# **The Maryland School for the Blind**

# **Annual Report-2023 Edition**

Letter From the Superintendent and Board Chair

Dear Supporters of MSB,

We are thrilled to present our annual report for the academic year 2022-23 at The Maryland School for the Blind. It is with immense pride and gratitude that we reflect on the achievements, growth, and progress made by our students, staff, and school community throughout this school year.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to continuous improvement and innovation in our educational programs and campus buildings. Moving into 2023, we were awarded the Middendorf grant for the Cottages on the Hill, thanks to their generous foundation (page 6).

Over the past year, our primary focus has been on providing an exceptional educational experience that nurtures the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development of our students. We have strived to create a safe and inclusive environment where every student feels valued and can gain self-determination like Nadia in our ROX program (page 15), or reach new heights like Briasia as our TikTok social media ambassador (page 19).

Our second year of the annual See Beyond Festival was a success in connecting our students and campus with the local community (page 16). With that success we have fostered a culture of respect, inclusivity, and accessibility for all.

In conclusion, we are confident that with the help of our supportive communities, passionate and driven students, and dedicated staff, the coming year holds great promise for our school.

Thank you for your continued support.

Warm regards,

W. Robert Hair, Superintendent

Marion Mullauer, Board Chair

200+ On-Campus Students

24 Counties Reached by MSB

1,500+ Students Served Yearly, In State & Out-of-State

170 Years of Blind & Low Vision Education

The Maryland Instructional Resource Center(MIRC)

The Maryland Instructional Resource Center(MIRC) team produces textbooks and educational materials for students throughout Maryland.

* 1,630 Tactile Graphics & Diagram Produced
* 453 Total Collection of Texts
* This year the MIRC transcribed and produced the Kindergarten Reading Assessment (KRA) for students inMaryland, South Carolina, and Hawaii! Scan for more KRA information.
* The MIRC team has also modified the "Bedtime in a Box" kits for students who are blind and low vision. Scan to learn about Bedtime in a Box.
* 10,641 Pages of Braille Produced
* 800 American Printing House-Eligible Students Served

The MIRC is a centralized repository for braille and large print textbooks as well as other educational materials, located on MSB’s campus. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) began a partnership with The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) and local education agencies (LEAs) to establish the Maryland Instructional Resource Center (MIRC) for students who are blind or low vision.

Middendorf and the Cottages on the Hill

In 1907 our campus moved from downtown Baltimore to Taylor Avenue and spans 95 acres in Baltimore City and County.

The Maryland School for the Blind expresses our gratitude to the Middendorf Foundation for their invaluable support towards our newest construction project, The Cottages on the Hill. The foundation has graciously provided a significant grant in support of the Cottages.

The Middendorf family's generosity to MSB began over 70 years ago when Mr. Middendorf joined the MSB Board of Directors in 1946. He sat on our Board until he passed away in 1973. His leadership and guidance, particularly in financial matters, over those 27 years helped shape the future of MSB and his legacy continues to do so today through the foundation.

Guided by the philanthropic ideals of its founders J. William Jr. and Alice Carter Middendorf, the Middendorf Foundation supports organizations and projects within the state of Maryland. Primary interests are capital projects in the Greater Baltimore area, in the fields of: culture, education, the environment, health care, historic preservation, and

social services.

Mr. and Mrs. Middendorf, in their letter to future trustees of their foundation, stated:

“Our dominant idea is that the highest service of a private Foundation is to contribute to institutions which themselves help people stand on their own feet; to retain their independence; and, in short, to help themselves. We would favor substantial gifts to the sort of institution which can make provisions … We have in mind such institutions of the character of…the Maryland School for the Blind. ”

MSB Class of 2023

Class Motto - “We are proud, as proud as can be. We are the Class of 2023”

Class Officers

President: James Quade

Vice President: David Baul

Treasurer: Lucas Paredes

Secretary:Kenny Akanni

Public Relations: Amaurie Davison

Class Colors - Red and Black

Class Flower - Rose

Student Awards: These awards are presented annually to students who exhibit leadership qualities, academic excellence or noteworthy improvement throughout their years at MSB.

MSB Staff Commendation Award - David Baul

MSB Alumni Award - Anderson Ayala-Pacheco

Benjamin Franklin Newcomer Award - Kenny Akanni

2023 Graduates

Amaurie Davison - Berlin, MD

Andre Edwards - Temple Hills, MD

Arianna King - Halethorpe, MD

Ayomide Ogunjemilua - Upper Marlboro, MD

Charlie Smith - Reisterstown, MD

Christian Coreas - Bel Air, MD

Daniel Salembene - Kingsville, MD

David Baul - Baltimore, MD

Elijah Waddell - Catonsville, MD

Jaden Pointer - Baltimore, MD

James Quade - North Beach, MD

Kenny Akanni - District Heights, MD

Lucas Paredes - Baltimore, MD

Mary Evans - Parkville, MD

Savion Cottingham - Baltimore, MD

Valerie Cooper - Baltimore, MD

30% of braille readers have advanced degrees.

