

## *Appendix E:*

# TEXAS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND & VISUALLY IMPAIRED

## STRATEGIC WORKFORCE ANALYSIS AND PLAN

### ***I. OVERVIEW***

Originally created by the Texas Legislature in 1856, the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired has been established as part of the public education system that serves as a special school in the continuum of statewide alternative placements for students who have a visual impairment. It is also a statewide resource to parents of these children and professionals who serve them.

### ***Mission of TSBVI***

Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI) will be a leading center of educational expertise in Texas for students with visual impairments, their families and the local and regional service providers who work with them. TSBVI will provide opportunities for children and youth who are visually impaired, including those with additional disabilities or deafblindness, to develop the skills necessary to lead vocationally, personally, and socially satisfying and productive lives.

### ***Strategic Goals and Objectives***

**GOAL 1:** Students who are visually impaired or deafblind will demonstrate the skills and knowledge to lead vocationally, personally, and socially satisfying lives as demonstrated by academic success and successful transition to the community.

**OBJECTIVE:** Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired will annually demonstrate progress in their academic programs, career and work programs, and life skills program.

**GOAL 2:** Families, professionals, and paraprofessionals will have the knowledge and skills necessary to improve educational programming and other services for all Texas students who are visually impaired or deafblind.

**OBJECTIVE:** Texas students, professionals, families, individuals, local school districts, and agencies will receive quality services or products from Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

## ***Main Functions: Direct and Outreach Services***

- \* To provide a free, appropriate public education that addresses the intense or specialized needs of visually impaired children and youth, including those with additional disabilities when the local school district and parents agree that such services are not available in a local program.
- \* To conduct supplemental programs, such as summer school and short-term school-year programs, to students who are enrolled in their local school district during the regular school year.
- \* To provide statewide services to parents of students with visual impairments, school districts, regional education service centers, and other agencies. These services include training, consultation, technical assistance, and developing and disseminating materials such as curriculum, instructional methodology, and educational technology.
- \* To provide information about instructional resources and materials, including educational technology, related to teaching, assessment, and transition of students with visual impairments.
- \* To lend educational and technological materials for student use to school districts and regional education service centers.
- \* To partner with Texas Tech University and Stephen F. Austin University in preparation programs for teachers of the visually impaired.
- \* To cooperate with public and private agencies and organizations serving students and other persons with visual impairments in the planning, development, and implementation of effective educational and rehabilitative service delivery systems.
- \* To serve as leaders in the use of distance learning for teachers, parents, and students.

## ***Anticipated Changes***

It is expected that the primary functions of TSBVI will remain the same over the next five years; therefore, the mission, goals, and objectives of the School will remain relatively stable. However, the following types of changes will cause us to adjust some of our strategies, or at least the manner in which those strategies are executed:

- ♦ We are serving a significant number of students who are either wards of the State, from unstable families, or otherwise in situations that have caused them to have severe emotional and social support needs.
- ♦ In fiscal year 2009, 42% of our students were 18 years of age or older. Because we are serving an increasing number of adult-age students, many of our programs are directed at transitioning to adult life, such as career education.
- ♦ The number of referrals for existing classes in short-term programs rises each year. Additionally, requests to add specific new types of classes from parents, professionals, and school board mem

bers increase each year. However, there has been no additional staff added to assist with instruction or admissions.

- ♦ There are increasing requests for weekend and higher frequency local trainings that require staffing in Outreach for increased travel and flexible hours.
- ♦ Pursuing distance learning technology for providing anytime training on the website requires increasing staff with technical skills.

## ***II. Current Workforce Profile***

The staff of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired is comprised of 608 budgeted full- and part-time employees, including substitute employees, who work on an on-call, as-needed basis. Because the majority of our employees do not work continuously through the summer and other school breaks, our FTE count varies depending on the quarter. Our annual average FTE count for FY 2009 was 354.42. Of the 354.42 FTEs, 337.50 are classified and one, the Superintendent, is line item exempt. The remaining are teachers, principals, counselors, and other educational positions that, by statute (Texas Education Code 30.024(b)(1)), are paid in accordance with Austin Independent School District pay scales for comparable positions.

