



**Executive Director's Report  
September 2, 2021**

Karen Hopkins  
*Executive Director*

The excitement of the 2021-22 school year is here! I cannot believe how quickly summer has gone! I extend a warm welcome to all within our MECDHH/GBSD Family. MECDHH/GBSD exists to create a community that supports learning, fosters resiliency, and cares deeply for every child. As a community, we benefit from an invested Board, passionate, talented staff, community engagement, committed families, and outstanding students!

We share incredible pride for having navigated last year's challenges together. While we know we are not out of the woods yet, the challenges we have overcome together demonstrate our resiliency and commitment to each other and the students and families we work with. I thank all of you for your positive engagement throughout this time.

Our health and safety protocols will support in-person instruction, while still benefiting from virtual connections as we find ways to bring child-centered, language-rich, transformational learning to life. We are confident that we will creatively navigate these times as we did during our last school year together. Our success will require agility, flexibility, and commitment to each other. All of which the MECDHH/GBSD community has demonstrated in the past!

We welcomed our entire staff back to Mackworth Island for the first time in nearly two years for a day of Professional Development and planning for a great school year together. Careful planning went into making this event a safe and collaborative day. Teams were assigned to various rooms throughout the island to allow for social distancing and rich team discussions. We were connected virtually to each other while still having teams physically together. We rolled out the new Strategic Plan with Shane Feldman, which generated lots of excitement and deep discussion. We also had a presentation on creating a culture of collaboration which offered many helpful tips for us all. New committees were explained and several staff have come to me with interest in joining to support change and growth in our organization. The energy, passion and commitment witnessed these past few days have been inspirational. Many staff commented on the joy of simply being together.

Welcome again to the 2021-22 school year. We are at our best when we continue to stand together. Our families and students will follow our lead and together we will have a successful school year!

Warmly,  
Karen Hopkins

**Operations and Human Resource**

Cathy Murphy, *Director*

**Business and Human Resources**

It has been a busy summer in the Accounting Office as usual but we have successfully transitioned to the new accounting and payroll year and the public audit is essentially behind us.

Elena Ivanovsky, *Accountant*, has been diligently working on contracts for all of our interpreters and other service providers for the new school year. New in FY22 is a requirement for all of our contracted providers to show proof of Workers Comp insurance or receive a waiver from the Workers Comp Board exempting them from this type of insurance. We appreciate the extra efforts of all of our contracted providers in meeting this new requirement. Our interpreter coordinators were also extremely helpful in learning how to navigate the waiver process.



# THE MAINE EDUCATIONAL CENTER FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

GOVERNOR BAXTER SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

One Mackworth Island, Falmouth, ME 04105

Lori Levesque, *Payroll and Human Resource Specialist*, will soon begin the process of reporting all of our staff data into the State of Maine's "NEO" system. The system tracks our number of FTE's, their positions, education and years of experience. I am also currently in the process of uploading our financial data (actuals for FY 2021 and budget for FY 2022) to Maine's NEO system.

The Department of Health and Human Services is requiring all schools to report rates of vaccination among their staff. The reporting will be done monthly and DHHS will have a link to the information on their website. We are requiring staff to submit copies of their vaccination cards so we can compile and report accurate data. Based on anecdotal information, I am estimating our vaccination rate for staff will be above 90%. Rates will be published monthly and I will provide the link to that information once it is available.

## **Facilities projects/improvement**

We are so pleased to announce that we have hired a maintenance mechanic, Dio Wand. Dio recently moved here from Massachusetts and comes to us with a CDL license, experience with light carpentry, plumbing, electrical and auto mechanic experience and he has previously worked in a school setting. The crew is very relieved to be back at full strength.

The envelope assessment of Carter Hall is complete and the findings are encouraging. While there is work which needs to be done on the roof, re-pointing of bricks, and window replacement, there is no real water or structural damage to address. The findings of the envelope assessment and the recent air quality assessment are confirmation that the building is well worth saving. Next steps are to work with our representative from the Bureau of General Services and obtain quotes for the work recommended in the assessment. I am encouraged that BGS does have some financial resources to help with these projects due to the President's recovery package and the Governor's commitment to the Modernizing Maine's buildings by transitioning to cleaner heating and cooling systems and promoting climate-friendly building products.

