



**Florida School for  
the Deaf & the Blind**

*Do More. Be More. Achieve More.*



# IMPACT REPORT

YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

# Finding Joy and Success in Reading



**M**eka and her family didn't know what to do before FSDB. In her home school system, Meka struggled in all subjects, especially reading. The school had limited resources and didn't know how to teach visually impaired students. For years, Meka remained below reading level.

In December 2019, Meka transferred to FSDB as a 2nd grader. She gained access to teachers and specialists who are trained to teach the visually impaired. In fact, Meka's family credits her teacher, Ms. Garay, for her success. To boost literacy, Ms. Garay weaves reading lessons and testing strategies throughout her curriculum.

Ms. Garay says, "It's been beautiful to see the real connections that Meka is making with content and the fluidity with her reading. I am extremely fortunate to be teaching her for a third year in a row. Witnessing her confidence continually improving is truly remarkable."

FSDB's teachers work closely with literacy specialists, who help with teaching, lesson planning, interpreting literacy tests, and transcribing curriculum into braille. Our literacy specialists and librarians also host book clubs, book drives, and summer camps to encourage a love of reading in students. Meka attended the summer camp before 3rd grade.

Today, Meka is in 4th grade. And her hard work has paid off. On her recent Florida Standards Assessments, she earned 4s in English Language Arts – competitive scores with non-visually impaired students in the district and state.

Meka's family couldn't be prouder. Her grandmother shares, "FSDB has helped her tremendously, and my heart is filled with joy and warmth. As a family, we can see her successful journey and daily progress. We are very proud of her and thankful for the school!"

# Building Robots and Confidence



Each school year, the students enter their robot in the VEX Robotics Competition, the largest robotics competition in the world. The students learn and practice a ‘game’ set by the event. They score points if their robots can perform specific movements and tasks.

In 2020-2021, the Robotics Club competed against 14 other deaf schools for a shot at the world championship. Although they did not win, they were happy to participate. “I joined Robotics Club for the challenge,” says student Elijah. “I enjoy working with my hands and learning more about robots.”

**T**he FSDB Robotics Club supports Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education for middle and high school students in the Deaf Department. Every week, students meet to build and code a custom robot. Monica, the Robotics Club sponsor, says, “It’s exciting to see the students challenge themselves, problem solve, and be successful competing!”

The students learn science and math in addition to critical thinking, problem solving, and teamwork. They also gain essential skills for STEM careers. Student Geoffrey shares, “I joined the club because it’s a STEM activity that will help with my future. Plus, I love building the robots.”



## Foundation Strengthens FSDB’s Future



**T**he Foundation for the Schools for the Deaf and the Blind of Florida (Foundation) was incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 1968 to offer assistance to schools for the deaf and blind in the state of Florida with a purpose to improve the quality and effectiveness of programs.

During the decades that followed, the Foundation, which was a separate entity and not within the administration of the Board of Trustees for the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind (FSDB),

supported FSDB students. They granted funds for visionary projects including post-secondary educational scholarships; academic enhancements; employability and life skills; arts, athletics and play; social responsibility and empowerment as well as early intervention and outreach.

In 2020 the Foundation was dissolved and per the original articles of incorporation all assets were to be distributed to a “qualified nonprofit (under 501(c)3 IRS exemption), or to Federal, state or local government for a public purpose.” The Foundation granted transfer of their funds to FSDB’s endowment where the Foundation’s original purpose, to offer assistance to schools for the deaf and blind in Florida, will continue to improve the lives of the children who attend FSDB today and for generations to come. The Foundation’s final gift is the largest one-time grant FSDB has ever received.

# FSDB Reaches Out



At 10-and-a-half years old, Nico collects Bop-Its, Sing-a-ma-jigs, and chiming clocks. He loves to jump on the trampoline, practice his keyboard, and play with his little brother, Noah.

He's also proudly blind.

When Nico was six months old, he was diagnosed with neuroblastoma. The tumors damaged his optic nerves. While undergoing chemotherapy, Nico lost his vision. Mom shares, "For me, he was responding to treatment, and he was in less pain. He lost his sight, but we continued to have vision for his future. He's a healthy boy with lots of character traits – blind is just one of them."



The day after Nico lost his vision, Mom discovered FSDB.

Nico and his family live in central Florida. On the weekends, they participate in virtual events from FSDB's Outreach Department like the Virtual Interactive

Learning Series. Outreach sends students books, foods, and activities that engage their minds and senses. All of this is funded by our wonderful donors.

"I love being able to go through the bags and use the braille labels to tell my family about the project," Nico says. He also gets to experience new things with his friends.

Since the start of the series, Nico has become more independent. He does chores and knows how to make basic food items. "He enjoys reading braille and using his other senses to experience the world.



"He lost his sight, but we continued to have vision for his future .... We thank you for supporting all families like ours."



He knows that anything is possible with practice," says Mom.