The MSB Board, Past and Present

The average board member tenure is 9 years. Some have served longer due to being

Governor appointees.

Kati Penney joined the MSB Board of Directors in 2020. Her deep connection to the school stems from her daughter, Lucienne, who is a student at MSB. With a strong background in finance, Kati has honed her skills while working for prominent accounting firms. Currently, she serves as the Chair of the Audit Committee and is a member of the Governance Committee at MSB, where she drives responsible and strategic fiscal initiatives for the school. Alongside her husband Jon, Kati is a dedicated supporter of MSB, recognizing the invaluable impact it has on students like Lucienne.

Beyond her involvement with MSB, Kati is actively engaged in advocacy work through the Penney Girls Foundation. This foundation, established by her family, is dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of chronically ill children, their families, and communities. Kati's commitment to these causes is a testament to her unwavering dedication and passion for creating a brighter future for those in need.

*“MSB is comprised of compassionate staff who are creative, collaborative, and truly one of a kind. It is a community that stimulates self-confidence and has taught Lucienne essential life skills and core values.”*

In Memory of William S. Ratchford II

MSB Board Member, 2012-2023

*“In honoring Bill Ratchford, we celebrate a man who devoted his life to the betterment of*

*our students, our institution and the state of Maryland.”*

-Robert Hair, MSB Superintendent

Students Served

The Maryland School for the Blind provides a range of services to our students, such as After School/Residential Programs, ELECCT\*, and our Outreach Program, which includes Camp Abilities, MISLE\*, and TrECCk\*. These programs offer additional support to our students and their families.

On-Campus Student Demographics

42% African American

37% Caucasian

14% Hispanic American

4% Asian American

2% Pacific Islander, American Indian, Jamaican American, Moorish American

76% Day Students

18% Residential Students

4% Students without IEP

3% Out of State Students

Outreach and Statewide Services

78% Outreach Contracts

14% Unique Students

8% MIRC Production

* Outreach Contracts consist of Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVIs) needed in homes or public schools throughout Maryland.
* MIRC Production is the percentage of tactile and braille printed materials from the Maryland Instructional Resource Center, located on our campus.
* Unique Students are students new to our Outreach and Statewide programs within the fiscal year.

*\*ELECCT - Extended Learning in Expanded Core Curriculum Topics*

*\*MISLE - Mastering Independence Skills Through Living Experiences*

*\*TrECCk - summer program focusing on the Expanded Core Curriculum*

*\*IEP - Individualized Education Program*

Students by County Map

Student Story Leading With Confidence

Nadia Gompers is not an inspiration. She’s a high school freshman from Calvert County who loves riding horses, playing on her phone late at night, and watching Judge Judy re-runs with her dad. In fact, she says, *“People tell me that I’m an inspiration, and I don’t feel good when they tell me that because I’m just normal.”*

At a young age, Nadia knew that her disability is part of who she is, but it is not her identity. She is not impressive because she has cerebral palsy but rather because she has a kind heart, ambition, and confidence. Nadia jumps at opportunities that many would shy away from. She does modeling, acting, and part-time consulting with fashion brands to improve adaptive clothing lines—and she doesn’t plan to stop there.

Nadia’s parents were hesitant to take her out of public school when she was struggling. She had her group of friends, a routine, and on top of that, MSB would be a 3-hour round-trip bus ride. When they toured MSB, Nadia noticed that no one was staring at her the way they did in her previous school. To everyone here, she was just a normal kid. Her mom was immediately impressed by the technology lab, the physical therapy staff with their in-depth knowledge of cerebral palsy, and how easily Nadia could navigate the campus without assistance. Where she had been the “crazy mom” in other schools advocating for better services, everyone at MSB understood exactly what their family needed. She says, *“Every kid deserves to be in an environment where they can reach their full potential.”* MSB was that environment for Nadia.

Since joining MSB in 6th grade, Nadia’s confidence has sky-rocketed. In three short years, she’s gone from having trouble talking to close family members to speaking at a recent Groundbreaking Ceremony with an audience of over 100 people. She has advocated to join the MSB residential program to live on campus during the week. Her parents were so impressed by her initiative and reasoning, but they were nervous about how much they would miss her. Nadia pushed them; she said it would help improve her social skills and independence. They say she was also aiming for a few extra hours of sleep without a long bus ride. What teenager wouldn’t jump at that opportunity?

