TO: THE SCHOOL BOARD
FROM: DAVID SHERRY
SUBJECT: MONTHLY REPORT – NOVEMBER 2016

Academic Department

The leaves are “peak” color; the temperatures are getting a little cooler and our K-12 students are now well into the new school year. There have been many changes this fall that we are all getting accustomed to but our students’ learning continues and is now in full stride.

Much professional development has already taken place with the most recent workshop from audiologist Karen Anderson on October 7. She presented a wealth of information about access issues and strategies to address them. Her website, successforstudentswithhearingloss.com contains a wide range of information that is very relevant and helpful for everyone working with our students. Recently two of our academic staff members, Elena Fernsler and Denise Adams, attended the Clarke Conference in Massachusetts which focused on supporting students within mainstream settings. This is particularly relevant now that our programs are all located within public school settings. A few of our staff members attended an ASL immersion weekend to improve their ASL skills. In addition, with the support of Regan Thibodeau, our ASL instructors are also meeting regularly to review ASL assessment and instructional practices to improve their skills in this area.

Professional development and learning this year will largely be focused on improving instructional practice. We will pay particular attention to literacy in both ASL and English. The access needs of all of our students will continue to be emphasized with our Portland Public School partners as we become more integrated within public school environments. While our Academic staff continue their own learning throughout the year, we are also working with Portland schools to provide more in-service opportunities. Our Portland school teachers and administrators from our MECDHH/GBSD staff will be able to participate in these opportunities. In this fashion, our collaboration will benefit both Portland and MECDHH/GBSD educators with the intent of enhancing the access and learning of all Deaf and Hard of Hearing students in our charge and throughout the region.

The K-5 program at East End is now into the 8th week and doing better than any of us anticipated: schedules are now fairly firm within the regular education classrooms, meetings are established for professional learning groups, students are forming new
friendships, and our staff are likewise getting to know their new colleagues. The “Back to School” night on September 22nd went very well with many parents and families in attendance being led by their children around the building to learn about all that is going on at the “big school on the hill.” Special thanks to Principal Gendron, Assistant Principal Marley and everyone at the East End School for making our K-5 classroom students and staff feel so welcome.

Although our 6-8 program at Lyman Moore Middle School is not as large as in previous years, they are still as busy as in past years. Christy Callahan has taken on the task of providing ASL instruction to the hearing students in addition to her teaching role with our students there. Brian Dietzel and Margaret Ryan are providing the necessary supports for our students both in and out of the regular education settings as appropriate. The new building principal, Ben Donaldson, has been very supportive and responsive to our program needs.

The program at Portland High School also experienced a change of building leadership with Sheila Jepson now serving as Principal. Sheila is a graduate of the Gallaudet graduate school and has many years of administrative and teaching experience. Along with the continued wonderful support from assistant principals Kathy Marquis-Girard and Kim Wike, our staff and students are really in very good administrative hands.

Particular thanks go to all of our PHS staff for their work in developing schedules for our students at PHS. Aligning student needs and available resources with the appropriate course selections is a very challenging task. The team began planning back in March when they began looking at student learning and assessment data and matching these as closely as possible with other factors (such as communication needs, access issues and overall language development) to make student learning experiences as effective as possible. Thank you to Denise Adams and Shana Kelley-Cohen for their work on wrestling with the Portland High School schedule.

Finally, a huge thank you goes to K-5 Teacher of the Deaf Colleen Doiron who will be moving westward, to Kansas City, at the end of October. Colleen has been an outstanding teacher for our elementary students. Since her first day in the classroom, she has provided them with clear, meaningful and relevant learning experiences. Colleen’s dedication to her craft and to the children in her care have been exemplary and a model for teaching excellence. She has also provided superb support and guidance for classroom staff with the transition of our K-5 program. It is without question that Colleen will continue to make a difference for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children for many years to come.

The 2016-2017 school year is off to a very busy start. Even though changes require some hard work, like the leaves on the trees right now, it can be inspiring as well.

**Business Operations**

**Accounting Update**

Jim McCallum, CPA, our auditor from Blake Hurley McCallum & Conley, LLC, has been here for the past four weeks to audit our financial activities. We are pleased to
report that a 2016 Financial Audit has been completed and was sent to the State of Maine on October 7th. Everything was in good order and Jim presented the results at the board meeting on October 6th. Thank you to Kathy, Therese and Doreen for all your hard work in gathering documents, answering questions, and helping us research the information needed during the audit process.