Among the classified positions, the single largest staff group (142.25 positions) consists of residential instructors. Classified as Resident Specialists, these are the staff that provides care, instruction, and supervision of students in their non-school hours. Other classified positions range from nurses to maintenance mechanics, from accountants to technology specialists. The campus-based workforce is a small community with nearly every occupational field represented.

TSBVI's contract workforce provides services primarily in the following areas: Pediatric medicine, low vision services, psychiatry, dietitian, and linen service. The first four of these are specialized professional services that can be provided more efficiently by contractors. Linen service is contracted out for some, but not all, linen use due to the safety and equipment issues involved in laundering linens heavily soiled with biohazardous substances. Contract workers are used to a lesser degree in the following ways: Spanish translation for documents required to be provided to parents in their primary language; temporary employee vacancies; specialized, non-routine repairs.

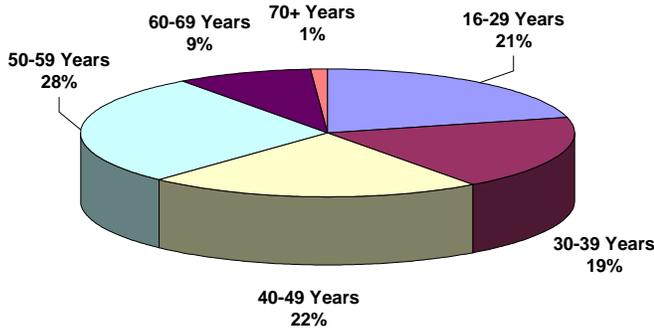
The Workforce percentages are obtained from the January 2008 Texas Workforce Commission's "Equal Employment Opportunity and Minority Hiring Practices Report," which notes:

"Items may not add to totals or compute to displayed percentages due to rounding. Detail for Race and Hispanic-origin groups will not add to totals because data for the "other races" group are not presented and Hispanics are included in both the Caucasian and African American categories."

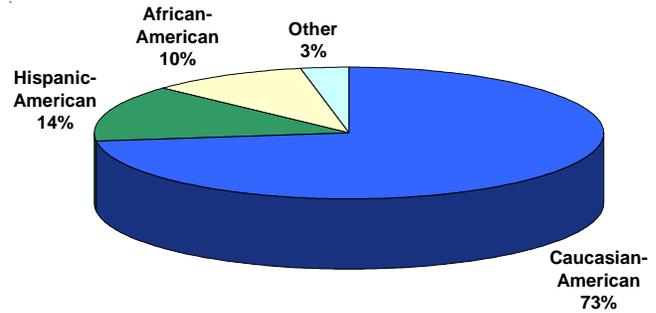
As is typical of an education setting, the majority of TSBVI employees are female (66%). Almost sixty percent of the workforce (59%) are over the age of 40, and more than one-third have more than 10 years of experience at this school (22%).

Since 2005, our percentages of African American and Hispanic TSBVI employees increased in several job categories. However, minorities are still underrepresented in the Professional, Officials/Administration, and Administrative Support categories at TSBVI in comparison to the civilian workforce composition. Although we are addressing this in our recruiting plan, we are limited by the fact that the majority of our professional staff consists of certified VI teachers, and it is known that minorities are vastly underrepresented in this specialized teaching field.

