PAGE

**Agency Profile** ..... 2

**Agency Fiscal Page (Gov Rec)** ..... 6

**Change Summary** ..... 7

**Agency Change Items**

⇒ Addition Of Trial Placement Option ..... 8

⇒ Nutrition Services Shifted To Contract ..... 9

**Programs**

**Resendtl Academies/Deaf & Blind** ..... 10

Program Summary ..... 11

**Budget Activities**

Academy For The Deaf ..... 12

Academy For The Blind ..... 15

Budget Activity Summary

**Agency Revenue Summary Fiscal Page** ..... 18

⇒ Designates that this item is a change item

## Agency Purpose

The mission of the Minnesota State Academies (MSA) is to provide the highest level of self-sufficiency possible for deaf/hard of hearing and blind/visually impaired students in the state of Minnesota. Established in 1858, the MSA are statewide public schools that provide education and related services to students ages 0-21, who are blind, visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, including those with multiple disabilities. The MSA are composed of two separate and unique schools – the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind (MSAB), and Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (MSAD). Federal law mandates that services provided by the MSA meet the student's need for a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) within the least restrictive environment.

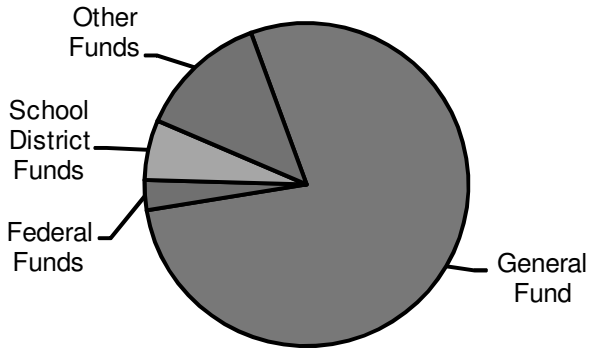
The decision to attend the MSA during the school year is made by an Individualized Educational Planning (IEP) team which includes the parent, the district of residence and MSA staff. For a student to enroll, the IEP team must decide that MSA provides the most appropriate placement. Students may also attend MSA to obtain social skills or for short-term skill development (for more information, refer to M.S. 125A.69 Admission Standards).

### At A Glance

The Minnesota State Academies (MSA) is a state agency made up of two unique schools serving deaf and/or blind students. MSA serves as a resource to families, school districts and educators throughout Minnesota and the Midwest region. Specifically, students are served as follows:

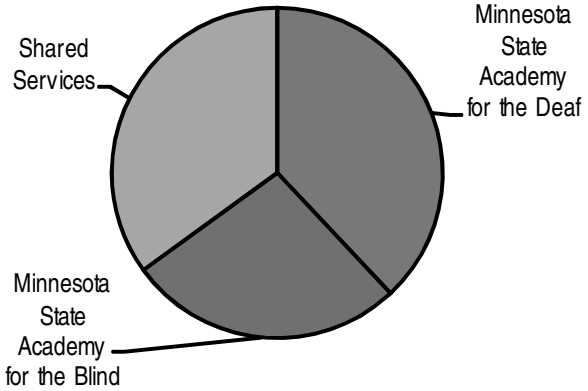
- ages 0-21 who reside in the state of Minnesota or the upper Midwest;
- in a special education environment with a residential component, providing 24 hour services;
- with additional disabilities, including physical and emotional needs.

**Est. FY 2010-11 Expenditures by Fund**




*Source: Minnesota State Academies.*

**Est. FY 2010-11 Expenditures by Program**




*Source: Minnesota Accounting and Procurement System.*

## Strategies

MSA has reviewed it mission, vision and beliefs, developed a strategic plan to guide its improvement and is currently working on updating its facilities master plan (the Academies share a common mission to educate students who are blind/visually impaired or deaf/hard of hearing to their greatest potential. While the mission is a common one, the strategies to accomplish that mission are unique to each school). See link for details: http://www.msa.state.mn.us/About/mission.asp.

The decision to enroll at MSAD is not an easy one for parents and/or school districts to make. Research indicates that if there is early identification of deafness (now a reality due to Minnesota's newborn infant screening) and early language acquisition, children can avoid becoming delayed language learners. With specialized services by appropriately trained staff, students can develop the tools to be successful, responsible, independent citizens. However, if students do not receive appropriate language acquisition opportunities, their educational progress and future success is diminished. In addition, the social-emotional needs of deaf/hard of hearing students are unique and real. However, children with disabilities also have the same social-emotional needs as their non-disabled peers and have the right to form an identity; have a peer group; participate in activities; develop their maximum potential; share life experiences; and feel good about who they are. These principles inform the Academies' strategies:

- provide services that would be prohibitively expensive or unavailable in public schools;
- provide direct and indirect educational services through a number of program options;
- provide academic year programs, which include pre-K-12 academics, early childhood intervention, transition, and programs for students with multiple disabilities;
- provide off-campus services in support of local school districts for non-enrolled students including specialized evaluation, direct teacher services, orientation and mobility training, and consultations;
- provide on-campus services in support of local school districts for non-enrolled students including weekend parent training programs, family and teacher visitation at the Academies to review specialized resources, short-term direct services such as basic skills testing remediation, independent living training, assistive technology training, extended school year programming and transition programs;
- help the state meet federal statutory requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA);
- provide access to a direct communication environment, comprehensive services, additional resources and increased opportunities which meet the individual needs of students as mandated by their IEPs; and
- offer mainstream courses in conjunction with the Faribault Public Schools which provide access to broader curriculum choices, advanced coursework, opportunities to increase skill in working with interpreters, and integration with non-disabled peers;
- provide independent living experience and career exploration in conjunction with South Central College and State Services for the Blind; and,
- the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf provides support for teacher preparation programs. Student teachers work under the guidance of Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf licensed professionals.

## Operations

The Academies are governed by a seven member board which is appointed by the governor. The board meets six times a year and is made up of the following membership: one member with school superintendent experience, one member with special education director experience, one deaf community representative, one blind community representative, one representative from the Minnesota Department of Education, and two members of the business/finance community.

The range of services provided by the MSA in support of the agency's mission is unique and often complex when compared to most public schools, making the Academies a necessary option for school districts. The MSA have provided educational services to deaf and blind students for more than 140 years. Historically, the MSA were the only educational options available to deaf or blind students. If students were deaf or blind it was assumed that they would attend the MSA. Today most deaf or blind students attend school in their local community and the Minnesota State Academies are viewed as an extension of the school district. The Minnesota State Academies is a state agency that functions under the leadership of the Academies Administrator. Each special school operates under the direction of a director who is a specialist with expertise in its disability area (blindness at the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind and deafness at the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf).

In its daily operations, the MSA educate enrolled and short term placement students and/or support public schools to educate students to:

- develop self-esteem, social skills, leadership skills, and specialized skills like Braille or sign language;
- complete a course of study equivalent to public schools;

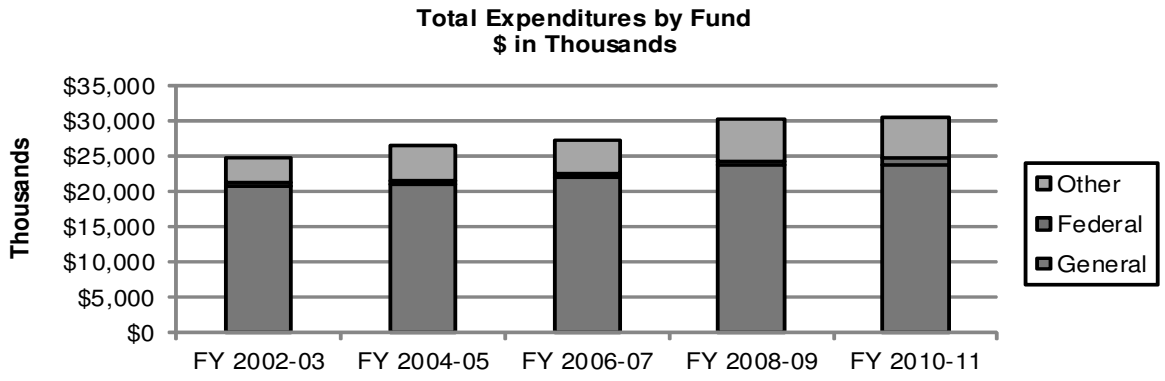
- earn a living, become integrated into the community, and/or live on their own or in supported living arrangements;
- prepare for higher education or vocational training;
- access and utilize state-of-the-art technology to prepare for employment in the 21st century;
- acquire technology skills to access information otherwise inaccessible because of their disability; and,
- prepare severely, multiply-disabled blind children for adult life.

In efforts to be fiscally responsible, we have consolidated the services that support the programming at MSAD and MSAB. These services include our health services, nutrition department, human resources, business office and maintenance department. While our schools are located on separate campuses, they are less than a mile apart within the Faribault community, and staff is able to meet the needs at both locations. RNs work in our health clinic to provide the necessary expertise needed by our complicated students. This is especially important on the MSAB campus where we have medically fragile students. Food is prepared at each site and both schools have students whose dietary needs are complicated. The human resources office and business office are located on the MSAD campus but staff spends time at MSAB on a regular basis. Some of the maintenance staff work at one school or the other, while other staff may spend time at each site. This is determined by their work responsibilities. Whenever possible, equipment is shared to reduce costs. This is also true for vehicles and buses, which are also shared.

## Budget Trends

The total budget for the MSA for the 2010-11 biennium is approximately is $30.4 million. This includes educational aides, all gifts, revolving and federal funds. MSA staff include approximately 200 full-time equivalent employees.