Maintenance Updates
- Issues with the furnace are being addressed
- Sand has been ordered for the upcoming season
- New signage is being constructed
- The mansion electrical system is being upgraded
- Set ups continue coming in for various functions
- Preparations are ongoing to upgrade furnace boilers
- Areas around campus are being spruced up (painting, pressure washing etc.)
- Foliage along the causeway is being trimmed back

Public School Outreach
Public School Outreach and Community Services
PSO is now up to 187 requests and counting! New requests are pouring in this year. This demonstrates that our new initiatives have been met with success. Our first ASL Immersion activity for parents was recently held. We had four families, 12 people in all, turn out. They had a great time learning how to communicate about “Fall Fun”. The theme of our next program, on November 9th from 5:00-6:30, will be “Thanksgiving with Family and Friends”.

It is with great sadness that we announce that Tobin Hagelin will be leaving MECDDH on October 28th. She has accepted a position teaching ESL (English as a Second Language) students at Scarborough Middle School. We wish her the very best and hope she will come back and see us often. We will all miss her!

Regional Programs
Oxford Regional has already gotten their KLM (Kids Like Me) program students together. To our great surprise, the group has grown enough to have two smaller groups: one for the K-5 students and a separate group of middle schoolers, who are really ready to have some interesting and open discussions. We are looking forward to setting up this concept in our two other regions this year.

Our Hancock-Washington county itinerant teacher has already made her first overnight trip to Washington County. Because of the growing numbers, it made this trip a very busy two days which involved checking in on almost 15 students. I’m sure there was strong motivation to get there before the snow hit!

We have begun our third regional program in the mid-coast area. There are 41 students currently being served in that region ranging from kindergarten to 12th grade. Donna Casavant will be working hard this year to embed herself into the many schools systems in which she is serving students.
“Kids Like Me” and Family Fun Days  
Patty Cook-Stewart has been very busy setting up many small K-6 programs. We have targeted eight for the year. As I mentioned above, the Oxford group has grown since it began last year. We will be using our Deaf Mentor, Liz Seal, and our new SLP (Speech Language Pathologist), Amy Chang, to enrich the programs. A new program began in Buxton last week. It was great to have the students sharing and enjoying making -new friends. Our first KLM 6-12 overnight will be October 28th -29th. As we have done for the last couple of years, our older students will run a Family Fun Day for the younger children on Saturday from 12:00-2:00.

On October 22nd we had a fun-filled Family Fun Day in Aroostook. Due to some well-needed rain, our plans for a trip to the farm were quickly changed to an indoor fun day at the University of Maine at Presque Isle. It was a great day! We had happy children running around with big smiles on their faces doing arts and crafts, playing with balls, getting their face painted, taking a swim in the pool, and enjoying some delicious pizza donated by some generous local merchants and civic organizations. One parent attended without her adolescent daughter (who was doing volunteer work that day). What a great message that sends about how important this activity is for parents. Polly Earl and Kim Matthews are a great team up in “the county”. We also want to thank Cathy Glover for driving up for the day to support the families with whom she works.

Webinars  
Our first webinar, “The Evaluation of Speech and Language Skills for Students Who Are Deaf and Hard of Hearing: An Overview”, by Amy Chang, was a huge success. We had 103 people register and 60 show up.

Our next webinar is scheduled for November 15 and is entitled “Why Parent Guides are Important for Parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children: An Intro of the Maine Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side Program”.

During this webinar: Tracy Henderson, Mitchell Daigle, Darleen Hutchins and Darlene Freeman, parents of children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, will give an overview of the GBYS (Guide by Your Side) program. They will share experiences of how having the support of a parent guide who is raising a child who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing can be just what another parent needs to become a strong advocate for their own child who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

About the Presenters: Tracy Henderson, Mitchell Daigle, Darleen Hutchins and Darlene Freeman all have full-time jobs outside of the Maine Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side Program. Their expertise for this program and this webinar comes from their most important job of raising their children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Who Should Attend: The target audience for this webinar includes: parents, caregivers, guardians of children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, audiologists, school staff, CDS, early intervention providers, speech pathologists, Public School Outreach consultants, and anyone working with families who have children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing who may want to refer those families for the support of a parent guide. Please join us!
Early Childhood Programs

Early Childhood and Family Services
Fall has been an extremely busy time for our department. The ECFS team has been continuing to support the families of infants and toddlers while adding in several preschool in-services and direct service supports to preschoolers and their providers. We are currently serving over 180 children throughout the state.