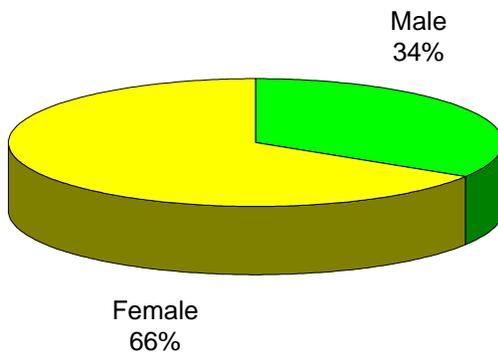
**Staff by Age**



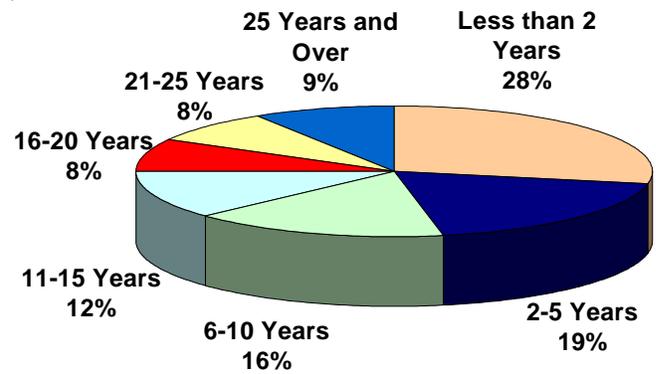
**Staff by Ethnicity**



**Staff by Gender**



**Staff by Length of Service**



**Staff Ethnicity by EEO Category Compared to Civilian Workforce Composition**

Job Category	African American		Hispanic American	
	TSBVI %	Workforce %	TSBVI %	Workforce %
Officials, Administration	0	9%	0	23.7%
Professional	2%	11.7%	6%	19.9%
Technical	18%	17%	9	27%
Admin. Support	0%	13%	22%	31.9%
Skilled Craft	44%	5.1%	22%	46.9%
Service & Maintenance	18%	12%	16%	44.8%

***Retirement Projections***

The task of projecting the number of retirements is more difficult for TSBVI than it might be for other agencies because our School changed retirement systems. In September 1994, the School moved from the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) to the Employees Retirement System (ERS); therefore, the data available from ERS about retirement eligibility is incomplete because it is based on ERS service only. We cannot reliably project retirements based on length of TSBVI service because our employees were able

to withdraw their TRS service without terminating employment when we moved to ERS. We know that some, perhaps many, employees did so, but this information is not formally available to us.

According to a report from the Texas Comptroller's Office, approximately 21% of TSBVI's workforce, excluding Substitute employees, will be eligible to retire within the next five years. Whether those employees choose to retire or not is unknown.

Administrators and Department Heads: Among the 16 managers who are the school's top administrators or major department heads, it is expected that approximately one-fourth, will retire (or, as return-to-work retirees, terminate) within the next five years.

Educational and Related Services Professionals: Teachers, educational diagnosticians, school psychologists, speech pathologists, social workers, physical/occupational therapists and similar professionals make up this group. Approximately 15% of them may be eligible to retire within five years. Due to the fact that the majority of these individuals are professional educators, these are the least likely staff to have withdrawn their TRS retirement.

Mid-managers and Non-educational Professionals: This is a varied group that includes smaller department heads, residential managers, front-line supervisors, programmers, and nurses, and, among others. Approximately 40% are eligible within the next five years assuming they have not withdrawn their TRS service.

Instructional and Residential Paraprofessionals: Although this is our largest group of staff and consists primarily of Residential Instructors and Teaching Assistants, the anticipated retirement rate within it is negligible. These jobs are primarily held by younger individuals who will leave TSBVI employment well before retirement eligibility. Less than 10% of our non-management, paraprofessional direct care staff has the age and length of service to retire within five years.

Technical/Clerical Support Staff: Less than one-quarter of this group will be eligible to retire within the next five years.

Other Support Services: This group includes maintenance technicians, cooks, custodial workers, drivers, and security personnel. Of these, it is estimated that less than one-third could be eligible to retire within the next five years.