Nadia now shares a dorm with five other girls where they take turns creating after-school activities to do together like painting and pumpkin carving. She joined the school’s chapter of Ruling Our Experiences (ROX), a staff-led group that *“creates generations of confident girls who control their own relationships, experiences, decisions and futures.”* She hopes to be a psychiatrist who helps teens in juvenile centers one day. She says, *“The kids seem like they want help. They know they can do better, but they just need a push to help them.”* Nadia recognizes through her own experiences that you can do a whole lot with a little bit of help.

See Beyond Festival

2,500 people attended the See Beyond Festival in 2023.

The 2023 See Beyond Festival proved to be an extraordinary event that showcased the power of adaptability and accessibility. Attendees from different generations, backgrounds and abilities all participated in a day filled with immersive learning experiences and boundless fun. The festival's success was further amplified by the media coverage, which doubled compared to the previous year, attracting an even larger audience. We invite you to join us April 27, 2024 from 11 am to 3 pm for next year's festival, where we will continue to grow by creating an inclusive and entertaining environment for all.

* 74% festival attendees plan to return with a friend in 2024
* 2x media coverage of the festival doubled from 2022 to 2023
* 3 Mil. impressions through media coverage

Festival attendees shared what they learned about in a post-event survey.

Event Impact

20% Their own adaptability without sight

25% Accessibility

30% Adaptations in sports

10% Braille

10% Various vision conditions

5% Blindness and low vision

Thanks to our generous sponsors who made it possible for participants to try the activities for free: Lewis Contractors, Penney Design Group, Marshall Craft Associates, Parker Flavors, T. Rowe Price, Sons of the American Legion, Maurey, Donnelly, and Parr (MDP) Insurance, Maryland Relay, Cigna, Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute, Baird Private Wealth Management, CHUBB, Ruff Roofers, SC&H, Maryland Department of Disabilities, Baltimore’s Child, Baltimore Fishbowl, WYPR & WTMD.

See Beyond 2023 In Action

Activities Included:

* Blind Soccer
* Beep Baseball
* Adaptive Lacrosse
* Goal Ball
* Sprint Races
* Kids-zone
* Sensory & Braille Crafts
* Free Balloon Animals
* Accessible Playground
* Games
* Obstacle Courses
* Food Taste Test
* Craft & Vendor Fair
* Food Vendors
* Live Music
* And More!

Student Story - A Day in the Life

During the 2022-23 academic year, The Maryland School for the Blind embarked on a

new venture by creating their own TikTok page. Briasia Bowser, a talented 15 year old

sophomore joined the team to provide a student’s perspective. In between her classes,

Briasia seized the opportunity to capture unique moments that are not always observable by the outside world. For instance, she documents the bus rides to blind soccer games and the cheerleaders’ warm-up sessions before the goalball cheers.

*“I did TikTok as a platform where I was advocating for myself, but not only myself,*

*but helping other people out there learn to advocate…”*

Briasia took advantage of the creative freedom afforded to her on TikTok to express

herself and advocate for MSB and people who are blind or low vision. She aspires to be

a role model for others. After being diagnosed with Stargardt’s Eye Disease, she worked hard to regain her self-confidence and gain a better understanding of what

awaits her after her time at MSB. Encouraged by her experiences at MSB, Briasia

applied for an internship at the National Security Agency (NSA) and was awarded it for

her senior year.

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her senior year.

*“...when we hear blind, we hear people [who] only see blackness, which is not true at all. So, I want people to gain confidence and knowledge from watching those videos.”*

FY23 Financial

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 for 2022-2023 approximated $39 million.

Revenue

84% State of Maryland

10% Local Education Agencies (LEAs)

4% Federal

2% Private Gifts

Expenses

45% Instruction and Education

14% Ed. Support and Nutrition

11% Residential

11% Facilities

11% Administration

7% Outreach

2% Fundraising

1853 Society and Other Supporters

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Other Supporters

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* Lions Clubs of Aberdeen, Annapolis, Betterton Still Pond, Darlington, Deer Park, Denton, Greensboro, Hurlock, Jarrettsville, LaVale, Lineboro-Manchester, Montgomery Central (Derwood), Mt. Airy, Princess Anne, Queenstown, Union Bridge an International.

MSB Board and Leadership

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Chair: Marion Mullauer

1st Vice-Chair: \*\*Raymond Brown

2nd Vice-Chair: Karen Malinowski

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*\*\*Governor Appointed*