



# 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

April 7, 2022

Dear Board Members,

I had the honor of spending the weekend with administrators from over 100 schools for the deaf at the annual CEASD conference. It was wonderful to share ideas! Our strategic plan was highlighted which generated excitement and brought many questions! They were most impressed with the way we incorporated involvement from so many different perspectives: families, staff, Board members, alumni, and the medical community. They were amazed at the number of people involved in our process, truly making it a community plan. The Ad Hoc and Strategic Plan Board Committees will be meeting next week to get an update on the implementation and establish a monitoring process to ensure we continue our momentum.

After two years of writing and re-writing and gathering feedback from many constituents, LD 1632 has been signed into law by Governor Mills! This legislation is monumental for an organization such as ours. This legislation solidifies our footprint in Maine as the leading Deaf Education Agency. With this role we will oversee many aspects of Deaf education working collaboratively with DOE, CDS, and public schools to ensure Deaf and Hard of Hearing children and students have access to an appropriate educational experience. Training will be happening with staff and public schools to ensure everyone has a working understanding of the law.

I was incredibly proud of several of our students this month! Marlaco Bethune has been selected to attend the Youth Leadership Camp in Oregon and our Lyman Moore Middle School students presented at the Maine Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community Conference. Our students are becoming strong Deaf and Hard of Hearing leaders! I am thankful to our teachers and coordinators for the work they have done to prepare these students. We can all be so proud!

Thank you all for your continued support and dedication to MECDHH/GBSD!

Warmly,

Karen Hopkins, *Executive Director*



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## Early Intervention and Family Services

Natalie Austin, *Director*

Self-care has been a focus of our team since coming back from April break. Today I put on my colorful rain boots and splashed in some puddles in the quad on the walkway for my daily dose of self-care. It has been wonderful to see all the May flowers that are coming about from these April showers.

Many members of our team attended a self-care workshop provided by Elizabeth Seeliger. We focused on self-care as it relates to our social, physical, intellectual, creative, emotional, and spiritual selves. A big focus was in the slowing down of our day to day and taking the time to really



experience everything that is happening in and around us. The EIFS team has been working together to encourage prioritizing this, even if just for a quick moment of deep breaths, sharing a funny joke,

putting together a few pieces of a puzzle, or finding a cloud that looks like an animal. We hope to encourage this focus on self-care through the end of the school year and beyond.



The Maine Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community Conference was a fabulous gathering of parents and professionals from around the state. We all met in Augusta where the focus of the day was “Celebrating Differences”. We heard a wonderful presentation from Mallorie Evans, an educational audiologist, who talked about the implicit bias that is present in the audiological field. A wonderful author, Valli Gideons, who is also a mother of two teenagers who are deaf, shared an incredible presentation on her journey. Briana Dornan Nichols, an audiologist at Boston Children’s hospital, presented on increasing the efficiency of audiological evaluations for young and difficult to test patients. There were many amazing parent panels, and a definite highlight was the teen panel to end the day.

Caitlin O’Connell led our monthly EIFS team meeting in Augusta. These meetings are always a highlight of the month for our team. These gatherings provide the perfect mix of self-care, idea sharing, support, learning, laughing, and of course, delicious treats. After our regular meeting, we stayed to discuss our favorite and most impactful EHDI sessions. Since the EHDI conference was virtual, we wanted to carve out a time to gather and discuss our take-aways. We are excited to have our May monthly team meeting in Bangor at our new office.





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Two egg hunts were hosted by our EIFS team in collaboration with Maine Hands and Voices. Families in the north gathered in Brewer and our southern families hunted for eggs on island. Both events were very well attended and filled with games, arts & crafts activities, and those priceless family connections.

The end of the school year is quickly approaching. Time sure flies when you're busy... and of course having fun! We continue to strive for that ever elusive balance of fitting both in to our day to day. Looking forward to the sunshine of summer and getting outside even more with the families we serve to help support them in finding the joy in their day to day.