In summary, within the coming five years, TSBVI is likely to experience the most significant losses through retirement among the top administrators, mid-managers, and non-educational professionals in the School. The fact that retirement eligibility is primarily concentrated among TSBVI's most experienced and highly skilled employees is of more concern than the actual number of prospective retirees. We know that this will be a "second and final" retirement for some individuals, but others will be interested in returning to work post-retirement and may be able to do so, which will mitigate some of the loss.

### ***Turnover and Projected Attrition***

During the 2009 fiscal year, our turnover rate as reported by the State Auditor's Office was 12.8%, including interagency transfers, compared to 14.4% turnover statewide, excluding interagency transfers. TSBVI's prior years' rates were 16.6% for FY 2008 and 13% for FY 2007.

The data presented in the State Auditor's Office annual report of turnover is based on full-time, classified staff; however, this category omits two significant segments of the TSBVI workforce. First, and most important, as noted above, nearly a quarter of our staff are categorized as "unclassified" because they are teachers and other educators paid in accordance with the local school district salary scales; therefore, including only classified staff in turnover data omits our core professional staff. Secondly, due to the 24-hour nature of our school, we employ many part-time workers to cover a variety of shift patterns. We consider part-time employees to be an integral part of our workforce and believe it is important to examine turnover in a manner that includes them. Including all unclassified and part-time workers along with full-time classified staff, our turnover rate in FY 2009 was 18%.

### ***Critical Workforce Skills***

TSBVI relies primarily on teachers and other educational professionals to carry out its core mission. Additionally, direct care paraprofessionals extend the capabilities of teachers during the school day and provide care, supervision, and instruction to students during non-school hours. Finally, employees with a wide variety of administrative, technical, manual and other skills provide the support activities that allow our campus to function programmatically and physically. As such, we consider the following skills and credentials to be critical to the performance of our mission:

- Certification as a teacher of visually impaired students.
- Proficiency in working with students with multiple disabilities, including autism, deafblindness, and orthopedic impairments.
- Proficiency using and instructing students in the use of specialized technologies for the visually impaired, one of the most critical options available today for providing access to the world of information for blind learners.
- Certification or licensure in the professional areas that comprise special education related services required for our students: O&M Specialist, Licensed Specialist in School Psychology, Educational Diagnostician, Speech-Language Pathologist, Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Librarian, Social Worker, Nurse.
- Knowledge of statewide services, regional programs and local school districts and how to work with them.
- Proficiency in training and consulting skills.
- Proficiency in instructing students in career education and other subjects related to transition to adult life.
- Proficiency in leadership and management skills, and educational administration certification if required for position.
- For direct care paraprofessionals, individuals who have:
  - A human service orientation with a sincere desire to work with children with disabilities.
  - Paraprofessional certification and qualified under No Child Left Behind Act
- Proficiency in technology and skilled trade areas which support all School functions.
- Proficiency in business and administrative support areas which support all School functions.

### ***III. Future Workforce Profile***

#### ***Factors Driving Expected Workforce Changes***

- Comprehensive Programs (regular school year) anticipates a slight increase in enrollment.

- The School anticipates that the number of referrals for existing classes, as well as requests to add specific new classes, will continue to increase in Special Programs (Summer and Short Term Programs), although no additional staff have been added to assist with instruction or admissions.
- Increased demand for expanded summer program offerings will require more staff during the summer and the possible need to hire temporary staff from outside the school.
- Students will continue to present more severe and complex disabling conditions, particularly emotional and behavioral disorders, along with visual impairment. They will have more intense needs while enrolled at TSBVI, and will require more indirect services to help ensure their success in local school districts.
- The proportion of students who need vocational instruction and independent living skills will increase.
- Federal and state education and special education regulations will require more services and impose more standards that our School will be expected to meet.
- The new building program will require a higher level of technical expertise for building systems such as security, building controls, plumbing mechanical and life safety. There are additional state required inspections and service by licensed professional for elevators, plumbing, fire protection and suppression, natural gas line (both exterior and interior), boilers, pest control and food services as well as best practices inspections for electrical, air conditioning and plumbing systems. These increased required inspections are accomplished through contracts with licensed professionals, the training of current staff where possible for certification and hiring licensed and certified technicians.
- There is a need for a full time day bus driver to cover day routes and issue keys in the transportation department.
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- There is a critical need for database management and process automation at TSBVI. Coupled with increased reliance on technology, both to execute the school's core mission and to assist in all support activities, the School anticipates a need for more highly skilled technical staff.

