preparation programs at TTU had been funded from grants through the TSBVI budget since the year 2000. Initially, all funds were from federal IDEA flow-through funds from TEA. Then additional funds were added through a TSBVI budget state fund request that increased the grant to \$520,000 per year for each university in 2009. The amount gradually increased to \$602,000 and has been the same since 2015. The program had been flat funded at that same amount each year since 2015. She stated that over the past 10 years, enrollment has increased in the VI and O&M programs at TTU by 260 percent. TTU had approximately 170 students at any given time between the certification programs, the master's programs, and the Ph.D. programs. During that time, tuition and fees costs steadily increased. Ms. Pogrund stated that prior to 2012, TTU was able to hire an additional full-time faculty person paid 50 percent from the Reach Across Texas grant and 50 percent from TTU College of

Education. However, since that time, with the increased costs of tuition and benefits for staff, the University had to omit having a third faculty member and rely more heavily on adjuncts. Ms. Pogrund explained that she is working 70 hours per week because of being over loaded with work. She added that she has for the third time proposed the need for a third faculty member. Over the past four years, TTU had to hire between 8 to 12 adjunct faculty to cover courses each year. Some semesters, the University course numbers had reached 25 to 30 plus students due to high enrollment. Three long-time staff members who support the program and maintain its excellence got small cost-of-living raises most years, when possible, to ensure their continuation assisting with administration of the program. She stated that because TTU is a research university they require that adjuncts have a doctorates degree. Furthermore, personnel costs have also continued to rise each year.

Dr. Pogrund advised 90 to 100 students who were VI certification, master's, and doctoral students.

Dr. Griffin advised 50 to 70 students who were O&M certification, master's, and doctoral students.

The impact of COVID on all educators had been significant over the past two years. For example, vision professionals are leaving the field and retiring in larger numbers than in the past, while the student population with visual impairments was increasing. Additionally, some students in VI and O&M personnel preparation programs have not been able to complete their graduate programs in a timely manner due to lack of internship opportunities and supervision availability.

During the 2020-2021 school year, TTU had 28 program certification completers. This number was slightly down from previous years due to the impact of COVID on the ability to complete their program.

Based on the TSBVI 2020 Summary of Need Report (Shore, 2021):

- ESC consultants anticipated that 100 TSVIs and 45 COMS (the highest projection on record for COMS), or 13 percent of existing VI professionals, would retire or otherwise leave the field over the next 3 years.
- The number of students with visual impairments grew by 3.5 percent, greater than the 2.7 percent average increase typically seen each year. In 2020, the total number of students reported to the Annual Registration of Students with Visual Impairments was 11,125, adding 372 students.
- It was projected that Texas would need up to 71 additional full-time equivalent TSVI new positions and 57 full-time equivalent COMS new positions by 2023 to accommodate student growth alone.
- Texas is estimated to need an additional 157-171 full-time equivalent TVIs and 86-102 full-time equivalent COMS in the next 3 years to replace those who are likely to leave the field and respond to anticipated student growth.

Ms. Pogrud concluded and stated that the future needs of TTU's programs were:

1. Add one additional full-time faculty member for VI and O&M programs.
2. Increase relevant master's elective courses offered e.g., NVI/CVI, Assistive Technology, Evaluation, to keep up with current needs in the field. Additional funding would be needed for adjunct instructors to teach these specialized courses.
3. As the number of students increased, the workload on staff and faculty increased in terms of tracking and advisement, additional funds for more staff, more adjuncts would be needed as well. Currently, one of the University's staff members was paid 50 percent from Reach Across Texas and the remaining 50 percent from a federal Department of Education grant which ends in 2024. Funds from Reach Across Texas will be needed after that to fund her full-time position.
4. Additional funds are needed to recruit and pay tuition for additional students in both programs to better meet the continued personnel shortage in Texas.
5. With the potential increase in student enrollment, additional funds will be needed to cover internship supervision and travel.
6. More braille grading time would be needed with increased enrollment. Therefore, more funding for braille graders would be required.
7. The Deafblind program needs an administrative assistant to handle the growing numbers of students interested in that program as we move closer to DB certification, as there is no staff assigned to that program. It needs at least a half-time position.
8. Funds for DB mentor program and funds for tuition are also needed for this expanding program.

