



2021 **Annual Report**



The Maryland School for the Blind

Superintendent and Board Chair



AS WE LOOK BACK ON THE YEAR 2021, it will be forever noted as the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic. No one ever expected it to last this long, especially with the deployment of vaccines early in the year. As spring ensued and case counts began to recede, we had collectively begun to feel hopeful that this global crisis would soon be behind us. But then the Delta variant emerged, and by July, it had become the dominant strain of COVID-19 and would wreak its devastation. Before Delta was gone, another variant, Omicron, came roaring through in November, taking hold even more swiftly than the Delta variant.

During this time, millions of Americans voluntarily left their jobs. Companies large and small scrambled for workers—including MSB. Inflation rose to a 40 year high, having a significant and direct impact on our operating costs and the construction costs in our campus master plan in 2022.

However, in spite of the many challenges we all faced during the pandemic, The Maryland School for the Blind proved once again that nothing can stop us from delivering on our mission. We are proud and thankful for what we accomplished together in 2021, which is highlighted in the timeline section of this report (pages 4-5).

We were able to bring students and staff back to campus throughout the spring and resume operations as part of our gradual, tiered plan to return to in-person instruction. With the students back on campus, we remained diligent in our safety protocols, always with student and staff safety and health remaining top-of-mind.

The Class of 2021 was able to have a prom and graduation in person—socially distanced—which was unimaginable in 2020. Some students were able to participate in summer programs, and all of our students returned to on-campus instruction in the fall.

The commitment of our staff was never more evident as they worked diligently to get back to in-person instruction, despite increased work demands, including wearing medical masks, gowns, and face shields, testing students for learning loss, and, like so many other schools, struggling to cover for severe staff vacancies. In the face of these obstacles, our staff continued to show resiliency and strength while remaining committed to serving our students with blindness, low vision, and multiple disabilities from across the state of Maryland.

We also recognize our Board of Directors, the greatest advocates, and ambassadors of MSB's work and mission. This year, even throughout the pandemic, they worked diligently with our leadership team to advance our strategic goals—including legislative advocacy with the Maryland General Assembly to improve staff compensation through the "Pay Plan" bill as well as other initiatives that will make MSB more financially secure for years to come.

Our appreciation also extends to you, our community of supporters. Without your support bridging the gap between our revenue and operating costs, we could not accomplish our mission to educate Maryland's blind and low-vision students.

Sincerely,

W. ROBERT HAIR
SUPERINTENDENT & CEO

MARION MULLAUER
BOARD CHAIR

MSB Then and Now

MSB CIRCA 1911



MSB IN 2021



The Maryland School for the Blind is grateful to the Maryland State Department of Education Interagency Commission on School Construction. Since 2013, MSB has been included in the state's Public School Construction Program due to the legislative passage of HB 1391 in 2012. The support of this program has transformed the MSB campus into a fully accessible learning space for Maryland's blind and low-vision students.

The educational spaces are acoustically appropriate to the sensory needs of our students, the walkways teach real-world navigation and mobility skills, the bathrooms are accessible, offer privacy and independence, the teaching kitchens are accessible to all students, and buildings are uniquely suited to our multiply disabled community engaging them in developing their independence.

The Coronavirus pandemic revealed other benefits of our new buildings that we previously had not realized. We returned to in-person school because these buildings have modern HVAC systems and healthy air circulation. The classrooms and cottages are spacious, which allow small group sizes and social distancing. Throughout the pandemic, we have continued to provide life-changing educational programming on a scale that would have been unimaginable in the facilities we had just a decade ago.

When this campus was constructed in 1907, it began modestly with Newcomer Hall that served all students for education and vocational learning and four cottages in which staff and students lived and worked together.