### ***Future Workforce Skills Needed for Critical Functions***

The mission of TSBVI and its key goals are unlikely to change in the coming years. The critical functions will continue to be the direct and indirect provision of services to the visually impaired, school-aged children of Texas. While the mission will remain the same, it will be implemented with a changing student population and within a changing regulatory environment, by an evolving staff. As such, we anticipate the following future workforce skill needs:

- TSBVI will continue to have a steady demand for certified VI and O&M teachers, but will also need teachers who are certified in VI along with auditory impairment, math, science, ESL, and geography.
- We will continue to need certified or licensed professionals in the related services areas, but with particular emphasis on counseling and assessment personnel because of (a) anticipated attrition

through retirement in this area, and (b) the need for more intensive services related to student behavioral disorders and severe emotional needs.

- We will need educational administrators with a strong background in education of the visually impaired as well as administrative and leadership skills.
- We will need managers in non-educational areas with strong leadership skills in addition to expertise with their own functional areas (facilities, business, technology, etc.).
- All staff who provide direct services to students, whether professional or paraprofessional, must develop skills to manage students' behavior and emotional problems.
- All staff must have an adequate working knowledge of technology appropriate to their assignment.
- TSBVI will need staff who have bilingual skills and cultural awareness.

### ***Anticipated Changes in the Number of Employees Needed***

TSBVI anticipates a need for targeted skill areas, including staff with bilingual skills and cultural competence, staff with systems analysis and database management expertise, and training staff with expertise in creating computer-based teaching classes specifically geared toward visual impairment as well as more general development.

It is difficult to forecast future enrollment, because we cannot ordinarily predict how many or which students will be referred to TSBVI, and we cannot know the extent of their needs until they have been assessed. A referral from a local district to TSBVI can take place at anytime, and it is a complex, highly regulated process which does not give us much flexibility to decline to accept students we do not feel adequately staffed to serve. Nevertheless, we do not expect a decline in enrollment or demand for other services.

## ***IV. Gap Analysis***

### ***Anticipated Shortage of Employees and Skills***

The following gaps are either likely or possible based on a comparison between the current staff profile and anticipated future staffing and skills needs:

- Staff will need to continue to increase the knowledge and skills required to work with students who are presenting increasingly challenging disabilities.
- We will have an insufficient supply of VI teachers, educational administrators and related service professionals due to retirement and other attrition.
- We will have an insufficient supply of professionals in the fields of visual impairment and deafblindness who are available to travel as statewide consultants.
- Flexibility will be required of the school's grounds, building, and custodial staff as the campus continues to transform with new buildings going up and old buildings coming down. It may be necessary to reclassify maintenance staff to job titles within groundskeeping and custodial classifications as the school will need to keep the new buildings and landscape in pristine condition while maintenance of the old buildings will become less critical.
- The need for data management and process automation will require us to either hire additional technical professionals or contract for this service.

- ♦ As technology becomes more integral to most jobs, staff will need to increase their technical competence accordingly. In addition, in some jobs, the required competence level will be quite high due to the complex technology related to visually impairment.
- ♦ To ensure that training needs related to behavior, technology, VI core curricular areas, and other content are met, we need to utilize computer-based training rather than traditional instructor-led training to reach more staff at times convenient to their schedules. We also need for staff to have time to be trained.