Of the total budget, the majority (78%) comes from direct state appropriations from the general fund. The Department of Education accounts for another 13% in the form of management aid reimbursements, tuition, and compensatory education revenue. The remainder of the budget is federal funding, student deposits, and gifts. Additionally, approximately $1.75 million in tuition from school districts for students attending the Academies is returned to the state's general fund.




**FY2010-11 is estimated, not actual.*
*Source data for the previous chart is the Minnesota Accounting and Procurement System (MAPS) as of 8/24/2010*

The Academies is heavily reliant on its general fund appropriation to fund operations. It does not have levy authority and receives limited federal funding. The Academies' designation as a state agency, and not as a school district, has limited its access to federal ARRA funds targeting the education sector, including $167 million in federal Educations Jobs funding. The financial challenges that public school districts are facing impact the Academies when attendance at the Academies is viewed as an additional cost to their budgets. The Academies' goal is to be as "cost neutral" as possible, though school districts do have to make some contributions to students' education when they attend the Academies. Another factor that impacts the Academies is how the admissions

process works. At the present time, families access enrollment at the Academies through the school district of residence. The school district must agree that placement at the Academies is an appropriate placement or the child cannot attend. Finally, there are no preparation programs for teachers of the visually impaired in the state of Minnesota. As the current staff at MSAB reaches the age of retirement, it will become exceedingly difficult to find licensed teachers of the visually impaired. We are working with professionals in the state, as well as across the country, to find solutions to this staffing dilemma.

## Contact

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Phone: (507) 384-6617

*Dollars in Thousands*

| | Current FY2010 | Current FY2011 | Governor Recomm. FY2012 | Governor Recomm. FY2013 | Biennium 2012-13 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Direct Appropriations by Fund*** | | | | | |
| **General** | | | | | |
| Current Appropriation | 11,912 | 11,912 | 11,912 | 11,912 | 23,824 |
| **Recommended** | **11,912** | **11,912** | **11,607** | **11,616** | **23,223** |
| Change | | 0 | (305) | (296) | (601) |
| % Biennial Change from 2010-11 | | | | | -2.5% |
| ***Expenditures by Fund*** | | | | | |
| **Direct Appropriations** | | | | | |
| General | 11,886 | 11,938 | 11,607 | 11,616 | 23,223 |
| **Statutory Appropriations** | | | | | |
| Miscellaneous Special Revenue | 2,322 | 3,220 | 2,929 | 3,029 | 5,958 |
| Federal | 369 | 306 | 310 | 318 | 628 |
| Miscellaneous Agency | 66 | 64 | 58 | 58 | 116 |
| Gift | 46 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 58 |
| **Total** | **14,689** | **15,557** | **14,933** | **15,050** | **29,983** |
| ***Expenditures by Category*** | | | | | |
| Total Compensation | 12,454 | 12,861 | 12,418 | 12,788 | 25,206 |
| Other Operating Expenses | 2,184 | 2,668 | 2,487 | 2,234 | 4,721 |
| Payments To Individuals | 51 | 28 | 28 | 28 | 56 |
| **Total** | **14,689** | **15,557** | **14,933** | **15,050** | **29,983** |
| ***Expenditures by Program*** | | | | | |
| Resendtl Academies/Deaf&Blind | 14,689 | 15,557 | 14,933 | 15,050 | 29,983 |
| **Total** | **14,689** | **15,557** | **14,933** | **15,050** | **29,983** |
| ***Full-Time Equivalents (FTE)*** | **179.0** | **169.0** | **168.4** | **168.4** | |

*Dollars in Thousands*

| | FY2011 | Governor's Recomm. FY2012 | Governor's Recomm. FY2013 | Biennium 2012-13 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Fund: GENERAL*** | | | | |
| **FY 2011 Appropriations** | **11,912** | **11,912** | **11,912** | **23,824** |
| **Subtotal - Forecast Base** | **11,912** | **11,912** | **11,912** | **23,824** |
| **Change Items** | | | | |
| Nutrition Services Shifted to Contract | 0 | (309) | (309) | (618) |
| Addition of Trial Placement Option | 0 | 4 | 13 | 17 |
| **Total Governor's Recommendations** | **11,912** | **11,607** | **11,616** | **23,223** |
| ***Fund: MISCELLANEOUS SPECIAL REVENUE*** | | | | |
| **Planned Statutory Spending** | **3,220** | **2,929** | **3,029** | **5,958** |
| **Total Governor's Recommendations** | **3,220** | **2,929** | **3,029** | **5,958** |
| ***Fund: FEDERAL*** | | | | |
| **Planned Statutory Spending** | **306** | **310** | **318** | **628** |
| **Total Governor's Recommendations** | **306** | **310** | **318** | **628** |
| ***Fund: MISCELLANEOUS AGENCY*** | | | | |
| **Planned Statutory Spending** | **64** | **58** | **58** | **116** |
| **Total Governor's Recommendations** | **64** | **58** | **58** | **116** |
| ***Fund: GIFT*** | | | | |
| **Planned Statutory Spending** | **29** | **29** | **29** | **58** |
| **Total Governor's Recommendations** | **29** | **29** | **29** | **58** |

| Fiscal Impact ($000s) | FY 2012 | FY 2013 | FY 2014 | FY 2015 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| General Fund | | | | |
| Expenditures | $4 | $13 | $26 | $26 |
| Revenues | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other Fund | | | | |
| Expenditures | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Revenues | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Net Fiscal Impact | $4 | $13 | $26 | $26 |