Nico and his family are grateful for FSDB's Outreach Department – and for you. "Helping our kids starts with a connection, then education, and then funding. None of these

accommodations are possible without funding. As parents of one sighted and one non-sighted child, we thank you for supporting all families like ours."

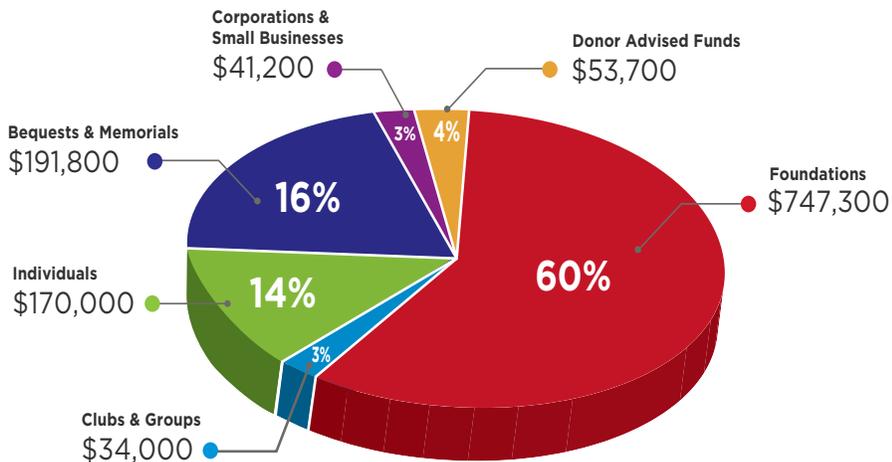


# DONATIONS

JULY 1, 2020 – JUNE 30, 2021 – APART FROM STATE OF FLORIDA FUNDING

As part of Florida’s education system, FSDB receives general revenue funds that cover the basic cost of educating students, teacher and staff salaries, utilities, food, transportation, and maintenance of facilities. Unlike other public school districts across the state, FSDB does not receive local tax dollars from property assessments or any lottery dollars. FSDB’s Endowment provides assurance that important programs will continue while maintaining separation of state funds from your donated funds. Students’ fundraising provides additional funds for their classes and clubs.

Total private funds raised: \$12,570,000



The Foundation for the Schools for the Deaf and the Blind of Florida’s final distribution of \$11,332,000 is in addition to these donations received. Read more about the Foundation inside.

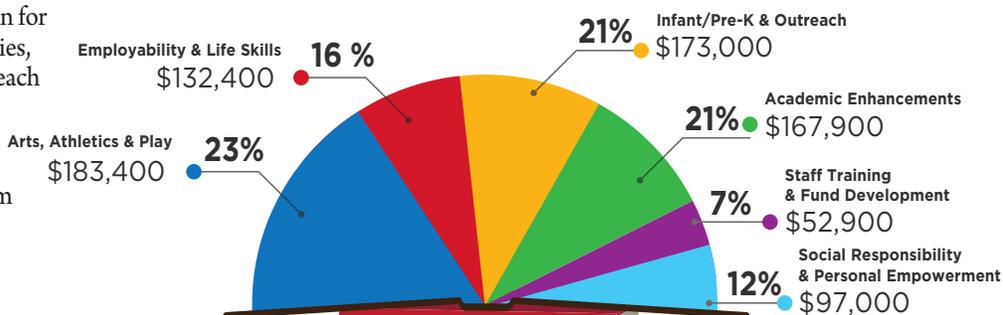
**Your private donations fill the gap and provide enhanced programs and services.**

# EXPENSES

JULY 1, 2020 – JUNE 30, 2021 – APART FROM STATE OF FLORIDA FUNDING

The pandemic significantly reduced FSDB’s ability to expend donated funds as many projects include social engagement, travel, and public interactions. To best protect students, staff, and the community, these projects could not take place as originally intended. When possible, virtual options were provided to enhance our students’ experience during these unusual times.

- Arts, Athletics & Play:** blind elementary theatre, performance bands Outta Sight, music lessons, Dance Troupe, athletics (football, volleyball, swimming, basketball, wrestling, cross country, soccer, track, flag football, cheerleading, and goalball) as well as all after-school recreational activities and playgrounds
  - Employability & Life Skills:** independent living/apartment program and workforce development/career training
  - Infant/Pre-K & Outreach:** early intervention for deaf/blind babies and toddlers and their families, parent education, long distance learning, outreach to future students, families and professionals
  - Academic Enhancements:** specialized reading programs, tutoring, library/classroom resources and assistive-adaptive technology
  - Staff Training and Fund Development:** staff training/recognition, unexpected/emergency projects and fundraising costs
  - Social Responsibility & Empowerment:** good citizenship/personal responsibility programs, community service/volunteerism and self-advocacy programs
- Total: \$806,600**



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To learn more go to [www.fsdbk12.org](http://www.fsdbk12.org)

Contact (904) 827-2291

FSDB is registered as a 501 (c) 3 charitable organization with the IRS. Federal EIN # is 59-3206619