## **V. Strategies for Workforce Transition**

### ***Succession Plan***

The core of TSBVI's institutional knowledge is held by (1) its professional staff members who provide direct services to students on campus and indirect services to students throughout the state through families and other educators; and (2) its administrators and managers. Emphasis in this succession plan is given to those two groups.

At TSBVI, we take a three-pronged approach to succession planning:

- (1) We believe that a diversity of professional educational approaches enriches our programs; therefore, we strive to recruit broadly to bring highly qualified professional staff from outside our school.
- (2) The large number of paraprofessional positions at TSBVI provides a supply of staff who have demonstrated good basic skills and a genuine interest in working with children with disabilities. Some of these individuals decide that they want to make a professional career of teaching visually impaired children, which we encourage and support. Our VI teachers can pursue further career development, with our support, by obtaining additional subject matter certification, becoming administrators, or becoming related services specialists.
- (3) We seek to disseminate key institutional knowledge throughout the organization both laterally and vertically by means such as cross-training and documenting work processes. There are key positions at our School that, because of the nature of the job and the size of the department, do not have potential internal successors.

### *Direct Instruction and Service*

#### **1. VI Teachers**

*Action steps to ensure adequate supply of VI teachers:*

- a. Continue to administer the VI teacher preparation project established by legislative rider. This includes: Financially supporting the Texas universities (Texas Tech and Stephen F. Austin) who offer VI teacher preparation in return for their assurance of a minimum number of

graduates per year; providing mentors for teachers in training; and providing workshops for new teachers to minimize attrition.

- b. Work to assure the continued funding of the VI teacher preparation project by documenting the outcomes of the program and communicating them to the funding sources.
- c. “Create” VI teachers from TSBVI staff:
  - (1) Identify and encourage degreed paraprofessionals (e.g., teaching assistants) who could complete alternative teacher certification in Special Education through the Region XIII Education Service Center program. After completion of this program, employ them (if vacancies occur) as first year classroom teachers to fulfill their internship.
  - (2) Hire promising teacher candidates who already have Generic Special Education or other related certification.
  - (3) Require all teachers hired under both circumstances to obtain VI certification over a designated period of time. Provide tuition reimbursement for those who complete coursework toward VI certification.

## **2. Related Service Professionals and Teachers with Additional Certification**

*Action step to ensure adequate supply of related services professionals (e.g., Educational Diagnosticians, Speech/Language Pathologists) and specially certified teachers (e.g. English as a Second Language, Science)*

- a. Continue to identify “high need” credentials based on actual and expected attrition.
- b. As funding permits, utilize the existing procedure that provides for teachers to receive tuition reimbursement for completing coursework toward credentials designated by the School’s management as “high need.”
- c. Actively solicit interest among current VI teaching staff in these opportunities.
- d. Actively recruit and train interns.

## **3. Outreach Specialists**

The majority of outreach specialists are highly experienced VI teachers or professionals in the field of deafblindness. A person would typically progress to this position from an earlier successful career as a provider of direct instruction; in other words, they are nearer retirement age than the average employee. It is estimated that a significant number of staff in this group will be eligible to retire within the next five years, whether they choose to do so or not. The classroom teacher staff at TSBVI provides a natural “training ground” for future outreach specialists; however, many teachers would not be interested in this role due to the extensive travel and longer work year. Generally, vacancies in this area require a national or at least statewide search. Fortunately, the very nature of the outreach specialist job involves extensive networking in the fields of visual impairment and deafblindness, both on a state and national basis. Our Outreach program is well known, and potentially suitable candidates for vacancies in this area are usually well known to us.

In summary, effective succession in this area will be accomplished by a combination of drawing upon a pool of highly qualified internal applicants and cultivating a ready-made network.

