

Questions and Answers

Tennessee School for the Deaf, Nashville

In accordance with T.C.A. §49-10-902, the Tennessee Department of Education is coordinating the opening of the Tennessee School for the Deaf, Nashville (TSDN). The school will be located on the Tennessee School for the Blind campus, utilizing the available space as in accordance with the code. TSDN will begin serving students in the 2018-19 school year for grades kindergarten through second grade as day students. Admission to the school will be based on the IEP team recommendations related to the individual student's skills, strengths, needs, and least restrictive environment. As always, parents are important members of the IEP team.

1. *Why is the department creating a school for the deaf in Nashville?*

The creation of a school for the deaf within Davidson County is required by [T.C.A. §49-10-902](#).

Additionally, students who are eligible for special education services, including those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, should have access to the full continuum of alternate placements (service options) as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Given the geographic distance of the current Tennessee School for the Deaf, Knoxville (TSD) and the West Tennessee School for the Deaf, Jackson (WTSD), young students in middle Tennessee are not able to benefit from these services unless the family is willing to enroll them as residential students in Knoxville. For students in the early grades of kindergarten through second grade, this is often not a reasonable expectation.

Research has clearly demonstrated the importance of quality early instruction in literacy in order for a student to become a fluent reader. Strong literacy skills are essential to success in school, college and career. Students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing require instruction that combines specifically designed strategies, intensive instruction in literacy, and direct instruction in communication and language skills. If a student is not able to access the instruction within their local schools due to the impact of their disability, even with the supports and services offered through the school, they will miss the formative early years of literacy instruction. TSDN will provide this early foundation for students in developing literacy and communication skills throughout the standards-based instruction.

2. *Is the Tennessee School for the Deaf, Nashville (TSDN) a part of the Tennessee School for the Blind?*

The two schools are separate. TSDN is utilizing space available at Tennessee School for the Blind (TSB) in accordance with the Tennessee Annotated Code §49-10-902 quoted below:

[T.C.A. §49-10-902](#). Schools for deaf children -- West Tennessee and Davidson County.

(a)(1) The state, acting through the state board of education and the commissioner of education, shall establish, maintain and operate a school in Madison County for the hearing impaired children of west Tennessee.

(2) The West Tennessee School for the Deaf shall be located at either Arlington in Shelby County on a portion of that property now owned by the state and used by the school for people with intellectual disability or at such other site in Shelby County made available to the state board of education by the Shelby County legislative body and that is mutually agreeable.

(b) There shall also be a branch school for the deaf located in Davidson County in connection with the Tennessee School for the Blind

3. *Who can attend TSDN?*

Enrollment in TSDN is determined by the IEP team, which includes parents/guardians, and the student must also meet the admission requirements defined by [Rule 0520-04-03](#). In the 2018-19 school year, enrollment will be limited to kindergarten through second grade.

4. *What are the benefits of the attending TSDN?*

TSDN is an important option within the continuum of service options available to students who are receiving IEP services. While schools work diligently to provide for a student's individualized needs, some students will require services or supports that can be best provided within a school designed for the deaf or hard-of-hearing. For students within the middle Tennessee region, access was limited to a specially designed school due to distance. TSDN will address this need for the students who meet the enrollment requirements.

5. *Are there reasons why a student who is deaf or hard-of-hearing would choose to not attend TSDN?*

Enrollment in TSDN should be based on the student's needs and least restrictive environment. It is the charge of the IEP team to determine what the student's current needs are based on data and then to determine how those needs are best met for the next year.

6. *Will the addition of TSDN to the TSB campus impact the current students, staff, or resources?*

The TSB students will continue to have access to all the services, supports, educational activities, and residential options that they have had previously. TSDN will use available resources at the TSB campus such as the playground, gym, parking lot, and cafeteria to ensure that students at both schools have all necessary services and supports. Any staff that will support both schools, such as the custodian or the school nurse, will be fully supported by both schools to ensure that they are able to meet the needs of all students.

7. *How will the addition of a third school for the deaf impact the current two schools located in Knoxville and Jackson?*

We anticipate that students that will enroll in TSDN are not attending either TSD or WTSD due to distance.

8. *Will TSDN be expanded beyond second grade in the future?*

Yes, the plan is to add an additional grade each year through the elementary grades, based on enrollment, through sixth grade.