## Recommendation

The Governor recommends that a trial placement option be added to MS 125A.69 subdivision 1, which would allow parents of children who are deaf/hard-of-hearing or blind/visually-impaired to attend the Minnesota State Academies (MSA) for a trial period of 60-90 calendar days to determine whether the MSA is an appropriate placement for their child.

## Rationale

In the state of Minnesota, parents may choose where their children go to school. The options available include but are not limited to public, parochial, private or charter schools as well as open enrollment options. While the Minnesota State Academies (MSA) is a resource to all of the deaf/hard-of-hearing and blind/visually-impaired children in Minnesota, at the present time, parents cannot access the MSA without the approval of their resident school district. If parents want their child to attend the MSA and the resident school district is not in agreement, the parents' only option is to contest the decision through the special education process of mediation, conciliation or more litigious steps. This trial placement language would allow a less contentious option for parents to determine if the MSA is an appropriate placement. This trial placement would also release the resident school district of their legal responsibility and place it with the MSA.

Often, students come to the Academies after being unsuccessful in a traditional school environment. MSA would like to offer this option to parents at any point in their child's education. Early language acquisition and immediate access to information has proven to make the difference in children who progress and those who fall behind.

With the addition of this language, enrollments at the MSA are projected to increase slightly. If MSA received the full amount of basic general education revenue directly from the general education appropriation, this would be revenue neutral. However, only the portion of the basic aid attributable to enrollment over 175 students is paid directly to the Academies through general education aid, based on the ratio of the May enrollment at the Academies to 175 students. The balance is funded through their direct appropriation. Because of this ratio calculation, there is not a dollar for dollar correspondence between the deductions made to the resident school districts who would otherwise be serving the student, and the amount received by the Academies. This results in a small cost to the state.

We recommend this change take place on July 1, 2011.

## Key Goals and Measures

The Minnesota State Academies will monitor annual enrollments to determine the number/percentage of students who access the MSA via the trial placement option.

| Fiscal Impact ($000s) | FY 2012 | FY 2013 | FY 2014 | FY 2015 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| General Fund | | | | |
| Expenditures | $(309) | $(309) | $(309) | $(309) |
| Revenues | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other Fund | | | | |
| Expenditures | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Revenues | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Net Fiscal Impact | $(309) | $(309) | $(309) | $(309) |

## Recommendation

The Governor recommends a change in the manner in which nutrition services are provided at the Minnesota State Academies (MSA). This change will result in a savings to the base budget of the MSA of approximately $309,000 while continuing to provide the same quality of service.

## Rationale

The Minnesota State Academies (MSA) is a state agency made up of two special and unique schools, each with its own kitchen/dining room facilities. As special schools with a residential option, meals are provided Monday through Friday for breakfast, lunch and dinner. There are some weekends throughout the school year for special events when meals are provided on weekends. Currently the staff at the Academies prepares and serves the food for all the meals. There are three issues that have influenced this recommendation to do business differently.

These include:

- **The potential for providing the same quality of service at a lower cost.** The MSA dietician would work with the contractor to ensure that the meals and snacks served to the students would meet the nutritional needs of the students as required by the school lunch program. The MSA dietician would also work with the MSA staff who serves the meals to ensure that the food safety rules are followed and that food is kept at the proper temperature (warmed and cooled).
- **The elimination of the need to renovate the MSAD kitchen, saving approximately $1 million.** MSAD's dining facilities are located in Rodman Hall, a building constructed in 1924. While this building is still being utilized at MSAD, it is inefficient and costly to operate. The dining room itself is pleasant and open, and can still be utilized for dining purposes. The kitchen in Rodman Hall needs to be replaced. The equipment in the MSAD kitchen is very old and has been under constant repair. It is no longer practical to continue replacing parts. New equipment will be needed if we are going to prepare food in the MSAD kitchen and installing new equipment would require major renovation to the kitchen space.
- **The lack of state employee layoffs.** A majority of the staff in the nutrition department took advantage of the early retirement incentive (ERI) offered this fall and the few that are still employed would be needed to serve the food and manage the clean-up in the dining areas. This provides us with an opportunity to change how we do business without laying off employees and having to pay unemployment costs.