## Human Resources

Lori Levesque, *Director*

The main focus of HR/Payroll right now is creating, sending, and gathering teacher contracts for the 2022-2023 school year. Along with current contracts, there are positions to post, the management of applicants, and the onboarding of newly hired staff. A Google spreadsheet was created to help supervisors and their administrative assistants manage information and the interview process.

Working with supervisors, all job descriptions are being updated so those on the website are current. We are contractually obligated to provide a current job description with each staff member's evaluation and the majority of our staff have annual evaluations coming up in July and August. It makes sense for supervisors to do evaluations before staff leave in June though, so the goal is to make sure the evaluation forms, with attached job descriptions, go out to staff very soon.

Other tasks that are coming up and require some prep work are open enrollment for insurance, fiscal year rollover, and the annual audit. Such a busy time for HR.

Thank you for the opportunity to do this work.

## Operations

Just before Cathy Murphy left, the new maintenance truck arrived! It's purported to have a much more efficient plow and it's Moxie orange, the favorite drink for some of the team.

Cathy in a final photo with her crew.





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## Mackworth Island Preschool

Cathy Lushman, *Coordinator*



At the preschool we've been enjoying learning our colors by wearing the color of the day to school. The weather has been so nice, we spend a lot of our time outside with outdoor centers, picnic lunches, and Island walks!



## East End Community School (Elementary)

Melanie Bowlus, *Lead Teacher*



Every week students at EECS have been watching teachers and ed techs give a dramatic reading in ASL on the book "Charlotte's Web". Just before spring break, we finished the book and now it's the student's turns! They have each been assigned characters and are practicing for this exciting end-of-year dramatic presentation.



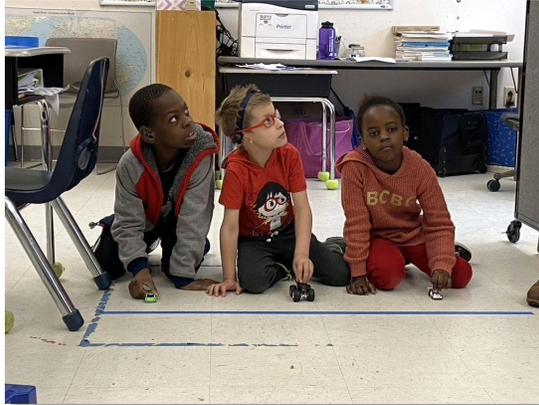


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As students demonstrate positive character traits in the classroom, they earn marbles to fill up the marble jar. Previously they earned an ice cream party and whiffle ball game. This month they earned enough marbles to watch the movie "Charlotte's Web" - just as we finished reading the book!



Teachers and ed techs benefited from three weeks of training on Grammar Shapes - a visual system that assists students with incorporating the rules of English grammar. We have already begun implementing the tools and techniques we learned in this training into the daily literacy practice and review in the classroom.



ASL Specialist Emily Blachly finished reading students the book "James and the Giant Peach" by Roald Dahl. Students were captivated by Emily's weekly storytelling, and excitedly watched the movie at the book's conclusion. Everyone is looking forward to Emily's next literature selection!

Due to increased growth and progress, two of our fourth graders have been mainstreamed for the majority of their day since the beginning of March. We are pleased for their success, that this transition has gone so smoothly, and that they are rising to meet the challenges of their general education class.

Just before spring break, all fourth and fifth graders participated in a variety of teachings on cyber-awareness, consent, and puberty. These teachings launched several positive questions and discussion among students and teachers. Social worker Shana Kelly-Cohen has been following up with students as needed to ensure they have full access to this EECS curriculum.

Spark's Ark, an animal rehabilitation program out of New Gloucester, brought a variety of recovering animals to EECS as part of an outreach education program for second and fourth graders. Students were educated as well as entertained as they participated in this program on Maine wildlife.



