

Purpose The historic April 8, 2024, eclipse could be observed by the entire world, but only 15 visually impaired Arkansas students had the opportunity to experience it in the path of totality with the support of NASA scientists. This eclipse occurred on a school day, allowing for schools throughout the country to use it as a learning opportunity. This story allowed the district to showcase its support of its special education students while creating a greater understanding of the district's blind community. There were many stories to tell about the eclipse, but Springdale Schools was confident it had the capacity to share a newsworthy story most were unable to tell.

Target Audience The target audience for this documentary was the entire world with an emphasis on Springdale in Northwest Arkansas and Springdale Public School's special education staff and students. Northwest Arkansas is one of the fastest growing metropolis areas in the United States. Springdale Schools is the largest school district in Arkansas with more than 3,100 staff members and an enrollment of about 23,000 Pre-K to high school students. Springdale has a population of about 101,000 people, while Northwest Arkansas is home to more than 590,000 residents.

Supporting Effective Communication Springdale sets the standard for many areas of education, and this story allowed the district to shine a light on its special education initiatives. In addition to making district special education students the focal point of the story, the article likewise discussed the historic nature of the event, its value to NASA research and created a greater understanding of the visually impaired community. This story was researched and produced the same day of the eclipse with the understanding that timeliness would truly make it relevant to the day's news cycle. Its quick turnaround is a testament to the professionalism and capabilities of the district's communications staff.

Outcomes In addition to allowing district special education staff and students to feel seen, the article reached audiences worldwide in 19 different countries. The Smore electronic newsletter received 11,378 views, while the Facebook post sharing the story had a reach of 7,556, 8,283 impressions, 122 interactions and nine link clicks. The addition of a blind subject matter expert from NASA also provided an opportunity for students and readers to receive the information from someone they knew truly understood what the visually impaired were experienced during the eclipse.