Ms. Darst gave an update on the Visual Impairment Preparation program at Stephen F. Austin State University. She said that the University is currently receiving the same flat funded \$602,000 a year. She stated the numbers for registrants for courses, students receiving TSBVI grant funding, program completion and anticipated completion.

Fall 2021 Registered for Courses

Undergraduate O&M Concentration – 24

Graduate TSVI Concentration – 67

Graduate O&M Concentration – 11

Total registered for coursework – 102

New Students 2021-2022 (included in the Fall 2021 Registration Total)

Graduate TSVI Concentration – 35

Graduate O&M Concentration – 5

Number of Students Receiving Grant Funding (TSBVI-Sponsored Grant)

Graduate TSVI Concentration – 47

Graduate O&M Concentration – 5

Approximate total spent on grant funding for 2021-2022 school year - \$314,000

Program Completers 2020-2021

Graduate TSVI Concentration – 47

Graduate O&M Concentration – 10

Total completers for 2020-2021 - 57

Anticipated completers for 2021-2022

Graduate TSVI Concentration – 32

Graduate O&M Concentration – 5

Ms. Darst gave an overview of the University personnel statuses.

Updates to VIP Program During 2020 – 2021

1. One full-time VIP faculty member (funded by university) resigned – June 2020
 - This position was removed from the university open lines and will not be replaced due to financial deficit at the university level.
2. One full-time VIP faculty member (funded by TSBVI grant) retired – August 2020
3. One full-time VIP administrative assistant (funded by TSBVI grant) retired – August 2020
4. One full-time VIP faculty member (funded by TSBVI grant) moved to part-time – August 2020
5. One full-time VIP administrative assistant (funded by TSBVI grant) hired – April 2021
6. One full-time VIP faculty member (funded by TSBVI grant) hired – May 2021
7. One part-time VIP faculty member (funded by TSBVI grant) hired – May 2021
8. University-funded stipend for Program Facilitators unfunded with no plan in place to fund in the future – August 2020

Ms. Darst stated that her salary was decreased last year because of the financial deficit.

9. Three adjunct VIP faculty members (funded by TSBVI grant) were hired to cover courses – August 2020
10. VIP Program accreditation for O&M concentration (ACVREP) was not in place as of August 2019; accreditation re-application is in preparation and should be submitted by the end of the fall 2021 semester
11. VIP Program accreditation for TSVI concentration (CAEP and TEA) currently covered by the parent degree (Master of Education [M.Ed.] - Special Education) accreditation
12. Four new courses are in the proposal stage as the first step in adding an educator preparation certification program and M.Ed. – Special Education concentration for Teacher of Students who are Deafblind (TSDB) – Fall 2021
13. The new TSDB educator preparation certification program and TSDB concentration will be proposed during the 2021-2022 school year. If the proposal is approved, certification and concentration coursework will begin in the 2023-2024 school year.

Funding Needs of the VIP Program at SFA

1. One new full-time faculty member = approximately \$75,000 per year with a 3 percent cost increase for every year thereafter
2. One new full-time administrative assistant = approximately \$45,000 per year with a 3 percent cost increase every year thereafter
3. An increase in grant tuition funding for at least five students per year in the TSDB certification/concentration area at approximately \$10,000 per student = \$50,000
4. An increase in grant tuition funding for at least ten students per year in the TSVI and O&M certification/concentration areas at approximately \$12,000 per student = \$120,000

Ms. Coleman explained another area with needs was funding for interveners and teachers of students who are deafblind. A family's perspective on the area of need was, "When DBMAT families were speaking with a Texas Senator's Office regarding intervener needs for their children they were told the office, 'didn't like the idea of a federal mandate with no funding to back it up'."