2021 Timeline



1st on campus Covid test



Outdoor class in pavilion



Staff in Cicada Hats



Prom King & Queen

JANUARY 2021

- Remote instruction continues due to COVID-19 pandemic
- MSB begins on-campus COVID testing for staff
- MSB reopens with limited 1:1 in person instruction on January 25
- MSB dedicates the Maryland Society for Sight Low-Vision Clinic on January 27

FEBRUARY 2021

- MD Braille Challenge held remotely on February 6
- Early Learning Program re-opens – limited # of Pre-K & K students return to campus on February 8
- MSB staff offered 1st dose of COVID vaccine through MD Department of Health – February 10
- Grades 1-3 return to campus on February 16 on alternating A-B schedules
- Hybrid instruction continues 4 days per week for grades 4-12
- MSB hosts 6th Biennial POSB Math & Science Institute virtually

MARCH 2021

- Grades 4 - 6 return to campus on March 8
- MSB staff offered 2nd dose of COVID vaccine through MD Department of Health – March 10
- Grades 7-8 return to campus on March 15
- Residential students in grades 4-8 residing outside of 30 miles return to campus on March 15

APRIL 2021

- Students in High School and HS residential students residing outside of 30 miles return to campus
- All staff return to campus on April 6 after 13 months of remote work
- Class of 2021 Senior Luau held in MSB Outdoor Pavilion

MAY 2021

- Socially distanced Junior and Senior prom held on campus
- Virtual athletic banquet held for students who participated in virtual sports
- The 17 year Cicadas emerge and descend on the state of Maryland (and MSB campus)

JUNE 2021

- Class of 2021 Graduation held on campus for graduates and their families
- Pre-K and Kindergarten graduation held virtually
- 5 year organizational strategic plan approved by MSB Board of Directors
- MSB celebrates Braille Spirit Day
- Camp Abilities held on campus for limited # of students



JULY 2021

- Extended School Year (ESY) enrichment program held on campus for 4 weeks
- 4 week outreach summer programs (TRECCK for Success, MISLE) held on campus for limited # of students
- COVID19 community cases on the rise due to the Delta Variant of the disease



AUGUST 2021

- MSB staff return to campus for start of the 2021-22 school year with strict safety protocols in place
- All staff trainings and meetings continue to be held virtually
- MSB begins new school year on August 30 with all in-person instruction (no virtual, no hybrid) with strict safety protocols in place
- Monthly Staff & Parent Town Hall meetings continue virtually

SEPTEMBER 2021

- MSB adopts policy to require COVID vaccine for all staff
- Limited number of residential students residing outside of 30 mile radius return to campus
- MSB partners with League of Dreams & Baltimore Orioles to host Beep Baseball event on campus



OCTOBER 2021

- Student operated businesses reopen on campus – Café, School Store and Boutique
- MSB celebrates White Cane Day – October 15
- MSB celebrates Unity Day (Unite against bullying)
- Flu Clinic for MSB staff and families held on campus

NOVEMBER 2021

- MSB and Baltimore Blast partner on Blind Soccer event – November 4
- COVID Vaccine Clinic held on campus for MSB staff and families – November 5

DECEMBER 2021

- COVID Vaccine Clinic held on campus for MSB staff and families – December 3
- Winter Concert is held virtually – December 16
- Holiday Spirit Week and Countdown to Winter Break – December 13-17



CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES

Maryland School for the Blind Class of 2021



Melika Aziminia
Parkville, MD



Maria Ellis
Baltimore, MD



**Maria Celeste
Gutierrez**
Hyattsville, MD



**Maria Lisbeth
Gutierrez**
Hyattsville, MD



Shaniya Harcum
Baltimore, MD



Shawn Hokanson
Catonsville, MD



**Elian Huasasquiche
Cardenas**
Baltimore, MD



Vaucour Jarmon, Jr.
Salisbury, MD



Alycia Levy
Gaithersburg, MD

It's been different, It's been fun, We are the Class of 2021



Giovanni Olvera
Baltimore, MD



**Jefferson
Palacios-Machado**
Baltimore, MD



Ruben Pinales
Odenton, MD



Shawn Ransom
Baltimore, MD



Destiny Robertson
Belcamp, MD



Jayson Tyler
Upper Marlboro, MD

MSB CLASS OF 2021 OFFICERS

President:
Jefferson Palacios-Machado

Vice President:
Alycia Levy

Secretary:
Maria Ellis

Treasurer:
Ruben Isaia Pinales

Public Relations:
Jayson Tyler

MSB CLASS OF 2021 AWARDS

**Benjamin Franklin
Newcomer Award:**
Melika Aziminia

MSB Alumni Award:
Shawn Ransom

**Staff Commendation
Award:**
Vaucour Jarmon, Jr.

Class Flower:
Rose

Colors:
Gold and Black

2021 Staff Awards & Highlights



POSB AWARD & CSTA FELLOWSHIP

Regina Fugate, was named the Principals of Schools for the Blind (POSB) 2021 Outstanding Teacher of Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired. Gina, a certified teacher of the visually impaired (TVI), has been teaching technology and engineering at MSB since 2015, and is also the school's lead FIRST LEGO LEAGUE Robotics team coach. She has received multiple STEM education awards including the 2019 Experiencing Programming in Quorum (EPIQ) award and the 2019 Northeastern Maryland Technology Council's (NMTC) Visionary Award. She was also selected as a 2021-22 Computer Science Teachers Association (CSTA) Equity Fellow.

POSB MATH/SCIENCE CONFERENCE

The Maryland School for the Blind hosted the 6th Biennial POSB Math and Science Institute held virtually on February 15-16, 2021. Originally, the Institute was to be held in person on campus and MSB Staff, Heather Browne, Joshua Irzyk and Heather Johnson worked tirelessly for the better part of a year only to pivot in response to the COVID Pandemic and modify plans to make the Institute available virtually. Over 200 professionals working with children who are blind/low vision from across the world attended the Institute over the 2 days. Over 16 concurrent sessions were presented with topics ranging from using Problem-Based Learning to Coding and Robotics for the Blind.

BRAILLE SPIRIT DAY

MSB staff celebrated the importance and significance of braille on Braille Spirit Day. They donned braille shirts, hats, masks, and jewelry to show their braille spirit and pride. Braille is an important key to literacy. It allows for the enjoyment of reading, leads to school success, and opens the doors to future employment.



MSB Staff Celebrate Braille Spirit Day

Student Experiences



Sujan Builds a Lego Robot

Discovering a Career Path – Sujan’s Story

Sujan Dhakal started attending free weekend and summer programs at The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) in elementary school, soon after his family moved to the United States from their native Nepal. His technology skills were apparent early on and further developed over the years through MSB’s enrichment programs offered to students with blindness or low vision who attend their local public schools.

With his interest in computer programming and strong technology skills, Sujan joined MSB’s robotics team, the 180 Optimum, in middle school. Since then he and the members of MSB’s two robotics teams have been advocating for accessible programming to help level the playing field in competitions. Under the leadership of MSB’s engineering coaches, Gina Fugate and Travis Lawrence, the teams have partnered with the inventor of Quorum, an accessible coding program, and successfully advocated with the FIRST LEGO League (FLL) to allow them to use the program in FLL robotics events and competitions. They have also presented on the importance of accessibility to executives from the LEGO Corporation itself.

These experiences have cemented Sujan’s desire to work in the technology and computer field. Now a junior at Eastern Technical High School, he plans to attend college to continue his education in computer science after graduation.

According to Sujan, “I am grateful to MSB for offering so many great programs to students like me. I’ve made friends through these opportunities and discovered what I want to do with my life.”



The Ellis Family at Graduation

The Bittersweet Goodbye – The Ellis Family Story

Regardless of the COVID-19 pandemic, Maria Ellis had a fantastic senior year. With her mom, Margie’s assistance at home and the creativity of her teacher, Staci Forrest, virtual instruction was a successful learning experience. For MSB’s senior class, the year was about more than just academics. Maria enjoyed all the senior class activities with her peers, including the senior luau and prom, which were able to be held in person. Her dad, Bill, accompanied Maria to the prom and it was a truly special evening for father and daughter.

The Class of 2021 graduation ceremony was bittersweet for the Ellis family. They were thrilled to celebrate the numerous accomplishments and growth of their daughter, Maria, but it was hard to say goodbye to the staff at The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) who have been a part of their lives for the past 20+ years.

