



THE MAINE EDUCATIONAL CENTER FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

GOVERNOR BAXTER SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

One Mackworth Island, Falmouth, ME 04105

Executive Director's Report December 8, 2022

Our hearts are sad as we process the unexpected passing of our kind-hearted board member, Corda Kinzie. Corda was a bright light on our Board always offering words of wisdom, sharing her experience, and offering to help. Leaving small tokens of inspiration, Corda inspired us all.

After a recent threat at Portland High School, and other schools in Maine, we continue to focus on our lockdown and emergency procedures. This is a primary focus of the CORE Leadership Team as we review what is working and what needs re-evaluation. Our staff at the High School did an amazing job during the recent lockdown in a very stressful situation. Thank you for your leadership and keeping our students and each other safe.

We are excited for the beginning of our MECDHH/GBSD Basketball season! We are thrilled to be bringing back this activity for our students and so thrilled that they will have the opportunity to go to other Schools for the Deaf and meet other Deaf and hard of hearing students. We will be sharing the final game schedule soon and will share on our social media channels and website. Please come support our students at our games!

The MECDHH/GBSD staff have been working incredibly hard this past month. Referrals keep coming in and as we watch numbers of children on our caseloads rise, we are thrilled to be finding these children and have them receive support from our expert staff members, we are concerned with the high caseloads in early intervention and outreach, growing number of needs in our site-based programs and the stress on our staff as they prioritize the needs of the children and families is clear. Our maintenance, business, IT and administrative assistant staff have been so incredibly supportive with last minute requests, need for support, and creative ideas! Our coordinators are offering amazing on-the-spot support to staff, filling in when needed, supporting IEP preparation, providing evaluations and directly serving children. This team is also creating many processes and procedures that will offer clarity and a sense of stability. I continue to share how blessed we are to have the staff that we have and the collaborative energy I see every day.

I would like to wish our entire community a happy and restful holiday season. I hope everyone takes the time to relax and celebrate with friends and family and enjoy this very special time of year.

Warmly

Karen Hopkins, *Executive Director*



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Human Resources/Payroll

Lori Levesque, *Director*

Exciting news! We finally hired an Accounts Payable Generalist! Woohoo! We are so happy here in the business office. HR has also been busy with a few other applicants for Ed Tech positions. It looks like we might have all of those filled very soon if all goes well!

Lori continues to work on various processes such as hiring, onboarding, evaluations, standardizing job descriptions, and certification. Timesheets seem to be working very smoothly now so I can move on from that process because we have a great one in place now! Yay!

Open enrollment for our AFLAC supplemental policies like dependent care, flexible spending accounts, and short-term disability has ended, so now I am updating employee information with AFLAC for the 2023 calendar year. I am excited to add the energy crisis stipend money to everyone's paycheck this time. So great!!

We still have the following positions open right now:

- Site-based Special Education Teacher
- Early Intervention and Family Services Consultant – North and South
- Ed Tech I, II, and III
- Subs

If you know of anyone looking for an awesome job at an amazing organization, send them my way!

Thank you for the opportunity to do this work. Lori

Operations

Dean Flanagan, *Director*

Business and Human Resources

The Accounts Payable Generalist position will be filled soon, which is exciting news. Filling this position will bring the Business Office to fully staffed and provide the recommended staffing levels to meet segregation of duties.

Thank you to Lori Levesque for taking over the primary accounts' payable duties, and Chris Reault for his assistance with accounts payable functions while we search to fill the Accounts Payable Generalist position

A fuel cost stipulation has been negotiated with Safe Care as part of the student transportation contract. The provision should save MECDDHH money and allow Safe Care to continue with daily transportation.

Facilities projects/improvement

On October 11th we held a lockdown drill for all Mackworth Island staff (no students). We were assisted by Lieutenant Frank Soule of the Falmouth Police Department and Assistant Chief Colin Shea of the Falmouth Fire Department. The drill went very well and was a successful test of our new CrisisGo software. From the drill we will work to improve our key system to make it easier to identify keys for all doors with color coding. We are also working to get properly marked sets of keys in the three Knox boxes on our buildings. Thanks to Steve Kimball and the maintenance staff for their continued work on locks and keys. We are planning another drill with staff and students in the month of December. In the interim we continue to implement and test the CrisisGo software at each of our site-based programs. Many thanks to Rich Foisy for his help with the rollout of this software.

Thank you to Steve Kimball and the maintenance staff (Andy Oliver, Caleb Drake, Michael Geary and Dio Wand) for their work to cut brush lining the causeway. This will provide a safer passage for vehicles and pedestrians visiting Mackworth Island.



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Mackworth Island Preschool

Cathy Lushman, *Coordinator*

The children have been exploring the concepts of friendship, how to be a good friend, and ways to resolve conflicts with friends. Through the read-aloud texts, children have been learning about the importance of being who they are, helping friends, enjoying special times together, and cooperating with one another. Children have been building on their problem-solving skills developed in Unit 1, learning to resolve conflicts by identifying feelings, describing problems, and looking for alternative solutions.



Elementary, North/South

Melanie Bowlus, *Coordinator*



EECS hosted family conferences November 2-4. While some conferences were held virtually to accommodate families' schedules, several were held in person at EECS. It was wonderful to see parents in person after last year's virtual meetings. We also enjoyed an all-school concert by local musicians who sang songs in various languages represented in the school.



As part of the Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) framework, EECS has implemented their Way to Shine acknowledgement program. When teachers observe students modeling the PBIS expectations of being respectful, responsible, and perseverance they pass out Way to Shine tickets. As a weekly reward, these tickets entitle students to receive extra free time on the Playscape outside. One of our 5th grade students has already received a Way to Shine ticket!