Chris Montgomery introduced himself a Deafblind education consultant for TSBVI. He stated that the Teacher of the Deafblind Initiative has been working since the year 2000, to establish a professional field of practice here in Texas for teachers of the deafblind and interveners. It started with an intervener role and then in 2008 the group started to focus on issues related to qualified teachers. He said the Teachers of the Deafblind (TDB) standards were recognized in

October by SBEC and TEA. Mr. Montgomery said that was a big deal. He stated that stakeholders are currently working with TEA to develop a certification test. He said the School will be working on state guidelines for teachers of Deafblind students. Texas will be the first state that will have TDB's supported and employed in local districts. Other states have been looking to TSBVI to start their own TDB programs. He stated that he has been working with Cyral Miller on a Deafblind story so the NCDB can put it up so that other states can follow suit and borrow from TSBVI's model. He stated there are three methods of support that need to be expanded. They are the Texas Deafblind Project, Texas Sensory Support Network and the University preparation program. He stated that they are working on the TDB pilot program which started in 2011. The pilot program raised awareness to the TDB needs in Texas. It enabled teachers to identify as teachers of the Deafblind. He stated that the program showed efficacy through allowing administrators to create a TDB position in their district, by using the gathered data. Efficacy was also shown when the School was able to provide TEA with the data to create TDB certification. He stated that each educational consultant is responsible for one district team.

The draw back to the pilot is that it can only serve a limited number of people. Mr. Montgomery said that as more and more TDB's enter the field there will be an increased need for technical assistance to support them. He said that with the current OSEP TA grant being flat funded for many years, it would be hard for the Texas Deafblind project to expand under the current funding. He stated that the pilot has supported ten districts, four educational service centers and over 25 TDB's across the state. There had been two districts that created two TDB positions. There are districts who created teams around the TDB position. He stated that another technical assistance initiative that they wanted to establish was a TDB mentor program. The program would start small with four to five TDB mentors. He said that mentors are paid \$500 a year and then there are statewide mentors who are paid up to \$2,500 per year. Mr. Montgomery stated that the positive outcome from COVID is that the program has been able to do some distance mentoring. He said that he hoped that he would see the course work for Teacher of the Deafblind certification. When that did happen he would anticipate there would be an increase in people taking the coursework. He stated that so far even without the certification he has seen an increase in the number of people applying for Texas Sensory Network Support grant money to take the coursework at TTU. Mr. Montgomery thanked the group for the opportunity to present. He asked if anyone had questions.

Ms. Borg thanked Mr. Montgomery for his thorough presentation on the foresight of the program. She stated that the elephant in the room was that the program was out of funds. She added that they have talked about the need to expand the mentor program to include teachers for students who are deafblind. As of now teachers receive one to two years of mentoring. Through research and data, the School has found that the real number of years that teachers need mentoring is five years. The program is not asking for the funding to extend for that long. However, the possibility to mentor for three or more years would be ideal for teachers and students. TSBVI is not asking for funding for five years yet, but just looking at being able to expand the number of years that new teachers are getting support, as well as for our orientation and mobility specialist. One of the needs and requests that Outreach gets most often, both through comprehensive programs and to Outreach is training and support on assessment and evaluation. Outreach tries to give support, but it is becoming more and more clear that we need someone in outreach, who has that background and expertise. Someone with a diagnostic or a school psychology background, one that also understands vision and Deafblindness. Ms. Borg

expressed her gratitude for the support Miles Fain, Valerie Perwein and their teams have given Outreach, but they have a full time job already. Outreach needs dedicated support to its programs. Outreach is also looking at the necessity of having someone unique to Outreach and full time web support. One of the silver linings of COVID was that Outreach was able to be very prolific in courses, workshops and webinars. The School had a new Texas Deafblind project website. Outreach also had the active learning space website. The School hoped to create an early childhood specific site. Ms. Borg stated that the School's Texas SenseAbilities newsletter was moving online. She stated that she hoped to be able to fund a position for a webmaster for the Outreach department. Lastly, the conference center was in desperate need of an upgrade. The microphones used during the meeting had static and interference while in use. The spaces are not only used by TSBVI but other community groups and stakeholders as well.

