

History of SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Printed from their handbook

Donated by Briana Hoffman

HISTORY

The South Dakota School for the Blind was officially opened in Gary, South Dakota on March 1, 1900, under the Board of Charities and Corrections. The citizens of Gary were instrumental in pursuing the location of a state "Blind Asylum" in their community and offered the former Courthouse as a facility. After inspection by the Board of Charities and Corrections it was determined additional accommodations would be needed. The city of Gary constructed a new two-story building according to the plans submitted by the Board of Charities and Corrections. Ground was broken for the facility in July 1899, and the facility was officially presented to the state of South Dakota on March 1, 1900, with a grand reception.

Additional construction on the Gary campus included areas for administration, girls' dormitory, boys' dormitory, auditorium, several barns and a large chicken house. The school kept a large dairy herd, raised hogs and chickens and planted a large garden. They produced milk, meat, eggs and vegetables for their own use and for sale to the community.

In 1945 the School for the Blind was placed under the jurisdiction of the South Dakota Board of Regents.

In 1957-58 the idea of relocating the school surfaced. The major contentions were the inadequacy of the facilities at Gary, the lack of opportunity for city travel experiences and the proximity to a college. In 1959, the State Legislature passed a bill authorizing relocation of the school to Aberdeen. At that same session, \$800,000 was appropriated to build an entirely new set of buildings on the land donated by the citizens of Aberdeen for the purpose. Ground was broken on April 11, 1960, and a one-story building was constructed, with separate areas for classrooms, dormitories and other services. Classes began in the new facility in Aberdeen on September 18, 1961.

In 1968 an Activities Building was completed at a cost of \$165,000. The unit houses a gymnasium-auditorium which provides space for physical education, recreation, music, drama and other large and small group activities.

In 1970 the name South Dakota School for the Visually Handicapped was adopted. This change reflects the fact that students who are visually impaired as well as blind can receive services. This was not a new development; the majority of students since 1900 have had some degree of usable vision.

A federally funded program to serve deaf-blind students was begun in 1972 as a part of the nationwide response to the rubella epidemic of the mid-sixties. Because of their reduced ability to learn through visual or auditory modes, different teaching methods were introduced. In 1979 serving the deaf-blind was added to the responsibility of the South Dakota School for the Visually Handicapped and the program was funded by the state.

The South Dakota School for the Visually Handicapped has had a strong history of including students in the public schools and community activities, because an integrated approach to teaching the blind and providing "hands on" experiences are appropriate for the students. The school has also introduced new technologies as they have become available, including large print, voice output for our computers, Reading Edge, talking encyclopedia and low vision aids. Curriculum developments, new teaching methods and integrated use of the therapy programs have been adopted to better serve the students. In 1984 a Work Experience Program was started to provide students an opportunity to develop practical skills through both on-campus and off-campus employment.

After the introduction of PL 94-142, there were increasing requests from public schools for assistance with evaluating students who are visually impaired. The SDSVH also developed a Multifaceted Evaluation Program to assist schools in planning programs for students who are being educated in their home districts. In 1981 the South Dakota School for the Visually Handicapped, in a response to growing requests from parents and local school districts, hired its first Consultant to travel and work with visually impaired students in their homes and public schools. Currently, there are four Outreach Vision Consultants who provide this service and a Transition Specialist who assists older students statewide. In addition, consultation in the area of adaptive technology is also available to local schools.

On the recommendation of the South Dakota School for the Visually Handicapped Advisory Council and with the support of the South Dakota Board of Regents, the South Dakota Association of the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota, the school requested a name change during the 1998 legislative session. On July 1, 1998, the South Dakota School for the Visually Handicapped became the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. During the 2000 Legislative Session funding was earmarked for six weeks of summer programs.

SCHOOL SONG: "From Across Fair South Dakota"

MUSIC BY: Doris Atteberry

WORDS BY: Rochelle Foley

SCHOOL SONG: "SDSBVI 2001"

MUSIC BY: David Lee Brown, Artist-In-Residence

WORDS BY: SDSBVI Students

SCHOOL MOTTO: Visions of a Brighter Tomorrow through Education

The motto "Visions of a Brighter Tomorrow through Education" was adopted in 1987. With the assistance of the public relations staff from Northern State University, a review of the school's public relations activities was conducted and a distinctive logo was created. The black-on-white logo depicted a large oak tree. Beside the tree, and moving away from it, were five people holding hands - two adults and three children. The leading figure, a child, was using a long cane. The tree represented security and growth; the movement away from the tree symbolized independence.

SCHOOL COLORS: Blue and Gold

SUPERINTENDENTS

Miss Dora Donald	1900-1903
Mrs. Mary Wood	1903-1907
Mrs. L.A. (Donald) Humbert	1907-1909
Mrs. Lelia Curl	1909-1918
Mrs. Otis Rule	1918-1935
Mr. H.H. Stephenson (Acting)	1935-1937
Mr. Vincent Linn	1937-1943
Mr. Sam Van Voorhis	1943-1953
Mr. Walter Hack	1953-1968
Mrs. Walter Hack (Acting)	1968
Mr. George McCrea	1968-1976
Mr. John Hudson (Acting)	1976-1977
Mr. Jules Cote'	1977-1979
Mr. Dean North (Acting)	1979
Mr. Charles Boyer	1979-1986
Mr. Dean North (Acting)	1986
Dr. Marjorie A. Kaiser	1986-present