When Maria was one year old, she began early intervention services through MSB’s Infant and Toddler program and enrolled full-time in the Pre-K program on campus by the time she was three. Her older brother, Christopher, was also a student at MSB for many years. The siblings have multiple disabilities and are non-verbal in addition to low-vision. Both students had a team of professionals (vision specialists, educators, therapists, psychologists, nutritionists, medical and residential staff) that worked in concert with each other to help them reach their fullest potential. The family worked with many of the same staff at MSB for over two decades.

Margie stated, “I will always be grateful to MSB for providing our children with the best educational setting to suit their unique learning needs. We will miss everyone so much as the staff have become an extended family to us.”

Student Experiences



Esmee works on travel skills with her O&M instructor

Finding the Perfect Fit – Esmee’s Story

At just 4 years old, Esmee Tames began to lose her vision. Her mother, Destiny, threw herself into the world of low vision to try to understand Esmee’s changing world. “It was hard, and getting her what she needed felt like a battle. I was struggling to learn how to help her.”

After Esmee’s sight had declined beyond just sitting at the front of the classroom to see, one of her teachers recommended her to The Maryland School for the Blind. “I had never heard of the place, and here it was the ideal location, only minutes from my house. They offer low vision services and all the therapies she needs, at no cost to me.”

Before Esmee enrolled at MSB in 2021, she did not have a white cane or know how to use one. With the help of the Orientation and Mobility team, she is learning to use her cane to navigate her surroundings. The instructors are also teaching Destiny how to use the cane so she can help her daughter at home. MSB makes sure that not only the students receive support, but the entire family as well.

Esmee found the perfect fit at MSB; she thrives in the immersive environment because she is being taught what she is doing and why it is important. She is learning that everyone has differences, but differences does not mean one is incapable.

For most parents, trusting others with your child is hard, but Destiny feels that, “At MSB, I do not have trouble trusting anyone. I know the teachers and staff here have her best interest always. This school has truly been a blessing. If it wasn’t for MSB our family would have moved out of Maryland to find a better path for her. We are happy to say we are not leaving the great city of Baltimore anytime soon! MSB is family and we can’t move away from our family.”

ONE-ON-ONE, IN-PERSON-RELATED SERVICES DELIVERED TO STUDENTS DURING VIRTUAL LEARNING PERIODS

During the intermittent campus closures caused by the COVID19 pandemic throughout the school year 2020-21, specialized staff from MSB’s related services team visited students’ homes throughout the entire state of Maryland to deliver crucial services to students. Services included speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, orientation & mobility, social work, psychology, and delivering assistive technology and accessible equipment. MSB staff (in full PPE) went above and beyond to deliver these services to students and their families personally during the height of the pandemic. Lessons and services took place in homes, driveways, garages, yards, and neighborhoods, throughout all 24 Maryland counties.

Many of these services were imperative for students, especially those with multiple disabilities, to be able to access the new and unfamiliar digital learning environment of virtual school in their own homes.

Over 250 one-on-one in-person services were performed by MSB staff during a three-month period.

“The teachers at MSB are like family. I appreciate them so much. Maureen Morgan has been Sarah’s Orientation and Mobility instructor since she was 3 years old. She came to our house twice a week during the COVID19 pandemic to work with my daughter on lessons (and teach me) how to help her navigate safely in our neighborhood. To be as accommodating as they are as a special needs program and just as a school in general, we are not going to find that anywhere else. MSB is one of a kind.”

- Arianna Burk, Sarah’s mom



Student and staff tie-dye shirt during summer program



MSB graduate poses with his teacher



Teachers and students work on a recipe in hybrid cooking class



Teacher oversees student working on technology



Student holding cane and wearing mask



Student and teacher work on braille skills using Legos



Students work on career skills in campus boutique



Student works on art project



Student participates in Unity Day



Student explores a robot

Having a Blast with the Birds and the Bees

BY DOTTY RAYNOR



The Oriole Bird plays baseball with a student

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, student athletes from MSB's athletic teams have continued to exercise and practice virtually to not only keep in shape, but to also keep up their spirits. In normal times, The MSB Bees would be competing against other blind schools in the Eastern Athletic Association for the Blind (EAAB) league, or hosting tournaments on our campus.