Ms. Coleman thanked Mr. Montgomery for his presentation and Ms. Borg for her input. She stated that another area with needs was to grow the Outreach Program. Ms. Coleman shared a stakeholder's perspective, they said, "Increasing the Outreach perspective is critical. Due to variation in big city schools and rural districts, districts say they aren't getting enough Outreach access." In addition, "Outreach understands they are there for the student, but can't be afraid to disagree with the school district." She stated the next area of need was student identification and evaluation. She shared a family's perspective. They said, "Our son was born 4 months early. Had hearing aids by the time he was 1-year-old. Thick glasses by 18 months and had early childhood intervention services from the start. Why did we not know he was deafblind until he was almost 10 years old!" Ms. Coleman listed concerns from stakeholders including inaccurate tools used to evaluate students with CVI. Dual sensory loss was going unnoticed. Inexperienced TSVI's were completing evaluations. Evaluations were not comprehensive resulting in an inappropriate level of service. There was minimal supervision of itinerant professionals. Evaluation organization and sequencing was missing. LV and MIVI students were being underserved. Ms. Coleman shared an educator's perspective, they said, "Academic needs were often still a lone factor when determining eligibility and appropriate services; due to the narrow focus many areas of the ECC were not being adequately addressed within the IEP. Low vision, academic students received a small number of consult minutes. Students with multiple impairments had minimal consult. Ideas that stakeholders had were, video assessments for various FVLMA examples, mentors co-write evaluations with protégés and new teachers within Google Docs, embed coaching throughout trainings and support growth of programs through QPVI and "train the trainer" models.

Ms. Coleman stated that another area of need was promoting student empowerment and independence. American Council at the Blind and National Federation of the Blind Texas Chapters recommendations were that high expectations build character, honesty, personal accountability, and character development, they commended TSBVI for serving more students with multiple disabilities but we need to ensure academics don't slide, plan for students to graduate at 18 instead of counting on EXIT and/or adult training programs, provide mentors who are blind to students, parent and educator training to help them gain high expectations, and educate all elementary students to promote blindness independence during disability awareness week. External feedback was transfer of technical skills from short-term programs into the classroom can be difficult, and day students should have access to overnight or evening programming, better prepare students to transition into public school by teaching more self-determination and advocacy skills. She stated that when students come to TSBVI our job is to give them everything they need to succeed. Students do not need to advocate for

themselves here. However, they need to be taught to advocate for themselves when back in their local district. Ms. Coleman shared internal stakeholder feedback. It was purchase more adaptive equipment in the dorms (in progress), offer more activities by age and grade instead of by team (in progress), remove the “Elementary” signage on Building 606 (done), increase parent engagement to work on goals at home, increase access to role models who are blind, deafblind, or low vision (in progress), ensure student access to assignments to promote independence, utilize accessible technology on campus, offer low vision reading class similar to braille instruction, provide more ASL interpreters and interveners, and provide increased opportunities for peer interaction without staff present.

The next area of need was to improve on-campus training opportunities. Internal stakeholder recommendations were to expand NEO to include foundational knowledge around blindness, provide MIVI and Early Childhood boot camps similar to Braille Boot Camp, attend staff development with other departments, provide diversity, equity, and inclusion training, offer new hires job shadowing within the residential program, ARD training across campus, and increase student empowerment awareness and staff training. She shared some additional on-campus support ideas. They were lesson plan and instructional materials repository, opportunities for teachers to job shadow each other, implement mentoring program within TSBVI comprehensive programs (in progress), increase administrative presence in classrooms (in progress), share videos of each other providing instruction, and update and revise student performance indicators. She stated with some of the staffing issues administrators have pitched in during classes and lunch.