The Academies would begin contracting for nutrition services for the 2011-2012 school year. In order for this to occur, the MSA dietician would work closely with the contractor to set up menus, make sure that the necessary procedures and equipment for keeping food at the proper temperature was in place, schedule MSA staff for serving and clean-up; work with the MSA Health Services Coordinator to provide special diets to students whose IEPs require them.

## Program Description

The purpose of the residential academies is to provide the highest level of self sufficiency possible for deaf/hard or hearing and blind/visually impaired students in the state of Minnesota.

## Budget Activities

This program includes the following budget activities:

- Academy for the Deaf
- Academy for the Blind
- Academy Operations (covered in the “Operations” section of the agency profile)

# MINN STATE ACADEMIES

## Program: RESENDTL ACADEMIES/DEAF&BLIND

Program Summary

*Dollars in Thousands*

| | Current | | Governor Recomm. | | Biennium |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FY2010 | FY2011 | FY2012 | FY2013 | 2012-13 |
| ***Direct Appropriations by Fund*** | | | | | |
| **General** | | | | | |
| Current Appropriation | 11,912 | 11,912 | 11,912 | 11,912 | 23,824 |
| Subtotal - Forecast Base | 11,912 | 11,912 | 11,912 | 11,912 | 23,824 |
| **Governor's Recommendations** | | | | | |
| Nutrition Services Shifted to Contract | | 0 | (309) | (309) | (618) |
| Addition of Trial Placement Option | | 0 | 4 | 13 | 17 |
| **Total** | **11,912** | **11,912** | **11,607** | **11,616** | **23,223** |
| ***Expenditures by Fund*** | | | | | |
| **Direct Appropriations** | | | | | |
| General | 11,886 | 11,938 | 11,607 | 11,616 | 23,223 |
| **Statutory Appropriations** | | | | | |
| Miscellaneous Special Revenue | 2,322 | 3,220 | 2,929 | 3,029 | 5,958 |
| Federal | 369 | 306 | 310 | 318 | 628 |
| Miscellaneous Agency | 66 | 64 | 58 | 58 | 116 |
| Gift | 46 | 29 | 29 | 29 | 58 |
| **Total** | **14,689** | **15,557** | **14,933** | **15,050** | **29,983** |
| ***Expenditures by Category*** | | | | | |
| Total Compensation | 12,454 | 12,861 | 12,418 | 12,788 | 25,206 |
| Other Operating Expenses | 2,184 | 2,668 | 2,487 | 2,234 | 4,721 |
| Payments To Individuals | 51 | 28 | 28 | 28 | 56 |
| **Total** | **14,689** | **15,557** | **14,933** | **15,050** | **29,983** |
| ***Expenditures by Activity*** | | | | | |
| Academy For The Deaf | 5,863 | 5,774 | 5,550 | 5,614 | 11,164 |
| Academy For The Blind | 3,779 | 3,930 | 3,912 | 3,978 | 7,890 |
| Academy Operations | 5,047 | 5,853 | 5,471 | 5,458 | 10,929 |
| **Total** | **14,689** | **15,557** | **14,933** | **15,050** | **29,983** |
| ***Full-Time Equivalents (FTE)*** | **179.0** | **169.0** | **168.4** | **168.4** | |

## Activity at a Glance

- Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf students in 2009 – 2010 as follows:

| **Student Type** | |
|---|---|
| Day | 59 |
| Residential | 82 |
| **Total Enrolled** | **141** |
| Summer | 88 |
| **Total Served** | **228** |

- 51% of MSAD students present a secondary or multiple handicapping conditions including: learning disabilities, physical disabilities, emotional behavior disorders, communication disorders, autism spectrum disorders, cognitive disabilities, and dual sensory impairments (deaf-blind).
- The Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf maintains ten buildings with a total of 315,000 square feet on 40 acres of land.
- The Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf has two buildings listed on the National Historic Registry: Tate Hall and Noyes Hall.

## Activity Description

The Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (MSAD) provides educational opportunities to deaf/hard of hearing students ages 0-21 throughout the state of Minnesota. Students attend the MSAD when the family, school district of residence and Academies staff agree that MSAD is an appropriate placement. Students may also attend to obtain social skills or for targeted short-term skill development.

## Services Provided

The Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (MSAD) is located on 40 acres of land on the east side of Faribault, Minnesota. The campus is about a half mile from the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind within the Faribault community. MSAD has a residential option and educational programs unique to the disability of deafness. MSAD's mission is to educate deaf/hard of hearing students to their greatest potential. The strategies to accomplish this mission are unique to MSAD and the disability of deafness. Teachers at MSAD require specialized training and are highly qualified teachers.

**Communication Access.** MSAD provides direct instruction to deaf/hard of hearing students by licensed teachers fluent in American Sign Language. Instruction and classroom environments are designed to include necessary adaptations unique to deaf/hard of hearing learners. MSAD is a 24-hour, language-rich environment, where American Sign Language and English are utilized to foster effective communication in a community with a critical mass of similar age, language peers. Children have direct communication access 24 hours a day. This 24 hour access to information and communication creates an environment which is least the restrictive for a deaf child.

