



2018-2023 Strategic Plan Annual Report

August 2020





About Us



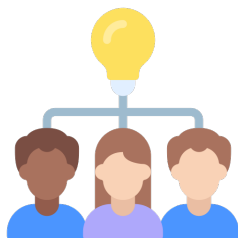
WHO WE ARE

Established in 1858, the Minnesota State Academies (MSA) is the leader in the State of Minnesota in providing services to students who are Blind, Visually Impaired, Deaf, Hard of Hearing or DeafBlind and their families. Our academies include the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind (MSAB) and the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (MSAD). We provide a broad range of educational options from infancy through age 21 for students from all corners of the state. We also provide a wealth of resources, educational tools and strategies, and trained/knowledgeable personnel that are available to support students statewide.



VISION

MSA empowers every student to achieve, care, and thrive in an ever-changing world.



MISSION

MSA provides a rigorous, student-centered educational program in a fully accessible, language-rich environment to maximize each student's full potential. Additionally, MSA provides statewide resources and professional expertise to parents, families, partners, and educational programs in Minnesota.



STRATEGIC PLAN

Dedicated staff, empowered students, involved parents, supportive alumni and invested stakeholders, along with the support of our governing board, are committed to working together to accomplish the strategic goals. They will continue to enhance MSA as the foremost resource in the state and region for Deaf, Blind, and DeafBlind education. The MSA 2018-2023 strategic plan articulates the schools' and agency's goal for the next 5 years. This report is a summary of our activities and work completed towards our goal during the recent 2019-2020 school year.



Strategic Goals

The 2019-2020 school year kicked off to a great start and it was business as usual. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020. For the safety of our students and staff, our campuses closed and we transitioned to distance learning for the last three months of the school year. We're incredibly proud and appreciative of our teachers, staff, students and their families for stepping up to the challenge and making the best out of a difficult situation.

As a result of the pandemic, we were forced to halt action in a few goal areas, but we were able to make significant progress in fulfilling our strategic plan and towards achieving our ultimate vision: empowering each and every one of our students to achieve, care, and thrive.

Below is a quick overview of our strategic goal areas. For more details and a full listing of objectives and action plans, please refer to the full Strategic Plan, which is available on our website (www.msa.state.mn.us).

GOAL AREA #1: SCHOOL CLIMATE

Minnesota State Academies (MSA) is a place where all are welcomed, informed, involved and safe.

GOAL AREA #2: STUDENT LIFE

The Student Life supports and develops educational goals by providing student-centered programs, activities and social opportunities that allow all day and residential students to discover self-identity and enrich their lives now and in the future.

GOAL AREA #3: INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT

MSA is a place where students receive accessible, rigorous and standards-based education and related services with assessments that accurately reflect student growth.

GOAL AREA #4: STATEWIDE VISIBILITY

MSA will be known by families and all school districts as a leader and partner in the education of students who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, Blind or Visually Impaired for its campuses, as well as a resource center for information and outreach activities to support school districts and families statewide.

GOAL AREA #5: TRANSITION

The transition programs at MSA provide an array of quality programs and trainings that lead to independence in an ever-changing world.



1: School Climate

STRATEGIC GOAL

Minnesota State Academies (MSA) is a place where all are welcomed, informed, involved and safe.

CURRENT FOCUS AREAS

- Improving internal and external communication with students, staff, families and stakeholders/partners
- Ensuring student and staff safety and a positive working/learning environment
- Professional development for staff

UPDATE

- Increased communications to students and added opportunities for feedback after each sports season and event
- Changed the school schedule to include Wednesday Forums, a weekly gathering for all high school students to discuss various topics
- Began live-streaming ASL Literacy Nights, so families could participate remotely
- 15 Superintendent Update videos posted on YouTube
- Superintendent Spotlight bi-weekly videos featuring our staff, students and alumni began in January, but was paused during the pandemic
- After the pandemic hit, MSA started producing weekly “Wellness Wednesday” videos (covering a variety of health and wellness tips, including self-care and resource sharing)
- During the pandemic, staff produced 6 inspirational and motivational videos for students and their families
- To ensure accessibility for all, public videos produced by MSA were captioned, ASL interpreted, voiced over, and accompanied by transcript
- Family Immersion Weekend was successfully hosted in October 2019, with 13 families participating
- Began offering online training opportunities for professional development
- During the Governor’s Stay at Home order, MSA hosted forums for students, families and staff to communicate updates through Zoom
- Surveys were distributed to students, families and staff during the pandemic and in preparations for Fall 2020
- Second year of Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) program rolled out
- Gathered student input on the student handbook and potential transition to Office 365 software for school use
- Direct communication established between Student Council/Student Body Government and school directors



2: Student Life

STRATEGIC GOAL

The Student Life program supports and develops educational goals by providing student-centered programs, activities and social opportunities that allow all day and residential students to discover self-identity and enrich their lives now and in the future.

