
**MAINE EDUCATIONAL CENTER FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING
THE GOVERNOR BAXTER SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF**

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MONTHLY REPORT TO THE SCHOOL BOARD

TO: THE SCHOOL BOARD
FROM: DAVID SHERRY
SUBJECT: MONTHLY REPORT – JUNE, 2015

Academic Department

Happy Spring, at last! The ice and snow are completely gone, birds are chirping again, woodchucks are out and about and once again the lawns are green. However, it may be a while before we have a string of warm days that suggest we may be closer to summer. Plans are underway for the many end-of-school year activities and events that are about to occur.

This time of year schools and students are preparing to recognize the accomplishments of soon to be graduates. This year GBSD will be celebrating the graduation of four of our students, Brandon Kennagh, Courtney Camire, Sabrina Depeter and Natasha Ellis. As with all changes, we look forward to wishing our students all the best and hope that they are as prepared as possible to meet the next phase of their journeys in their lives. Graduation, marked with both anticipation and apprehension, is a time of great change and is one of the many milestones in life not forgotten.

Recently, all four of our graduating seniors attended the Portland Arts and Technology High School graduation in Portland which was attended by teachers, parents, friends and families from all around southern Maine's school districts. Huge congratulations go out to Natasha Ellis and Sabrina Depeter for their accomplishments in the Fashion Marketing program at PATHS, Brandon Kennagh for his achievements in the Auto Body program and Courtney Camire for her accomplishments with New Media. Graduation from PATHS represents a significant accomplishment in "hands-on" disciplines and prepares graduates to begin entry level positions in their chosen fields. It should also be noted that two of our other PATHS underclassmen received awards as well. Colin MacDonnell and Christian Lemelin both achieved Garden Glove awards for their work in the horticulture program at PATHS for their contributions towards making the world even greener!

A notable accomplishment this year at PATHS was the induction of Sabrina into the National Technical Honor Society! This is an honor reserved for only a handful of PATHS graduates and through her hard work and perseverance, Sabrina has duly earned this distinction. Congratulations Sabrina!

Our seniors will be very busy in the coming weeks preparing for Portland High School graduation with 7 total marching practices that began May 26. Past ceremonies would suggest that the practice is well worth the effort with so many languages represented and a large student body. The GBSD Sports Banquet took place on the 21st from 4-6pm and the Senior Banquet was held May 28. As with years past, the Portland High School graduation will be held at the Merrill Auditorium. Graduation will take place on June 4th.

The Academic Department is pleased to announce that we have just completed all of the mandated state assessments that have become a staple of spring in schools across the nation. We were able to participate in piloting some of the Alternate Assessment items last fall to provide feedback to the Maine Dept. of Education around issues facing Deaf and Hard of Hearing students who take the test. I am happy to say that the newer Smarter Balanced test does come with accommodations that include a captioned signer to help students understand the test item directions. In this way more of our students will have greater access to be able show what they know.

I would like to thank everyone for their attendance and efforts with our Art Show in April which was, by all measures, a huge success! Almost all of our K-4 parents attended the event and we had over 65 people come and observe all of the great works of art that were created by our students. This was a fantastic event that we hope to make an annual one that will continue to showcase and publicly acknowledge the creativity and efforts of our kids here at school.

Finally, many thanks to everyone on our staff who continue to demonstrate a high level of commitment to our programs and our kids. This is evident in many different ways from volunteering time at sporting events, pursuing professional development opportunities, attending warehouse sales, contacting parents, having challenging conversations with each other, being flexible with assignments, asking hard questions and helping each other out in times of need. Seeking to improve our delivery of instruction and creating opportunities for social and emotional growth for our students is what makes working at GBSD/MECDHH such a rewarding experience. Ours is a learning organization always striving to improve and through everyone's teamwork and efforts we always end up making good things happen!

From Our Library

Leona Anderson attended "Picture Books That Challenge Gender Stereotypes," a program at Portland Public Library featuring acclaimed author, Leslea Newman. Ms. Newman is the author of sixty books for adults and children, including the groundbreaking children's classic, *Heather Has Two Mommies*, first published in 1989. Contact Leona if you would like additional information and a list of books cited.

Business Operations

Custodial/Maintenance

Maintenance worked with volunteers from Key Bank to do cleanup work on the island. The elevator and the sprinkler system were inspected. Our bus driver recently

transported students for the regional overnight program. Some of our vendors i.e. W.B Mason can now cross the bridge since the upgrade work has been completed. Custodians have been busy setting up for the end of school year events.

Public School Outreach

Public School Outreach and Community Programs

PSO is up to 228 requests for services from districts all over the state of Maine and they are still coming. We have also started to collaborate with ECFS to transition the 25-28 kindergarten students entering public schools next year.

Kids Like ME/Family Days Update

May 7th was the final session of the Bangor “Kids Like Me” program. The students enjoyed sharing their activities with parents and teachers. It is exciting to watch our students continue to develop their skills and confidence in their ability to advocate for themselves. We are very proud of them!

Aroostook Fun Day is scheduled for May 30th at the Aroostook State Park. Twenty five people have already signed up to join in the fun.

On May 15 & 16 seventeen students who are Deaf and hard of hearing in grades 6-12 from all over Maine came together on Mackworth Island for their final Kids Like ME regional overnight for the 2014-15 school year. It began with a beautiful ferry ride to Peaks Island and bike touring around the island. When they returned to Mackworth Island, they enjoyed more outdoor fun and games that included a BBQ and evening downtime with a good movie.

Webinar Update

Our final webinar entitled “A Continuum of Communication: Manually Coded English Systems”, was held on May 26th.