**Educational Options.** Educational opportunities include core academics, early childhood education, transition programming, work study experience, functional life skill development, specialized behavioral programming, and specific instructional strategies designed to meet the needs of multi-handicapped learners.

**Mainstream Options.** Mainstream opportunities are available through the Faribault Public School System. This opportunity provides students with the experience of being a participant in a class with non-disabled peers. Deaf students acquire skills in working with an interpreter and note-taker.

**Related Services.** All student support services are provided by professional staff licensed and trained to work with deaf/hard of hearing students. Support staff includes licensed school psychologists, social workers, counselors, OT/PT staff and speech/language pathologists. Approximately 75% of all academy staff members are deaf or hard of hearing, providing students with successful role models. Recreational and competitive activities provide students with opportunities to develop self-confidence, self-esteem, leadership and self-advocacy skills, knowledge and competence to apply to their future roles as productive, independent citizens.

### Special Programs

**The Impact program** opened its doors in January of 2010 as a collaborative venture with the Volunteers of America (VOA) and MSAD. Located in Pollard Hall on the MSAD campus, this specialized program serves deaf/hard of hearing students with intense mental health issues. MSAD provides the educational component of the program and VOA provides the mental health therapy.

**The Nest** is a special classroom in which teaching techniques are designed to meet the needs of middle school and high school students with developmental language needs. Designed for students who are non-readers who may also be diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum, this program has a low staff to student ratio and focuses on each student's functional needs. Clear visuals such as visual daily schedules, visual recipes and other supports are used throughout the day in order to support learning.

**The Next Steps** program is modeled after a program developed at the Perkins School for the Blind. It is a functional pre-vocational program that teaches students math, reading and functional organizational skills and patterning and is one of the many transition options provided at MSAD.

**The Levels program** offers educational opportunities to deaf/hard of hearing children who also have additional emotional and behavioral problems. This very structured program provides an environment in which children earn privileges and responsibilities by demonstrating appropriate behavior and completing academic tasks.

## Key Activity Goals & Measures

The Board of the Minnesota State Academies has a defined mission, vision and belief statements that guide the direction of the Academies. These statements are reviewed on an annual basis and reflect input from the Site Councils of both schools as well as other stakeholders of the Academies. See link for additional information: http://www.msa.state.mn.us/About/mission.asp.

- The MSAD mission is to educate deaf/hh children to their greatest potential. The majority of children who attend MSAD do not enroll academically-achieving at grade level. Each student at MSAD has an IEP (Individual Education Plan) with individual goals for achievement.
- Another key program goal for MSAD is to prepare students for life and education after high school and for all students to graduate with a high school diploma.

| **Measure: MSAD Students' Post-graduation Plans** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **2007** | **2008** | **2009** | **2010** | **4-Year Total** |
| College Bound | 78% | 85% | 63% | 50% | **70%** |
| Work | 17% | 5% | 5% | 29% | **13%** |
| Transition Program | | 10% | 11% | 21% | **10%** |
| Undecided/Unknown | 5% | | 21% | | **7%** |
| Class Size | 18 | 19 | 19 | 14 | **70** |

**Measure: Student Success Rate in Passing State Required Testing.** As special education facilities, progress monitoring via students' individualized goals is measured annually. Our children's disabilities make them unique unto themselves and demonstration of proficiency must be done on an individual basis. We measure growth by looking at where they started and the progress they've made. Students at MSAD take the Minnesota Standardized Tests and are able to compare their progress to their non-handicapped peers. Students whose IEPs deem it appropriate also participate in the Minnesota MCA 2's and the NWEAs (Northwest Education Assessments). Students whose IEPs do not deem it appropriate to take the Minnesota standardized tests may have their progress monitored via special assessments related to their disabilities or via alternative testing.

**Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (MSAD)**

| BST | Number Passed at State Level | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Class of | Reading | Writing | Math |
| 2009 | 11 (65%) | 9 (53%) | 9 (53%) |
| 2008 | 18 (95%) | 13 (68%) | 18 (95%) |
| 2007 | 11 (65%) | 10 (59%) | 8 (47%) |

Less than 1% of students attending MSAD are exempt from taking Minnesota's mandated tests. All others take the tests and results are measured and compared to non-handicapped peers.

**Measure: Individual Education Plan.** Testing and assessments have become a major component of K-12 education and while the students who attend MSAD do participate in taking Minnesota's mandated tests, it is just as important to highlight the progress that each student makes on the goals as defined in their individual education plan (IEP). All of our students are required to have three-year evaluations as part of the IEP process. There is extensive testing done at these three year intervals. While there is merit in comparing achievement with non-handicapped peers, it is equally if not more important to measure a child's own progress over time. Most students do not enroll at MSAD achieving at grade level, but all students enrolled at MSAD measure their own progress. Goals are reviewed periodically and if a student is not making adequate progress, an IEP meeting is held where monitoring and adjustments may be made. Assessments may be requested, teaching strategies may be changed and the IEP team determines the appropriate action to assure that progress is made.