"Not having those opportunities has been tough on our athletes and coaches; they thrive on these competitions with their peers," said Lakeesha Beverly, MSB's Athletic Director. To reinvigorate students, MSB athletic coach, Tim Taylor, brought some excitement to them by teaming up with a couple of local sports teams and organizations for some fun events in 2021:

- In September, the Baltimore Orioles and the League of Dreams visited campus for a beep baseball clinic. Beep baseball is an adapted form of the game that can be played by anyone. Participants wear eyeshades to completely block their vision, ensuring all players are on a level playing field. The baseball is embedded with an audio device so that players can locate the ball during both defensive and offensive play.

MSB students had the opportunity to play America's pastime with pros like Orioles Hall of Fame shortstop Mike Bordick. The entire school was invited to join in the fun along with the Oriole Bird and the MSB Bee mascot. It was a great day of comradery for students, staff, and the baseball community.

- In November, the school invited members of the Baltimore Blast Soccer team to campus to introduce them to blind soccer and play an informal game with our student athletes. Since 2017, MSB has played a leading role in creating awareness of the sport of blind soccer both nationally and internationally. The soccer pitch at MSB is the first and only full size regulation blind soccer field in the country, complete with kickboards to keep the ball in play.

Baltimore Blast players Jonatas Melo, Juan Pereira, and Head Coach David Bascome, had the opportunity to try blind soccer for the first time against the MSB Bees. Like in Beep Baseball all players wear eyeshades and use a special ball with motion activated noise-makers. Some Blast members quickly discovered how challenging it can be to play the game without vision. According to Coach Bascome, "We learned some valuable lessons from these kids about the game and the importance of trust and teamwork, which we are taking back to our players."

The Blast created a video of their experience and posted this message on their social media pages "The Blast were honored to learn to play blind soccer with our friends at The Maryland School for The Blind and their soccer team the Bees! A rattling soccer ball helps the players know where to go throughout the game. A great day with great athletes!"

Superintendent Rob Hair was there to cheer all teams along and shared "These events provide a unique opportunity for professional athletes from our local area to experience sports from a different perspective and to play and learn alongside our student athletes. It is also a great experience for our school."

This year was a special challenge but fortunately everyone was happy to oblige to the school's strict policies, which ensured all visiting players and volunteers were tested and/or vaccinated before the event.

In these stressful times, the ear-to-ear grins on the faces of everyone who participated in these events helped us all remember why sports are so important to not just students but also the morale of an entire community. These were such wonderful days of community bonding for all the players, volunteers, students, and staff. We cannot thank The Baltimore Orioles, the Baltimore Blast and the League of Dreams enough!



The Bird and the Bee



Student athletes and coaches



Baltimore Blast players enter the pitch



Blind soccer scrimmage



A Committed Partnership

BY DOTTY RAYNOR



The Knights present a check to MSB

2021 marked a milestone in a special relationship between the Knights of Columbus, Fr. Burggraff Council and the Maryland School for the Blind (MSB). This charitable group of men have been supporting the students of MSB for the past 40 years in various ways, the most successful being their annual Tootsie Roll Campaign.

An organization founded on the principles of charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism, the mission of the Knights of Columbus is to empower Catholic men to live their faith at home, in their parish and in their community. They offer financial assistance to the sick, disabled and needy members of their families and communities.

The relationship between Council #6021, as they are more commonly known in the KOC circle and MSB dates back to 1981. At that time, one of the member's daughters worked at the school and since the missions of both organizations aligned, the group decided to adopt MSB as their main charity of choice. The bond has only grown stronger over time. All of the men, Grand Knights as well as members, who have served throughout the years, have been very supportive of MSB and the staff and students at the school have formed a friendship with them as well.

Jim Morrow has been a member of the Fr. Burggraff council since 2013 and has chaired the Tootsie Roll campaign since joining the group. For him giving back to MSB is personal. "I volunteered at The Maryland School for the Blind many years ago as part of a high school service project. The students left quite an impression on me. I remember playing beep baseball and dodgeball with them. I even remember the name of one of the kids that I bonded with and often wonder where he is now. When I joined the council and found out that it supports the school, it all came back full circle."