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## Lyman Moore Middle School

Megan Garrity, *Lead Teacher*



You guessed it! It was a busy month for our students and team! One of the greatest highlights was student participation in the Maine Hands & Voices annual Conference. Five of our D/HH



students took part in a panel about “Celebrating Differences” at the Augusta Civic Center and they closed out the conference with laughter, wisdom and honesty. Thank you to the students and families that came to support and have their children participate. It was a moment that I and many others will remember forever.

That is not all! Spring Sports have begun and we have students involved with Outdoor Track and Baseball. We are grateful to be able to prioritize these student interests and provide them after-school opportunities to socialize and grow. In other news, students are halfway through their third trimester and the end of the school year is quickly approaching. I am *not* ready for our 8th graders

to “move up and out!” These students have endured a lot with juggling school, being a tween/teen and facing a pandemic. I am proud of who they are becoming and continue to grow to be.

The Friday before April Break, students participated in “Short Courses” at LMMS where they were able to sign up for courses and for all of Friday they worked with one assigned activity. For Our students they participated in “Baking,” “Life Hacks,” “Squash” and “Bike Repair.” It was a big hit with many of them!





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## Portland High School

Kevin Bohlin, *Lead Teacher*

April was a whirlwind month. The first two weeks students were just looking forward to Spring Break which was well deserved for everybody. Everybody came back from the break refreshed and ready to work again.

One of the Portland High School students was selected to join Youth Leadership Camp which this year will take place in Oregon. He is grateful to the Percival P. Baxter Foundation, the Maine Association of the Deaf, Maine Vocational Rehabilitation and the community's contributions for making this happen. For information on the camp, visit their website at <https://youth.nad.org/ylc/>

Three students were recently recognized for their involvement with the PHS athletic programs in basketball and wrestling. We are already excited for next season!

One of our students has been working on organizing the two school clothes closets. They have gained skills in organizing, sorting, folding, taking photos, creating a slide show (PR), and most recently, boxing up items for Maine Needs (<https://www.maineneeds.org/>). After the final product of donating to Maine Needs the student has said, "Let's do more!"

On May 6<sup>th</sup> several PHS students will be participating in the Special Olympics Track and Field event. We are excited to get back to local events in person and will share pictures of this at the last Board Meeting of the year.

## Brewer Community School Site-based Program

Linda Koehler, *Lead Teacher*



Our younger two students had a chance to look at the demonstration kit of the Cochlear Implants they both have. They got to touch the tiny wire that's inside their cochlear implants. They've also work together on the Bilingual Grammar Curriculum and other literacy activities.



Our older student helped our first grader with money concepts.

Our speech pathologist graduate student, Celine, will be finishing up next week and we wish her good luck!





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## Public School Outreach, North

Donna Casavant, *North Coordinator*



← As you read this board update from the north, the Brewer office has officially become the Bangor office. Thanks to all of the north staff who worked together to clear shelves, pack boxes, and get ready for the move across the river! Look at all we were able to clear! We couldn't even reach the door! It's all getting carried away over April vacation! Thanks to the maintenance team and Rich who will help us settle in.

Happy one month birthday, Bohdi Dresner! We certainly miss Jennifer at the office but are so happy she is she is doing well at home.



Welcome to Alyssa Guldager who is now officially a member of North Part B team! Welcome to Angel King who will be on board next academic year in the role of Aroostook county TOD.

Leia and Donna went on an adventure to Presque Isle. It was great to spend time together on the road and connect with Aroostook students.

Our transition teams are forming! Kindergarten transitions are in full swing. Teams are already forming to facilitate a smooth transition from Pre-K to Kindergarten. Thanks to Cathy, Brittany, Heather, Shannon, Leia, and Alyssa for making these transitions go smoothly!

Many members of the north team attended the Hands and Voices conference on April 9th. We invited Angel along and she had her first introduction to the MECDHH team spirit.