**Measure: Accreditation.** Accreditation for MSAD has been achieved through the CEASD (Conference of Educators and Administrators Serving the Deaf) organization. Accreditation is already in place through the North Central Association's school improvement cycle. MSAD is the only dually accredited school for the deaf in the State of Minnesota.

## Activity Funding

In 2010, MSAD received 76% of its activity funding from the general fund, including both direct appropriations and payments of state education aids from the Department of Education, 19% from school districts and other miscellaneous sources, and 4% from federal sources. It also received 1% of its revenues in 2010 from gifts and donations.

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## Program at a Glance

- Minnesota State Academy for the Blind served students in 2009 – 2010 as follows:

| **Student Type** | |
|---|---|
| Day | 22 |
| Residential | 28 |
| **Total Enrolled** | **50** |
| | |
| Outreach | 55 |
| Summer | 61 |
| **Total Served** | **149** |

- **75%** of MSAB students present multiple disabilities including: learning disabilities, physical disabilities, emotional behavior disorders, communication disorders, autism spectrum disorders, cognitive disabilities, and dual sensory impairments (deaf-blind).
- The Minnesota State Academy for the Blind maintains five buildings with a total of 382,000 square feet and 30 acres of land.
- The Minnesota State Academy for the Blind provides outreach, consulting and assessment services to public schools that have blind/visually impaired students in their district.

## Activity Description

The Minnesota State Academy for the Blind (MSAB) provides educational opportunities to blind/visually impaired students ages 0-21 throughout the state of Minnesota. Students attend MSAB when the family, school district of residence and Academies staff agree that MSAB is an appropriate placement. Students may also attend to obtain social skills or for targeted short-term skill development.

## Services Provided

The Minnesota State Academy for the Blind (MSAB) is located on the east side of Faribault, Minnesota about 50 miles south of the Twin Cities. The mission of MSAB is to educate students who are blind/visually impaired or have multiple disabilities to achieve their greatest potential. The strategies to accomplish this mission are unique to the disability of blindness. Teachers at MSAB require specialized training and licensure in the area of blindness/vision impairments and are highly qualified teachers.

The educational process at MSAB is provided in an environment where a specialized curriculum, related support services and appropriate adaptations and modifications are available to all students. Unlike sighted children, blind/visually-impaired children cannot access information in the same manner as their sighted peers. Thus the direct teaching of the skills necessary to overcome the loss of vision is critical. The curriculum taught at MSAB focuses on helping a blind/visually impaired child become a self-sufficient adult. Areas of curriculum and instruction provided at MSAB include the following:

- development of skills to access information, including Braille, large print and or print with the use of optical devices;
- orientation and mobility skills for independent travel;
- independent living skills;
- career education;
- technology and assistive technology; and,
- specialized expanded core curriculum to address the unique needs of blind children.

An example of specialized instruction is a summer transition program that focuses on functional skill development and is offered in conjunction with local schools and vocational rehabilitation assistance at MSAB.

**Academic Options.** MSAB provides core curriculum coursework typical of public school offerings: math, science, english, music, art, physical education, etc. The difference is in the delivery of the instruction, as strategies are designed specifically for children who are blind or visually impaired. Some students who attend the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind are able to participate in regular public school classes within the local public schools in Faribault, while also taking courses at the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind (MSAB). This opportunity provides students with the experience of being a participant in a class with non-disabled peers. Blind/visually-impaired students learn to navigate a sighted environment that is not specifically designed for their learning styles. They learn how to work with paraprofessionals, note takers, and also develop and practice self-advocacy skills.

**Programming for those with multiple challenges.** Students in the multi-challenged program at MSAB focus on developing basic functional skills while integrating home living, self help, and work skills. The Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for these students maintain education plan goals relating to self-sufficiency and independence, functional academics, pre-academics, and related services. Program components consist of functional reading, writing, math, social skills and listening skills, music, art, home living and vocational skills. Related services include orientation and mobility, speech, and physical and/or occupational therapy. Thematic units involve students in age appropriate learning activities in concept development, Braille readiness skills, music and games, cooking, daily living skills and social play.

**Academy Plus (A+) Transition programming.** The Academy Plus (A+) program serves students ages 18-21 who have completed their high school coursework but have an unsigned diploma and are currently on an IEP. There are three levels of instruction to the A+ program and students are able to work their way through the levels in preparation for living independently.

- Level One
  Students participate in structured classes with emphasis on compensatory skill building and functional living skills. The primary focus is on developing skills to prepare students for supported employment and assisted living. Students in Level One live within a fully supervised dormitory setting.

- Level Two
  Students participate in classes that emphasize post-secondary readiness and the skills to live semi or fully independently. The primary focus is to develop skills to prepare students for unsupported employment and post-secondary options. Students in Level Two have the opportunity to work toward living in an on-campus semi-supervised apartment.