The ECFS team hosted the Maine Hands & Voices conference and it was a huge success! We had over 150 participants from all over Maine and NH. Keynote presenters included: Tawny Holmes from NAD, Cheryl Deconde-Johnson from the National Hands & Voices Board and Shawn Kalback, from Maine General Hospital. We also were fortunate to have several parent/professional-presented sessions during afternoon breakouts. It was wonderful to see so many families and professionals attending in support of deaf and hard of hearing children in Maine.

Over the past two weeks we have been writing a federal grant geared toward increasing our capability for parent-to-parent support and Deaf guide support for families throughout Maine. The grant award is $250,000! In the past, this grant has usually been written by DHHS (Department of Health and Human Services) in Maine. When the RFP was advertised we decided that MECDHH was a logical applicant. We hoped to keep current family support programs running and add in more where needed. As has been the case with previous DHHS grants, this grant will also assist the MNHP (Maine Newborn Hearing Program) in ensuring children all have a hearing screening by 1 month of age, diagnosed by 3 months of age, and enrolled in appropriate early intervention by 6 months of age. We are hopeful that we will be awarded this grant.

Our staff has recently been involved in trainings to improve their skills in a variety of areas. This summer, Cathy Glover presented our ECFS model, along with Nicole Dobson, at the National Cued Speech conference and was able to attend sessions on Cued Speech. Recently, she also attended the ASL Immersion weekend to improve her skills in ASL. Last week, several staff from the early childhood department attended the Clarke Mainstream Conference to improve their skills in Listening and Spoken Language. Along with representatives from other departments, groups of ECFS and Preschool staff will be attending a professional development opportunity related to the brain and listening as it pertains to children with hearing loss. We look forward to implementing this learning into the work we do for the children with hearing loss of Maine.

Preschool is well under way for the school year. We have nearly 30 children enrolled with more scheduled to start in the upcoming months. In September, our curriculum focused on families. It is a familiar place to start for the children as they enjoy creating family trees and seeing their families’ pictures up in the classrooms.

This time of year we are focused on IEP meetings and data collection. We are gathering assessment data on all the children as the year starts and will complete the same assessments again in the spring to track progress and kindergarten readiness. For
assessments, we will be using a combination of the Maine Early Learning and Development Standards, ebackpack, and eventually Teaching Strategies Gold.

The preschool team welcomed Samantha Bragg aboard as our newest Ed Tech. She has jumped right in and is a wonderful additional to our team. She and Clayton Marr, another Preschool Ed Tech, will be helping us keep our blog updated. Clayton is also going to be starting a theater group with some of the children. We are looking forward to their first production!

**Administrative Updates**

The school year is well underway with many initiatives to keep us busy! Among these are: the updating of our Organizational Mission and Vision, taking stock of the strategic plan that was developed and slated to be complete in 2018, creating an updated strategic plan to bring us through 2023, getting a Development Committee (fundraising) up and running, developing K-12 ASL Curriculum, instruction and assessment, and continuing to support the many strong and valuable programs that have been in place.

We continue to work with George Burns, Esquire, to complete the paperwork and associated process for creating a Development/Fundraising Committee that is recognized as a non-profit, 501c3 entity. This is a very exciting venture for us as an organization and one that will likely be extremely helpful as we expand and deepen our services.

We are excited to announce that the annual Northeast Jr. NAD (National Association of the Deaf) convention will be held on Mackworth Island on April 7, 8 and 9, 2017. This will be an extremely valuable and positive experience for our middle school and high school students!

The Deaf Senior Citizens of Southern Maine are now meeting on Mackworth Island the second and fourth Tuesday of every month. This is a wonderful opportunity for both our staff and students. Preschool and Academic staff are working with Deaf senior citizens to plan interactions and learning opportunities.

I continue to see incredible dedication on the part of our staff. On a daily basis they bring creativity, dedication, skill, knowledge, understanding and positivity to their work with children and families.

We are truly fortunate to be blessed with a strong, dedicated and skilled staff!