We also have a Project Improvement plan submitted to BGS to have a study done on our heating system. We currently have one Central Boiler System which heats every building on the island. The system is old and inefficient. The heating pipes run through many of the old walkways which are in disrepair. If we are able to update our heating system and eliminate the pipes we can take down the old hallways and greatly improve efficiencies while heating our buildings with cleaner energies.

Representatives from Portland Public Schools recently toured Carter Hall. They are looking for three classrooms for the second grade team from Presumpscot School for two years while the school undergoes some construction. The teacher representative, facilities director, and an architect from PPS were very enthusiastic about the space. Next steps were determined and there may potentially be a presentation to our School Board at this month's board meeting.

## **Technology projects/improvements**

I want to thank Rich for all of his work for our All Staff Professional Day on island which took place on island on August 24th. In order to be in person we housed staff in 6 different locations by team and used zoom to deliver the PD and other pertinent information. We were able to mingle during breaks/lunch and enjoyed outdoor activities with the entire staff. Rich was charged with providing all of the hardware/technology to each room and also for troubleshooting. The day went off without a hitch.

Rich has been very busy in the month of August preparing laptops, emails accounts for new staff as well as updating all laptops for our returning staff.



### **Statewide Education and Family Services (SEFS)**

Kaitlyn Millen, *Director*

Statewide Education and Family Services is ready to start the 2021-22 school year! As ESY and school were not in session in August, we have one brief update for SEFS. On August 23, we had our All Staff Professional Development day, where everyone had the chance to connect in person across teams on Mackworth Island. This was a treat after connecting mostly through zoom since March of 2020. It has been wonderful to see the island come back to life. For the remainder of professional development week of August 24th-30th, each team met together. The site-based programs (EECS, LMMS, PHS, and Brewer) joined professional development at their sites and also had time to meet with one other and set up their classrooms. The preschool and Public School Outreach teams had meetings on the island. Staff members learned about our referral process and system for managing student files through Google Drive. They also had the chance to create schedules for the fall, review student IEPs, and plan for IEP data collection. The first day of school in Brewer was on Monday, August 30<sup>th</sup>. For everyone else, school began on Tuesday, August 31st. We are thrilled to see students again!

### **Early Intervention and Family Services**

Natalie Austin, *Director*

Greetings from your EIFS Team here on Mackworth Island! Can you believe this is the first time our entire team has *ever* met in person? All of the many new additions to our staff over the past pandemic year prevented our team in its entirety from gathering in person. Professional Development week to kick off the school year provided a wonderfully meaningful opportunity to make this happen. Safety precautions were of the highest priority as we gathered, utilizing outdoor spaces and countless rooms around the island to ensure safe distancing for all gatherings.

*Passion. Collaboration. Innovation. Open Mind/Open Heart. Supporting Family Choice. Communication.*

During one of the PD week activities, our team was asked to come up with words that we felt truly described our team at its' core. These are the words our EIFS team came up with and the vision we are bringing forward into this bright new school year.

Shane Feldman presented to the entire staff about the MECDDH/GBSD Strategic Plan. He asked for each of our individual teams to discuss the Strategic Priorities presented and what we see as the role our team plays in making these priorities come to fruition. Our team discussed the priority surrounding the collection of data to track student progress. Our involvement in ODDACE (Outcomes and Developmental Data Assistance Center for EHDI Programs) and our team's commitment to regular assessments of the students and families we serve will make great strides toward accomplishing this strategic priority as well as Kindergarten Readiness.

We also discussed the Strategic Priorities related to peer/family programming and maximizing the use of Mackworth Island facilities to benefit students, families, and the community. Parent Infant Training (PIT) programs provide incredible opportunities for families to gather and establish peer and family connections. Our team plans to utilize spaces around the island to provide these gathering opportunities for families, with the highest of priority given to safety and COVID precautions.

This is only my second month of having the honor of leading this incredible EIFS Team. I am blown away every single day by the commitment, talent, innovation, passion, kindness, and love that this team puts into every aspect of their work with children and families. I cannot wait to continue on this journey alongside these sensational professionals.