During this webinar, we discussed the history and function of Manually Coded English systems and a variety of different signing systems were reviewed. We covered the differences between American Sign Language (ASL), and other signing systems, and how they can be used in conjunction with spoken English to provide a simultaneous visual and auditory language model.

About the Presenters:

Cathy Glover M.Ed.- Co-Presenter

Cathy Glover has an undergraduate degree in Deaf education from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and a Master's degree in Deaf Education from Boston University. She has worked at schools for the deaf in several states, specializing in early childhood education. She has worked for MECDDH for over 10 years as an Early Intervention Specialist /Teacher of the Deaf for deaf and hard of hearing children birth through age 5 and their families.

Amy Spencer MS CCC/SLP- Co-presenter

Amy Spencer is a speech language pathologist and early intervention specialist. She has her Masters degree from the University of New Hampshire and completed the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Infants, Toddlers, and Families: Collaboration and Leadership Certificate Program through Gallaudet University. Amy has worked in early intervention for the past 10 years and currently works at MECDHH as an Early Intervention Specialist/ SLP for deaf and hard of hearing children birth- age 5 and their families.

Who Attended?

The target audience for this webinar included: parents, families, caregivers, Child Development Services (CDS) staff, early interventionists, audiologist, pediatricians, speech-language pathologists, Deaf mentors, teachers and anyone else working with families or caregivers of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing.

Early Childhood Programs

Early Childhood and Family Services

The ECFS team continues to work collaboratively with CDS to support children and families. Karen Hopkins is in the process of renewing our Memorandum of Understanding with CDS. This "MOU" integrates our work and offers families one coordinated system of early intervention services. The new "MOU" will be signed soon!

Early Intervention provides ongoing assessments to children and families. The CDS team has all been trained on the statewide developmental assessment (The Battelle Developmental Inventory) as well as the Routines Based Interview used with families early in their process. Allison Sedely returned to Maine on May 1st to train the team, and other early intervention providers who work with young children who are deaf and hard of hearing, on the NECAP assessment. This assessment is used as part of a national research study being done in Colorado by Christine Yoshinaga-Itano. We are thrilled to be part of this nation-wide project that provides on-going information to families about their children.

Karen Hopkins has been asked to present at an Early Intervention conference in Wisconsin this fall on supporting the social emotional development of children who are deaf and hard of hearing by assisting their families. This presentation will be done with Dr. Amy Szarkowski of Boston Children's Hospital. We are thrilled that other states are interested in learning about our model of working with families.

The PIT program is in the middle of another 8 week session! It's enlightening to see these little ones arrive every week with their families. PIT provides an avenue of parent to parent support, as well as support from: a teacher of the deaf, deaf mentor, speech language pathologist, educational audiologist and other professionals.

Preschool

The preschool program continues to grow! One new student started before break and two started after break. The children are enjoying the warmer weather and being outside more. It was a long winter for sure! Outside play is an integral part of early

childhood programs that offers children time to develop motor skills, social/emotional skills as well as skills in communication and language. We are fortunate to be housed on Mackworth Island which offers trails, beaches and the woods for exploration and play.

The preschool program is happy to welcome Rachel Larkin, an Occupational Therapy student from USM. Rachel is working with our OT staff in both the preschool program and the middle school program. The children have taken to her quickly and she is jumping right in supporting our program!

This year we have several students transitioning to Kindergarten. These transitions involve assessments, report-writing, parent meetings and IEP meetings. Our staff have developed a comprehensive transition process to ensure that the students and families make a smooth transition to Kindergarten.

Administrative Updates

On Saturday, May 16, a very successful and informative Deaf Community Forum was held. The purpose of the forum was to provide the Deaf Community with information regarding MECDHH/GBSD programs and services and what our future plans are. It was also a time to hear and consider the perspectives and opinions of Deaf Community members. The event was very well attended. It was the best attendance at a Deaf Community Meeting here on island over the past several years. The dialog was rich and informative. Rumors about GBSD closing and/or becoming an Auditory/Oral school were addressed and identified as untrue. This was a relief to many members of the Deaf Community who thought these rumors were true. Ideas about how to involve the Deaf Community more frequently were shared. Constructive feedback was provided in regards to our website, our involvement with the Deaf Community and our promotion of ASL. In general, the event was both positive and helpful.

John Jones and I met with Portland Schools Superintendent Emmanuel on Wednesday May 20 to discuss the integration of our K-5 programs into Portland Schools. Our students have been quite isolated this past year with little to no interaction with age peers other than their six classmates. Our hope is to find a workable and appropriate space for our program and the support staff related to it. We will keep you posted as we progress in our discussions.

On Thursday, May 28, I have a meeting with Commissioner Desjardins and representatives of the Bureau of General Services and the Department of Parks and Lands. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss our physical plant (buildings) and the care, upkeep and oversight of those buildings. As you know, Friends School will be moving out as of June 30. We continue to seek another agency or organization to rent the space.

Planning for the two Regional Itinerant Programs (Oxford County and Hancock County) continues to move forward. We will soon be posting an "Anticipated Opening"

advertisement for the two teachers needed (one for each county). Programs are slated to be up and running for the opening of School in September.

As you know, our last day of school for students will be Friday, June 19. School year staff, as long as they have finished their 8 Deaf Culture hours, will be done on Wednesday, June 24th. For those who have not completed their 8 hours of Deaf Culture learning time and submitted their approval form, the last day will be Thursday, June 25th.

This is a very busy time of year for all of us. Please remember how important it is to assume positive intentions. Everyone is working hard and doing multiple tasks. We all need to keep this in mind and give each other a bit more leeway.

Thanks for all you are doing for our students and their families and to end the school year on a positive note!