Morrow and his brother Knights can be seen collecting money for the school at local stores in the Parkville and Perry Hall area every fall. The Tootsie Roll Campaign, which was initiated in 1974, is one of the biggest fundraisers statewide for the Knights of Columbus organization. Council 6021 donates between \$5,000 - \$10,000 annually to MSB.

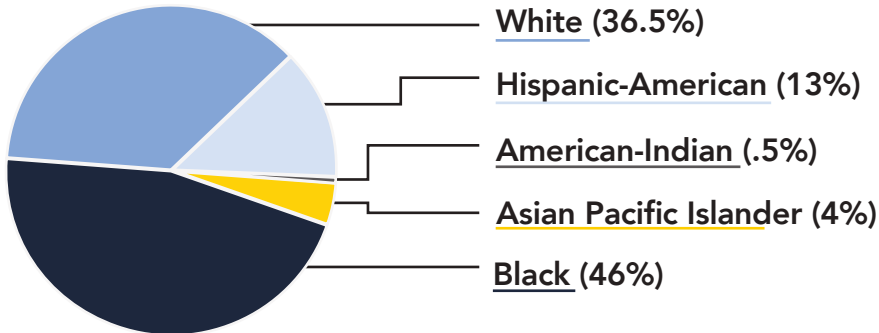
These dedicated men volunteer for any one of 90 shifts to help cover the 6 hours per day/30 day period of the campaign. They go out in all kinds of weather and even collected during COVID, as soon as stores began to re-open in 2020. One of the most enthusiastic volunteers is Pat Pugh, who has low-vision. "Being legally blind myself I can relate to the challenges the students face. That motivates me to make a difference," said Pugh.

Other members of the council planned a new fundraiser this year to benefit MSB. They held a corn hole tournament and basket raffle at St. Joseph Church Fullerton, (where the council is chartered) this past summer. They plan to grow this event and make it bigger and better every year.

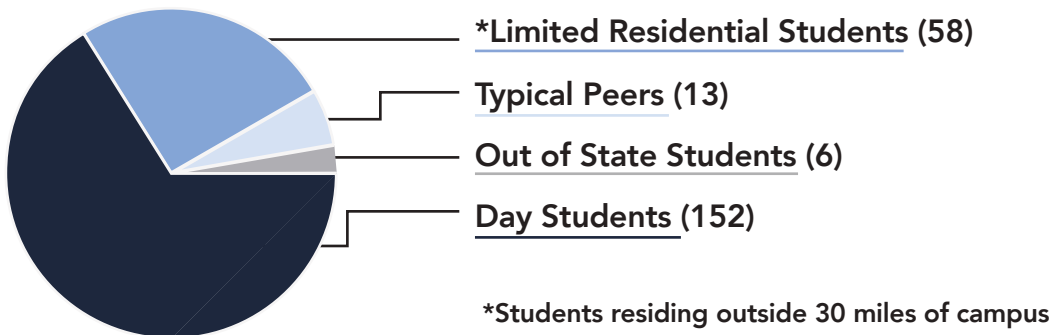
According to MSB Superintendent Rob Hair, "The Knights are a great example of putting purpose to action. We are so grateful for the support of our dedicated community partners."

MSB's Impact FY2021

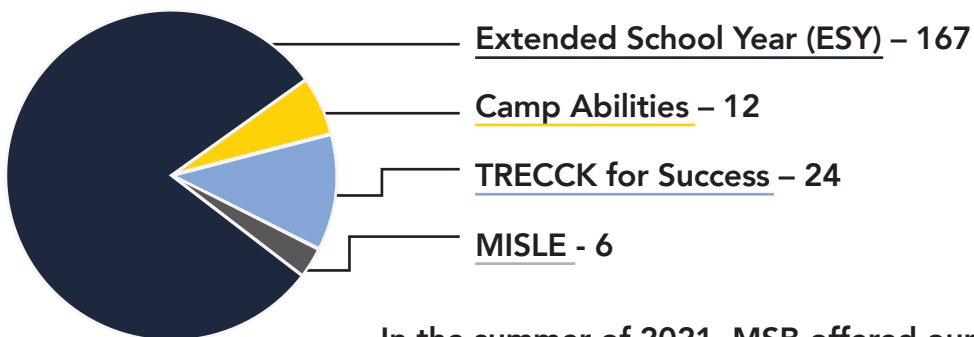
STUDENT ETHNICITY



STUDENT ENROLLMENT: TOTAL # OF ON-CAMPUS STUDENTS (229)



