



Minnesota State Academies

Public School District No. 160

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www.msa.state.mn.us

WHO WE ARE

The Minnesota State Academies (MSA) is a state agency under the Executive Branch of Minnesota's state government. Within this agency, there are two academies which have been established to serve deaf, hard-of-hearing, deafblind, blind, and visually impaired students. Those academies are the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind (MSAB) and the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (MSAD), located on two campuses about a mile apart in Faribault. Both schools are among the oldest public schools in Minnesota, having been established by the state legislature in 1858. MSAD opened its doors in 1863 while MSAB started serving students in 1866. Both schools are residential schools, with dormitories for students who come from all corners of the state, commuting to/from their homes every weekend. Life in the dormitories provides many opportunities for social and emotional development as well as opportunities to practice independent living skills, which is often unavailable to our students in their home communities. We have staff on campus to support our students at all times from Sunday evening through Friday afternoons, plus occasional weekends for enrichment activities such as drama and athletics.

SCHOOL DISTRICT AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Although the MSA is an independent state agency, both academies are defined as public schools by state statutes and our school district is established as Public School District #160. Both schools provide a broad range of educational options from infancy through age 21 and all of our students meet special education criteria and have Individual Education Plans (IEPs). They receive special education instruction, services, and other supports as documented in their IEPs. Our teachers are licensed by the Minnesota Department of Education and utilize Minnesota state standards in our curriculum and instruction to ensure preparation for meeting state standards through mandated tests. We not only serve students who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, deafblind, blind, or visually impaired, but we also serve students with additional learning needs and other challenges. As a critical part of the continuum of educational options for students with IEPs, MSA provides a wealth of resources, educational tools & strategies, and trained/knowledgeable personnel that are available to support students statewide.

FUNDING

Despite our status as a school district, the Minnesota State Academies are not funded like other public school districts. Rather than receiving aid based on the general education formula, special education reimbursements, or federal special education funds, the Academies receive yearly allocations from the legislature based on recommendations from the Governor's office. We are not able to get additional funding through any other referendum processes. We rely solely on allocations from the state legislature and some additional funding from school districts

"OUR MISSION IS TO EDUCATE, CREATE OPPORTUNITIES, AND MOTIVATE STUDENTS FOR AN INDEPENDENT FUTURE."
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for specific IEP-related services. The general allocation is for operational expenses: salaries and benefits for all staff, educational materials, technology, professional development, security, athletics, and so forth. Bonding requests generally support major construction projects like the new dormitory, improvements to our educational facilities, and additions of safety/security features. Asset preservation funds are the third component of our funding model; these funds help maintain the buildings on both campuses. Except for one-on-one educational assistants, the Academies are not reimbursed for special educational costs like other districts.

STUDENTS WE SERVE

By statute, we serve deaf, hard-of-hearing, deafblind, blind, and visually impaired students in Minnesota. We are also allowed to accept students from other states if their school districts are willing to compensate us for the costs involved in educating their child. During recent years, we have noted an increase in the number of students who also have additional learning needs and/or other challenges. In order to serve those students well, we require professionals who have additional training and skills to serve that population. As an example of this, our speech-language and occupational therapists must also have knowledge of assistive technology that is suited for each individual student's physical needs. We also collaborate with the Minnesota Department of Education in managing the statewide resource center (for both deaf and blind students) for materials and resources that teachers/staff can use in their classrooms statewide.

FUTURE AND POSSIBILITIES

As a state agency, the MSA provides services to students, parents, families, and staff members who work with deaf, hard-of-hearing, deafblind, blind, and visually impaired children from all parts of the state. Due to statewide budget limitations, previous bonding requests have not kept up with our continuing maintenance and upkeep needs. As a result, we are now in need of multiple projects to maintain our facilities and exterior spaces to ensure the safety, security, and accessibility of our buildings so that we can effectively provide educational programming that is required by our students' IEPs. This year, attempting to reduce the long list of projects that need attention, we have asked for funds to support four different bonding requests. Information regarding each project is included in our budget proposal. We remain ready to address any questions or concerns that you might have about our requests. Thank you.

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