- Level Three
  Students participate in classes that emphasize post-secondary exploration and advanced independent living skills. The primary focus includes post-secondary coursework and preparation for unsupported employment. Students in Level Three have the opportunity to live in an on-campus, independent living apartment.

**Short term skill development options.** Students who attend MSAB may enroll for short term placement to focus on acquiring specialized skills that are needed in order for them to be successful in their public school setting. Specialized skills may include learning orientation and mobility (O&M) skills, learning to use Braille, mastering specific assistive technology devices or developing independent living skills. There is an inaccurate assumption that students who enroll at MSAB stay at MSAB until they graduate. Presently we serve many students on a short term basis, either providing skills during summer programming or Extended School Year (ESY) services for the school districts, or by giving a child intense short term services in a specific area so that once they have mastered the skills they can return to their public school setting and implement their newly gained expertise.

## Key Activity Goals & Measures

The Board of the Minnesota State Academies has a defined mission, vision and belief statements that guide the direction of the Academies. These statements are reviewed on an annual basis and reflect input from the Site Councils of both schools as well as other stakeholders of the Academies. See link for additional information: http://www.msa.state.mn.us/About/mission.asp.

- The mission of the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind is to educate blind/visually-impaired children to their greatest potential. Many of the children who attend MSAB do not enroll academically-achieving at grade level or they are students who have completed their high school coursework but have an unsigned diploma and IEP. These students attend MSAB to learn independent living skills, including orientation and mobility skills. These skills are necessary for blind/visually impaired people if they intend to live independently and navigate the world. MSAB is a special education facility and each student who attends MSAB has an IEP with individual goals for achievement.

- Another key program goal for MSAB is to prepare students for life and education after high school and for all students to graduate with a high school diploma.

- **Measure: Graduation Success Rates**
  - MSAB's graduation rates are above 98% and student drop-out rates are non-existent. If MSAB is not the appropriate placement for a student, an IEP meeting is held and the IEP team determines if a change of placement is needed.
  - Five MSAB students graduated in 2010, three returned for continuing transition education, one enrolled in the Vector Transition program and one returned to his home.
  - The comprehensive transition programs at MSAB are showing signs of great success. Students at MSAB between the ages of 18-21 attend South Central College in Faribault and gain confidence successfully completing college work, developing independent living skills, and earning credits that can be utilized in their post high school education. Students from MSAB set transition goals which provide them with work experiences that integrate them in to the community.

- Measure: Individual Education Plan Measures
  - As special education facilities, progress monitoring via their individualized goals is measured annually. Our students' disabilities make them unique unto themselves and demonstration of proficiency must be done on an individual basis for many of them. We measure growth by looking at where they started and the progress they've made. While some students at MSAB take the Minnesota Standardized Tests and are able to compare their progress to their non-handicapped peers, many do not.
  - All of the students are required to have three-year evaluations as part of the IEP process. There is extensive testing done at these three-year intervals. Students whose IEPs deem it appropriate also participate in the Minnesota MCA 2's and the NWEAs (Northwest Education Assessments).
  - Students whose IEPs do not deem it appropriate to take the Minnesota standardized tests may have their progress monitored via special assessments related to their disabilities. Those students who attend the Academy Plus program at MSAB do not take the standardized tests because their high school coursework is already completed.

## Activity Funding

In 2010, MSAB received 70% of its activity funding from the general fund, including direct appropriations and payments of state education aids from the Minnesota Department of Education, 28% from school districts and other miscellaneous sources, and 1% from federal sources. It also received 1% of its revenues in 2010 from gifts and donations.

## Contact

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*Dollars in Thousands*

| | Actual FY2010 | Budgeted FY2011 | Governor's Recomm. FY2012 | Governor's Recomm. FY2013 | Biennium 2012-13 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Non Dedicated Revenue:*** | | | | | |
| **Total Non-Dedicated Receipts** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |
| ***Dedicated Receipts:*** | | | | | |
| **Grants:** | | | | | |
| Miscellaneous Special Revenue | 2,624 | 2,526 | 2,719 | 2,814 | 5,533 |
| Federal | 358 | 304 | 310 | 318 | 628 |
| **Other Revenues:** | | | | | |
| Miscellaneous Special Revenue | 125 | 229 | 228 | 228 | 456 |
| Miscellaneous Agency | 45 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Gift | 7 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 22 |
| **Other Sources:** | | | | | |
| Miscellaneous Special Revenue | 152 | 53 | 53 | 53 | 106 |
| Miscellaneous Agency | 29 | 76 | 76 | 76 | 152 |
| **Total Dedicated Receipts** | **3,340** | **3,200** | **3,398** | **3,501** | **6,899** |
| **Agency Total Revenue** | **3,340** | **3,200** | **3,398** | **3,501** | **6,899** |