Ms. Coleman shared another area of need and it was to increase family training. Stakeholder ideas were to offer on-demand training videos for families, offer enrichment series students could access with their families from home; perhaps 30 minute quick topics with conversation after, larger offering of family courses that support the ECC, introduction to braille course for families, Zoom lessons for families with materials/kits mailed in advance, parent mentoring by experienced parents, and connect families with children that have similar diagnosis.

Ms. Coleman shared another need at TSBVI and it was to continue online learning. She stated that the virtual learning platform helped students connect with peers. Stakeholder ideas were to continue Zoom lessons with same groups of students working on ECC (develop peers), appreciate virtual STP because it’s hard for students to miss school, virtual coaching for professionals throughout Texas, appreciate not travelling to trainings and dealing with traffic. She stated area of need is classroom consultation and collaboration outside TSBVI. Ms. Coleman shared a family’s perspective. Referring to DB Symposium, one parent said, “They all talked about finding the right program with resources, motivated and talented personnel, and strong buy-in from the administration. Given those conditions, they were able to have some success and that is something to celebrate, but families don’t usually have the ability to cherry pick the perfect situation for their Deafblind child.” She also shared external feedback, like more success stories shared of students receiving TSBVI Outreach services, and collaborating with districts, transition from TSBVI back to the district is often a “rocky road” particularly with students who have mental health concerns, provide support to VI professionals to help them distinguish between consult and collaboration to increase evidence-based practices, TSBVI teachers would benefit from shadowing in the public schools, and empowering educators to “own” our students in all settings. She stated another area of need was access to accessible materials across Texas. The external feedback to that was “It’s a disservice to students when

they have 'outs' instead of access." They said, a barrier to quality education is lack of access to braille for all students. "She's left out of PE, receives classroom materials after her peers" said a parent explaining lack of resources. "Access to technology is still a barrier, and professionals lack sufficient braille skills". "Many website platforms used by districts are not fully accessible to our students who use braille displays and/ or screen readers even though they are WCAG/ 508 compliant."

Ms. Coleman shared the last area of necessity and it was communication with internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholder recommendations were as IEP's were written at TSBVI, ensure goals can be generalized across settings, streamline homework process within Google platform to better communicate between instructional and residential programs, consider a centralized referral point for all TSBVI students, keep websites and microsites updated and relevant, language translation services available across all departments, and increase parent communication and share more videos with families. External stakeholder feedback was to promote TSBVI services to charter schools, share TSBVI resources to university preparation programs, better explain TSBVI's role in the continuum of services (instead of districts perceived admission of denial of FAPE), review referral process for efficiency and parent referral options, request more time between announcement of programs and deadline for everything to be turned in, provide lesson plan clearing house aligned with TEKS and available throughout TX, outreach professionals broadcasting more outside of field, and focus on statewide collaboration; working with TEA, TxSSN, and ESCs.

Ms. Coleman asked participants to vote for their top three areas of need for TSBVI. She stated that she would count the votes during the lunch hour.

Ms. Coleman announced that there would be a break for lunch it was 11:32 a.m.

Ms. Coleman announced that the Board Team Building session would begin. She shared parent and educator insight. One parent said, "I spent a couple days at TSBVI...left with an intense purpose to get our son into the right learning environment with experienced staff.". Educators said, "I love TSBVI. When I went there for the first time, I wanted to work there. It's like Disneyland for our kids.", "Rural districts really tapped into STP online options.", "Having online peer group ECC instruction has been really helpful." and "Targeted Coffee Hours have been wonderful. It's great archived hours are available as well...it's important that people be able to access information when they need it as it applies to their current caseloads in real time.". Another parent said, "I'm humbled and inspired by how well y'all have pulled together in this pandemic and subsequent shortage of staff and still managed to be there for the students that need you.". She shared the voting results. They were number one, Recruitment and Retention. Number two grow Outreach. Third was a tie, they were student identification and evaluation, as well as, promoting student empowerment and independence.

Ms. Coleman asked the Board if they had any comments or discussion.