2021 SUMMER PROGRAM ENROLLMENT

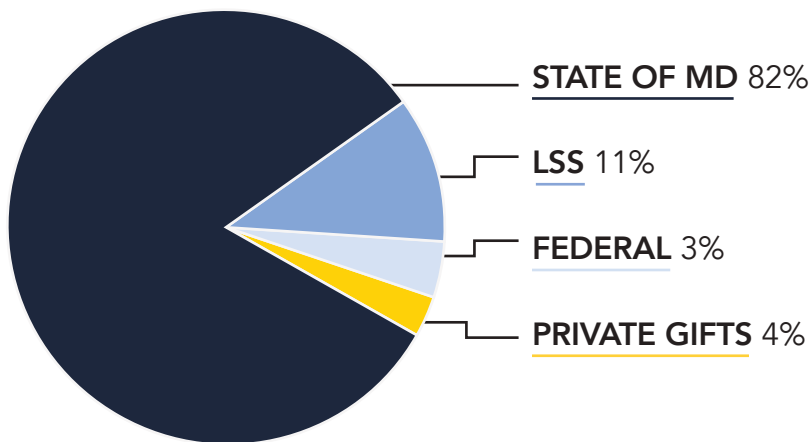


In the summer of 2021, MSB offered our annual summer programming, but limited enrollment on-campus due to the COVID pandemic. Students in the ESY program attended the program both in person and/or virtually

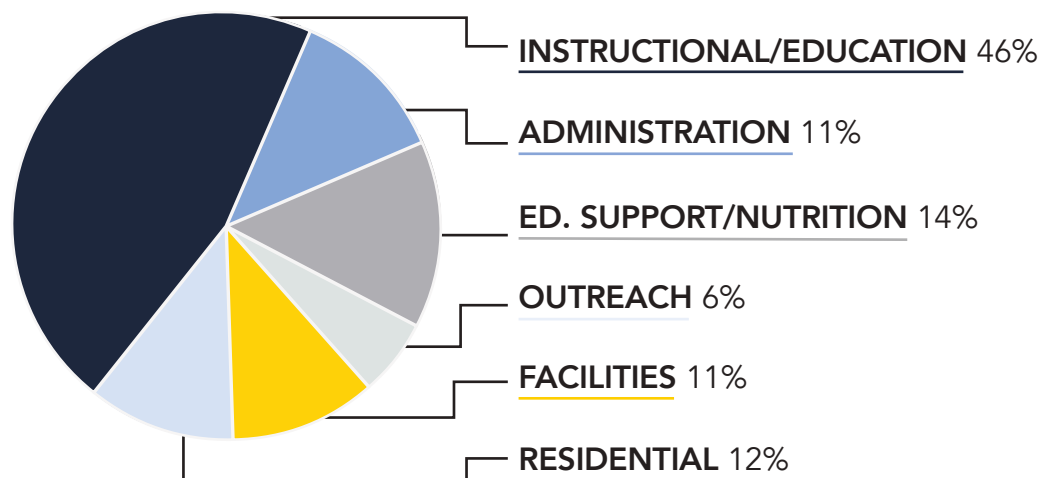
2021 Financial Information

THE MARYLAND SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND is a private, 501 (c)(3) school under Internal Revenue Service regulations. The school's fiscal year ends on June 30th. Funding is provided primarily through grants from the Maryland State Department of Education and payments from local school districts. Contributions are received from individuals, corporations, foundations, and community groups. Total expenses approximated \$32.1 million.

2021 REVENUES



2021 EXPENSES



THE MSB ANNUAL REPORT IS PRODUCED BY THE DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Marlo Jacobson, Director of Development • **Dotty Raynor**, Communications Specialist

JULY 1, 2020 TO JUNE 30, 2021

Board of Directors, Fiscal Year 2021

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The Maryland School for the Blind

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