CURRENT FOCUS AREAS

- Improving the quality of Student Life activities
- Increasing staff and student engagement
- Develop survey and gather feedback on current activities and programs, and suggestions for revised or new activities and programs

UPDATE

- Increased opportunities for socialization with students from other schools: Region 10, Gallaudet University Regional Academic Bowl, Deaf/Hard of Hearing Teen Night during Homecoming
- Established a variety of student groups and after school activities: Book reading club (which continued during distance learning), Dungeons & Dragons, Health Fair, STEM activities with the University of St. Thomas, and themed parties, among others
- Staff worked with students on creating goals and making monthly goal calendars to work on independent living skills
- Creation of 3 resource books for students: cooking, recreation, and self-help
- Weekly cooking lessons were provided for students
- Off campus work experience opportunities were offered for dorm students
- Established a partnership with Career Ventures Inc (CVI)
- During the Stay at Home order, Student Life staff created several videos to share ideas for at-home activities, hobbies and craft projects
- Offering a wide variety of off-campus trips to various community agencies, businesses and events
- Students participated in volunteer opportunities, such as Feed My Starving Children
- Staff were provided a diverse range of professional development training specifically focused on working with and engaging students, and on various topics



3: Instruction & Assessment

STRATEGIC GOAL

MSA is a place where students receive accessible, rigorous and standards-based education and related services with assessments that accurately reflect student growth.

CURRENT FOCUS AREAS

- Ensuring accessibility of our assessment and instructional materials
- Providing professional development
- Strengthening instruction

UPDATE

- One large focus was put on test proctoring, training teachers, monitoring IEP testing accommodations, test schedules and testing environment
- All spring testing was canceled due to COVID-19
- Planning for professional development on IEP testing accommodations, and determination of appropriate assessments - this was put on hold due to COVID-19
- Addition of all state and district assessments to IEPs
- Continued development of Assistive Technology survey to be distributed to students
- Growth was identified annually at IEP team meetings, and shared with families for students' progress on IEP goals and objectives
- Individual testing results were shared with families, and were used in creation of IEP goals and objectives
- New curriculum and summer curriculum workgroups were implemented
- The COVID-19 pandemic gave us the opportunity to expand resources used in teaching our students
- Mentoring program for new staff established
- Exploration and training in Office 365 technology and accessibility features
- Upgrade of fiber optic lines implemented, new network servers ordered
- Exploration of potential offering of online courses to serve students statewide as part of our distance learning program
- Trial program of Braille instruction on MSAD campus in collaboration with MSAB and a DeafBlind consultant
- Improved communications and transportation between MSAB and MSAD campuses
- Course catalogue final draft completed, will be expanded to add enrichment courses



4: Statewide Visibility

STRATEGIC GOAL

MSA will be known by families and all school districts as a leader and partner in the education of students who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, Blind or Visually Impaired for its campuses, as well as a resource center for information and outreach activities to support school districts and families statewide.

CURRENT FOCUS AREAS

- Sharing information about MSA's resources
- Serving as a statewide resource
- Improving public relations and branding

UPDATE

- All event hosting and participation was paused in March 2020 due to COVID-19; by the time of the Stay At Home order, MSA had participated in 137 events, with 1,622 impressions
- Formal social media plan implemented, resulting in an increase of 778 new followers across our channels, and 14,484 views on our YouTube channels
- Hosted four practicum students, one student teacher placement, and three staff enrolled in administrator preparation license programs
- Representation on the University of Minnesota Deaf/Hard of Hearing Teacher Preparation Program advisory board
- Began collaboration with PELSB to establish a BVI licensure program at MSAB
- Collaboration with school districts in addressing COVID-19 distance learning
- Revamp and launch of new website completed; 142,556 page views by 23,108 users
- MSA logo redesign finalized, branding materials and promotional items purchased
- MSAB mascot logo concept redesigned by student Kadence Regenscheid and finalized
- I-35 freeway signage approved; awaiting installation by the Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Hosting of many family-oriented events, including the Family Immersion Weekend, Region 10 social day, Gallaudet dinner, Latino dinner, trunk and Treat, parent-teacher conferences, Desserts in the Dark International Studies Club fundraiser, and the Gallaudet Midwest Regional Academic Bowl
- Participation in a wide variety of statewide events, including the Dakota County Libraries ASL Celebration Days at several Twin Cities libraries, and a family support group in Cloquet
- Addition of weekly Wellness Wednesday videos and website pages dedicated to COVID-19 resources for families with children who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind and Blind/Visually Impaired
- Responded and provided support and resource information sharing for 170+ requests through our website, email, and social media



5: Transition

STRATEGIC GOAL

The transition programs at MSA provide an array of quality programs and trainings that lead to independence in an ever-changing world.

CURRENT FOCUS AREAS

- Strengthen transition programs/resources
- Review and design transition courses
- Develop short-term programs to support transition skills
- Provide training for staff and students
- Expand work experience opportunities for students

UPDATE

- Expansion of pilot programs: Academy Plus and Pathways to Life Summer Transition on the MSAD campus
- Continued refining of Academy Plus program on MSAB campus
- Initial survey distributed to MSAB college and Academy Plus students; other surveys were paused due to COVID-19
- Strengthened relationship with Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and State Services for the Blind
- Continued work in developing contacts and resources
- Discussions with Minnesota Department of Education about expanding BVI and Deaf/Hard of Hearing services beyond library resources
- Development of self-awareness/career interest inventory, transition-based skills checklists and processes paused due to COVID-19
- Continued annual review of current portfolio process for students
- Career awareness classes and activities for K-8 students temporarily paused due to COVID-19
- Second year of Pathways to Life summer transition program offered, converted to distance learning
- Addition of new Assistant Dorm Program Coordinators on both campuses, which helped implement many educational activities within the dorms
- Transition plans individualized and embedded into curriculum and classes for our students aged 14 - 21
- Exploration of student-centered IEP; met with Minnesota Department of Education and inter-agency staff on implementation process for MSA
- Improved on- and off-campus work experience opportunity collaboration between MSAD and MSAB campuses
- Many students placed into work experience opportunities on and off campuses