Board Team Building Session: Discussion by the Board and TSBVI Staff of Strategic Planning Needs for TSBVI

Mr. Sonnenberg thanked Emily Coleman for all her hard work and all the input from TSBVI staff. Ms. Lee said that an approach to the Reach Across Texas program would be to have teachers' pay half of their tuition. She said at her service center they help teachers with their text books.

She said that she knows it draws teachers to the program because they are fully funded. However, there have been teachers who are fully funded and then do not complete the program. She stated that funding teachers at a percentage would bring in more teachers for students with visual impairments. Mr. Sonnenberg had trouble with his microphone and asked if expanding Outreach would address replacing the microphones. Ms. Coleman answered yes. Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the two teacher preparation programs are great but was it enough? Do the programs we have need the Board's support during the request of the funds. He stated that both TTU and SFAU have master level for TVI's. He stated that there has been some contention between bachelor's degrees and experience levels. He added that if another university was brought on how would it be funded. He said if the Board can provide additional support he'd like to know how to do so. Ms. Robertson stated within her years supervising the TVI's the ones that come in new, the state provides a mentor, however, the mentor can't always be there for assessments or the situations that are problematic. She purposed having someone go into the ESC's and talk to their special education directors and give them insight to the visually impaired field and have them set up a system within the district to mentor these and attain more knowledge of instruction of the visually impaired. She said that her district hired a contract employee to be the mentor for their district. The mentor worked with the TVI during the evaluation process. She added that giving an already over loaded teacher the responsibility of mentoring was too much. Ms. Coleman added that they could have a liaison from the district work with a mentor from TSBVI. Ms. Robertson said this is an idea that would help keep teachers in the VI field. Ms. Lee stated that the classroom collaboration would be helpful. She stated having a bank of lessons teachers could use for VI students would help with teacher retention. Ms. Jones added that was true especially because being a teacher of the VI made you unique to the district. She said sometimes they are the only one in the district. She added having a resources like lesson plan sharing, apps for evaluations and technology to help during distance learning could help teachers. She stated that more awareness needs to be brought to the field. Ms. Jones said that she is a mother of two VI students who were not taught braille. There are teachers who do not know how to read braille and can't pass their TVI tests. She had someone come to her program to be a diagnostician because she couldn't pass her TVI test. She also had a TVI come to her and say her friend is struggling with the same thing. She added that there were over 10,822 students with visual impairments in the state of Texas and 455 are braille readers. She added that there are 10,367 students who are not braille readers. She proposed omitting the requirement to master braille. Then that would get more of those teachers to the 10,365 students who do not read braille. She said that she thinks we lose people and not all visually impaired students need braille. Ms. Gautney reminded everyone that at Texas Tech there were students that did not have their cane training and that was holding them back an entire year from their internship. Ms. Prause said ten or fifteen years ago a team started the PPAG program. She stated that they came together to talk about retention. Dr. Casey Dignan was a fan of the homegrown model. She stated that she even took classes at UT in marketing so that she could learn how to bring people in for support. She said what could TSBVI do to expand on that. Marketing is a big part of the resolution. Bringing someone in to help with that could be beneficial she said. Cheryl Williams added TSBVI applied for a grant for paraprofessionals to pursue teaching, she stated that was really called growing your own. She said that creating that pathway earlier for staff would be beneficial. Then, TVI certification would come later. Ms. Coleman said it is the TCLAS grant through TEA. Ms. Williams said the School could get a list from TEA of their special education teachers. She added that the School had gotten the Region 10 and 13 list before. Then, TSBVI could send out emails to bring in teachers to the TVI field. Ms. Jones asked Kate Borg if they are doing a coffee hour on how to become a