EECS is happy to report that staff received multiple sessions of SafetyCare training provided by Shana Kelley-Cohen and are now fully certified. Grades K-2: classrooms have been practicing calm bodies by using movement breaks to help students release pent up energy. In the Baxter classroom students are learning a new set of vocabulary word and how to sign, fingerspell, and write each word. Each day they are learning about the calendar by working on the month, day, and the weather. In math students are working on number identification, counting, and addition.



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Grades 3-5: 3rd grade continues to study the Wabanaki Tribe and their relationship with the Presumpscot River. 5th Grade is studying the Solar System. Students designed and built their own rockets, launched them to see how far they would go, then revised their design to try to get as much rocket thrust as possible! They also studied the history of Thanksgiving. The Baxter classroom has been discussing what “grateful” means for our year-long work on Character Traits. 3rd-5th graders earned a soccer game as a reward for their positive behaviors demonstrated in school. In ELA, 5th grade is learning about poems in English and ASL, and started their Informative Writing Units.



The Baxter classroom shared a Thanksgiving celebration together. 3rd and 5th graders researched and wrote about the history of Thanksgiving then presented it to all the students. K-2nd grade students set the “table”, made fruit kabobs, and Oreo turkey crafts. All students shared things they were thankful for.



October was a spooky time for Brewer Community School students! The Hocus

Pocus themed decorated classroom door included many fun tactile elements and won honorable mention for first prize. Staff roasted a snack of “witches’ fingers” as a nod to include the Brewer Witches mascot.

For two years “Kids Like Me” has been on hold, and now Brewer is happy to report that with the return of KLM several students from surrounding schools have been able to participate. Students watched a story about a caterpillar morphing into a butterfly told in Visual Vernacular, played handshape games, and enjoyed lunch and playtime together. Since October was Fire Safety Month, students also learned about devices Deaf individuals use to alert them to fire alarms and watched a video about a Deaf firefighter.

Middle/High School, North/South

Erin Bunce, *Coordinator*

One of the most important things that teachers can do is to occasionally step into the role of a student. Megan Garrity recently had the opportunity to do so in Rochester, New York. Ms. Garrity attended the DeafTec Math Conference on November 7-9 at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf. The DeafTec Math conference was first “hosted in 2017 with the goal of bringing together teachers from middle school to community college to collaborate on strategies and resources for teaching mathematics to deaf and hard of hearing students” (<https://www.rit.edu/ntid/deaftec-math-conference-2022>). Ms. Garrity was able to participate in a variety of workshops to learn about innovative instructional strategies in math and meet with fellow educators that work with Deaf and Hard of Hearing students from across the country. Ms. Garrity is thankful to MECDDHH for giving her the opportunity to be part of the conference!

Recently Portland High School experienced a stressful situation: an actual lockdown due to a threat. Thankfully the Portland Police found that the threat was a hoax. Lockdowns are highly stressful situations for all involved but there was one shining moment that occurred. Alicia Pieper and Morgan Gavaletz immediately sprang into action during lockdown. They quickly assumed roles to ensure the safety of the students and fellow staff members during the situation. Their actions enabled other staff members to understand and be aware that they should not go to Portland High School for related services appointments. They also were able to communicate and coordinate with parents, staff members at PATHs and those not on the PHS campus, as well as parents which helped everyone know that the students at PHS were safe. Teamwork is difficult to execute during highly stressful situations but Alicia and Morgan did a phenomenal job.



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N/S Early Intervention and Family Services (EIFS)

Amy Spencer, *Coordinator*

EIFS is grateful for all of our wonderful collaborations throughout the state. This month, through a connection with the University of Maine, Orono, we have acquired a space to use for family playgroups. We used this space for the first time this month and hope to grow attendance over time. Although the relationship is in its infancy, we consider it an amazing opportunity to impart some best practice knowledge of how to support deaf and hard of hearing children and their families. This collaboration allows us to assist in building the capacity of future professionals and communities of our deaf and hard of hearing students and their families.



Family playgroups are ongoing but due to family feedback in the south we will shift to Fridays, 10-11:30am, in January. We will also offer one Saturday event a month to ensure better access to activities for a broader group of working families. In the north, playgroups continue to occur one time a month on Saturdays. When possible, events are lined up with Maine Hands & Voices events to encourage participation.



This month many of the EIFS staff completed the Newborn Behavior Observation (NBO) training through Child Development Services. This was a 3-day training focused on fostering our ability to guide families in making meaningful observations of their infants. The Newborn Behavioral Observations (NBO) system builds rapport between providers and caregivers while collectively learning about their infants' unique communication and overall development. The focus on strengthening the parent-infant relationship matches perfectly with our early process addressing early interactions and attachment first. The NBO is designed to show that newborns possess a wide range of abilities that allow them to explore and gather information about their world.

Maintenance

Steve Kimball, *Supervisor*

The maintenance team is in short business as usual and preparing for winter. The team has been working checking and opening blocked roof and road drains, clearing areas to push and place snow. We have been working on getting the sand shed ready for new winter sand. Our one-ton plow truck is currently in being serviced, and checked over to be ready for another season of plowing. Checking outside lights for better lighting. A note that our fire alarm system is at times sounding a trouble alarm; it can be heard coming from utility room in building D, the boiler room, and the panel in building C (DRM). This has been addressed with Eastern Fire to solve the problem, the fire alarm is not affected and in good working order, so at this time Eastern Fire has worked out a way to keep the system from sounding trouble.