OSB Commission Report

July 13, 2020

OSB’s primary focus over the past few months has been to address COVID 19 issues, provide distance learning, and formulate a plan for reopening. OSB students along with other students across the state did not return to school after Spring Break. Distance learning was implemented and teachers/staff were instructed to provide education to students through various methods. Packets, Zoom calls, Google Classroom, conference calls, and personal contacts with students/parents, etc. were utilized. Distance learning is not the preferred method of instruction for visually impaired/blind students; however, teachers/staff did their best to deliver meaningful instruction to students.

OSB surveyed parents/guardians after the school year was completed to determine specific needs/concerns they have regarding distance learning and re-opening procedures. OSB Administration felt that having all stakeholders’ input was vital when preparing for the 2020-21 school year. A voluntary teacher/staff meeting was held to discuss concerns or ideas to address re-opening procedures and receive input from teachers and staff. Re-opening plans are being discussed and written. These plans will be shared with parents, students, staff, and teachers upon completion with the understanding that the plans are subject to change as additional information is received.

OSB held a graduation ceremony on Tuesday, June 23. Eight students graduated and were presented their awards. Graduation speaker was former OSB student, Megan Rowan, currently a Rehabilitation of the Blind Specialist for the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services. Family/friends of graduates were limited to 10 or less, and auditorium had seats blocked off to ensure social distancing measures. Kaylee Ragon was honored as valedictorian and Gabriella King was named Salutatorian. Commissioners Cheng and Wolfe provided a short video greeting to the seniors. Guests were limited to invitation only.

Ruby Barker was named OSB Teacher of the Year. Mrs. Barker has worked for OSB for over 30 years. She instituted a Braille Club which is comprised of students from third through sixth grade and meet twice monthly to enhance braille skills.

Rebecca Larue was named OSB Employee of the Year. Mrs. Larue has been a Direct Care Specialist at OSB for 15 years. She volunteers her free time to serve as scoutmaster for OSB’s Troop 602.

Kaylee Ragon, a Tecumseh senior, received the V.R. Carter Scholarship from the Oklahoma Foundation for the education of Blind Children and Youth, Inc. in the amount of $1,000. Ms. Ragon plans to attend the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma in Chickasha and major in Deaf Education and Speech Language Pathology.

Kaylee Ragon and De’Poris Willis received a $500 scholarship from the Muskogee County Lions Club.

OSB teacher, Tera Webb, was honored as 2020 Special Olympics Area 10-Kiamichi Coach of the Year. Mrs. Webb has taught at OSB for 20 years. She teaches math and physical education and coaches cheerleading and track. In addition, Mrs. Webb was also honored as Adaptive Physical Education Teacher of the Year from the Oklahoma Associaton of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance­­­­­­­­­.

OSB Orientation and Mobility Instructor, Faye Miller was recently named the Blindness and Low Vision Studies Alumna of the Year of Salus University. Mrs. Miller serves as a full time O & M instructor and also as the coordinator of the Oklahoma Regional Braille Challenge and Oklahoma Regional Cane Quest.

White Cane Day was celebrated October 15 at Woodland Hills Mall. OSB students walked in a parade, and the OSB Jazz Band performed.

Thirty three students participated in Cane Quest on November 14. After the competition, students were introduced to “Beep Ball” (modified baseball).

OSB Homecoming was held December 3, 2020. Kaylee Ragon was named homecoming queen.

OSB students participated in the South Central Association of Schools for the Blind Wrestling/Cheerleading Tournament and Fine Arts Presentation at Austin, Texas on January 23-25.

OSB celebrated Dr. Seuss Read Across America Day on Monday, March 2 by hosting Craig Day, News on 6 Anchor. Mr. Day read a Dr. Seuss book to our students and later reported on his time at OSB on channel 6.

OSB students participated in the 2020 Oklahoma Regional Braille Challenge on Wednesday, March 4, at Oklahoma City.

OSB Student Council spent a day with legislators at the Capitol on March 9 and People With Disabilities Awareness Day on March 10. De’Poris Willis was named DRS Student of the Year for OSB. Mr. Willis has interned with Raper and Sons Realty, worked at Colton’s Steak House and plans to attend college in the fall.

Several spring and summer activities had to be canceled due to COVID 19.

The new OSB gymnasium is nearing completion. It is scheduled to be completed in late July 2020.

OSB’s Lowrey Hall has suffered major water damage due to a break in a water pipe fitting. Individual dorms were flooded as well as the commons area. A mitigation company is assisting in the restoration process.

OSB Maintenance Staff is working on several projects for the summer. A new lower elementary playground is being completed. Several teacher rooms are being renovated as well.

OSB will be losing two contract instructional employees and one support staff to retirement. Those retiring are: Ruby Baker-Braille Teacher, Sylvia Sterling- School Psychologist, and Karen Bryan- Independent Living Skills Instructor.

Respectfully submitted,

Rita J. Echelle

OSB Superintendent