TVI. Ms. Borg stated that outreach hasn't done one specific to that, however, holding one would be a great and she would put it on her list. Ms. Lee said once the School recruited how would they be trained. She stated that the teacher preparation programs are full. Ms. Borg said maybe getting a third university on board and referred to Dr. Beth Jones. Ms. Coleman added that she liked the idea of adding resources and capacity. She said that it should be addressed at PPAG because TSBVI is just a flow through for the money. PPAG is a stakeholder group that focuses on personnel preparation needs. She referred to Ms. Borg and asked if it was something they could put on the November agenda. Ms. Borg stated that it was already on the agenda. She said there were a number of ESCs that were going to share data they collected from an assessment of needs survey. She stated that after the presentation she would make sure there was a discussion. She added that it was definitely on the agenda to discuss with PPAG. Ms. Coleman said that if the School wanted to request funds in Legislative Appropriations Request then the School would need data to support it. If another university would be funded then, TSBVI needed the third university on board. Ms. Borg stated that Outreach had good data from the personnel preparation and the annual survey from the ESC's. She added that they had the data that said the School was in desperate need. Ms. Jones said the School could scale it, start small and then grow the program.

Ms. Coleman stated that the School's lowest paid staff could not keep earning low wages with the high cost of living in Austin. She added that the School needed to ask for funds to give them raises and should remain a focus item. Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the Board is in full agreement and that every position on campus is important. He said that the students benefit from every person employed at TSBVI. Mr. Sonnenberg stated that he hoped the Superintendent would be with the School for 10 to 15 more years, however, the salary is not competitive. Ms. Coleman updated participants on the history of the Superintendent's salary. She said that there has been a legislative salary cap tied to TSBVI and the School for the Deaf for many years. Ms. Coleman said at the next session she hoped to meet more specifically with the departments about the School's needs. She moved on the second topic which was grow the Outreach program. Mr. Sonnenberg said that family training hits close to home because he is a parent of a child with visual impairment. He stated that Outreach has a big role in reaching the thousands of students with visual impairments. Ms. Jones stated that getting the word out on how to get resources to general education teachers that will help them when they do get a student with visual impairments. Ms. Lee asked Kate Borg if there are additional positions needed in Outreach. Ms. Borg stated that in the coming years she sees that program outgrowing itself. Mr. Sonnenberg stated that student identification, family training, education and awareness needs to be brought to the forefront. He said there needs to be someone to market TSBVI's services and programs. Mr. Sonnenberg asked who drafts the document that is given to families at the ARD. Ms. Coleman said that there are older versions floating around. Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the School should update that. Ms. Jones stated that there could be a QR code to give information about TSBVI and its services. Ms. Lee stated that she is not sure that there is any Outreach information on the handout. She said that a lot of times parents see the handout and think you want them to send their child there because they don't see there is an outreach program. Ms. Prause said the annual report would be a good piece of information for families. Ms. Coleman stated that was a good idea and the School could definitely make a QR code for the annual report. Ms. Coleman moved on to student identification and evaluation. Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the evaluation process should go back to the teacher preparation programs and making sure they are efficiently trained so they are not doing unnecessary training. Ms. Jones stated that diagnosticians don't get training on assessments with VI

students. She stated that some parents don't know they can decline the cognitive assessment. She does not let her children be tested because she doesn't want them to be underestimated. She said the same should go for other VI students. Ms. Robertson stated that she thinks that the identification for deafblind students was getting better. Ms. Borg stated that she thought they are not being identified early enough. Ms. Robertson agreed and said it has gotten better since she started in the field. They moved on to student independence and empowerment. Mr. Sonnenberg said Short-Term Programs has done a lot to help students gain independence. He said social media helps too. Ms. Jones stated that it is important for students to attend their ARD meeting. She said the student advocating for themselves is more powerful. Mr. Sonnenberg stated his daughter attended ARDs since the third grade. He stated that they had her explain her vision loss to her teachers so that they could meet her needs. When she got to college she was comfortable asking for what she needed. He added that it goes back to parent training. Ms. Robertson said she knows at her district they asked students to come at a certain age. Mr. Fain answered that students from the beginning attend meetings and as they get older they are more and more involved. Ms. Coleman stated that she would be following up with a report to the Board.

Adjournment

Ms. Robertson motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Jones seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 2:13 p.m.