## **Management**

### **1. Educational and residential program administration:**

- a. Superintendent: The Superintendent is newly hired and is expected to remain in this position for the foreseeable future.
- b. Principals/Assistant Principals/Outreach Director/School & Student Services Director: Several employees in this area have already retired and returned to work. It is possible that one-third of these positions will retire for a final time within the next five years. It is expected that succession will be accomplished through (1) re-organization or consolidation of some functions or (2) filling vacancies with current employees who will meet MQ's or (3) conducting a national search for outside candidates. Our practice of developing lead teachers helps ensure our future supply of educational leaders.
- c. Residential Directors/Dorm Managers: Attrition at the residential director level is not expected within the next five years. Turnover among dorm managers is routine and succession is expected to be accomplished through the competitive selection of outstanding Residential Instructors.

### **2. Management of Support Functions:**

It is likely that two to three of the top five non-programmatic management positions will be vacated within the next five years. Although these are critical and highly skilled positions, they – unlike the educational administrator positions – do not require educational certification, and they have counterparts in other state agencies. It is expected that both internal and external applicants will compete for most of these positions. Meanwhile, the emphasis in these areas is on documenting institutional knowledge to ensure the smoothest possible transition to successors.

## **Other Goals for Workforce Transition**

The first three goals, below, concern staff training. The first one addresses: 1) The need for training concerning students with increasingly challenging disabilities. Workers, even professionals, do not arrive at our doorstep with these skills. It is imperative that we are able to rely on our own training to meet the complex needs of the students we serve. 2) The need for annual supervisory training for all dorm managers, supervisors, and department heads. It is imperative that decision-makers receive the latest information concerning employment laws that affect every day personnel decisions. Even the most seasoned managers need a refresher to minimize legal risk.

The second goal will facilitate having an involved and well-informed staff by ensuring that 1) all staff receives information in an accessible format, and 2) all staff acquires the technical skills to use computers in their jobs.

The third goal considers the possibilities for expanding internal training efforts.

The fourth goal focuses on retention through continuing development of career and salary progression.

The fifth and final goal recognizes that we cannot meet all of our needs by training, promoting, and retaining our existing staff. The expanding and changing needs of our school will demand that we add staff in certain areas. This goal does not necessarily imply that the overall staff or contract workforce size must increase, since some positions may be able to replace other, less critical ones.

**Goal 1:** 1) Ensure that all staff who work with students have adequate knowledge and skills in working with students with increasingly challenging disabilities.  
2) Ensure that all employees in a supervisory role receive employment law training on an annual basis to minimize potential legal pitfalls.

**Goal 2:** 1) Ensure that all employees in all departments receive information in an accessible format. 2) Ensure that all employees have the technical skills and the access to consistently use the intranet and e-mail for necessary information.

**Goal 3:** Explore the possibility of establishing a comprehensive staff development program that would serve the needs of TSBVI staff at all levels as well as non-TSBVI professionals.

**Goal 4:** Improve our ability to attract and retain staff.

- A. Continue efforts to develop career progression programs tied to training completion and/or education advancement.
- B. Continue to develop criteria to utilize our authority to make salary adjustments for purposes of internal and external equity, particularly for under-compensated job groups such as nurses.
- C. Work to identify more funds for merit salary increases so that deserving staff can be moved upward through the salary ranges for their jobs.
- D. Continue to follow our Highly Qualified Recruitment and Retention Plan, which provides incentive for teachers to obtain visual impairment certifications.
- E. Increase marketing efforts on the benefits of employment at TSBVI.
- F. Encourage paraprofessional staff who are interested in a career path as a Teacher of the Visually Impaired or Orientation and Mobility Specialist to pursue the required credentials and experience.

**Goal 5:** Assure we are sufficiently staffed for new or expanded initiatives.

- A. Continue to refine our determination of areas in which we will need to add staff as funding permits, and then prioritize those areas (e.g., physical plant support, training, direct care, technology).
- B. For each identified need and in order of priority, work toward a decision of whether and how to fund staffing for the need or how to meet the need in an alternative way.