



## **Executive Director's Report**

**March 3, 2022**

Dear Board Members,

As I write this message our staff are on their well-deserved break. February vacation always comes at the perfect time when staff and students have been working incredibly hard, the weather is cold and everyone begins to long for Spring! We hope our staff are enjoying this week and are excited to see their students on their return!

The past few weeks I have been working closely with The Maine Department of Education to revise Chapter 304. Fortunately they are including me in the revision process to ensure terminology and appropriate services stay in the document. They are being incredibly supportive and offering helpful guidance. The work session has been scheduled for March 3rd at 9:30 am.

The new website is generating lots of excitement. Positive feedback is coming from families, staff and community members. We have also welcomed constructive feedback. We are open to ideas and suggested changes. We want this to be a community website that everyone is proud of! Everyone seems excited to see the accessibility additions coming soon! Emily Blachly and her ASL team are working hard to create videos that will bring ASL to the forefront of our website.

We are also working on the implementation of our new Strategic Plan. It is exciting to see all of the hard work put into this plan come to life! This plan will be our guide and will take us all the way to 2024. It will be exciting to see where MECDHH/GBSD will be in a few years!

Thank you all for your continued support of our programs, staff and community. We are so fortunate to have you all guiding our work.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen Hopkins".

Karen Hopkins, *Executive Director*



## **Operations and Human Resource**

Cathy Murphy, *Director*

### **Business and Human Resources**

My last official day as Director of Operations will be March 17th, 2022. I will be returning for the week of April 11th to train the new Director of Operations. Over the next two to three weeks I will be organizing files, cleaning up loose ends and projects and preparing for the next Director. Karen has also asked me to compile a list of tasks to be performed in this position including the frequency and a brief summary of what the task is. This will be very helpful to Karen and the new Director. There may also be time for me to do some work in the accounting system in order to get the next biennial budget process started.

If you are at all worried about the transition please know that our Business Office, Facilities and Technology staff are so very capable. They are an extraordinary group and MECDHH/GBSD is lucky to have all of them. I can't thank them enough for all of their hard work and comradery over the last few years. They have been a huge help to me, and will be to the next Director.

### **Facilities projects/improvement**

As I write this, we are preparing to tackle another winter storm tomorrow. We have been very lucky with the timing of the winter storms this year. They have almost all come on weekends and tomorrow will be during school vacation week. Having said that, let's hope I didn't just jinx us. The timing of the storms has allowed us to plow (with only one truck), clear, shovel and sand, without the crew working extremely long hours overnight in order to have things ready for school in the morning.

Today, Eastern Fire was at the Mackworth Island facility to test all of our fire alarm systems, this is a semi-annual requirement. They did identify a few bulbs in the flashing system which needed replacement. Other than that, all went well.

The Master Plan for Mackworth Island is moving ahead. Participants have been invited to serve on the steering committee, and Harrimans has taken a preliminary walkthrough of the campus. Harriman has also been able to take copies of many of the blueprints for our buildings. Currently, the state is working on setting dates for the various focus groups.

## **Early Intervention and Family Services**

Natalie Austin, *Director*

Spring is in the air! It has been wonderful to be able to utilize our outdoor spaces for team and family gatherings. What a beautiful place we get to work.

For our monthly EIFS team meeting, Melinda Meyers led a great discussion on Parenting Practices and Behavior Problems Among Deaf Children. She is such a fantastic addition to our team and we are so enriched by the background she brings including her social work experience. Melinda also shared signs related to behavior, which led to a great discussion on the importance of keeping our sign use current and ensuring we adjust our sign language choices with the changing times.

Our team has been working to ensure the data base within the Maine Newborn Hearing Program reflects accurate information. This is highly important for the work we are doing for our HRSA grant to meet our 1-3-6 goals. We have been able to provide numerous updates to ensure that the data that is reported for the state of Maine reflects the hard work of our team.



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Robin McWilliam led a 3-day workshop for our team and all Part C providers across Maine on Collaborative Consultation to Child Care. Dr. McWilliam has provided paramount guidance and research on Routines Based Intervention. It was a valuable training for our work within child care settings.



Our north EIFS team, together with Hands and Voices, hosted a sledding party for families. This was a great way to connect with other kiddos and families from around the state in a fun outdoor activity. There was great weather and lots of smiles all around.

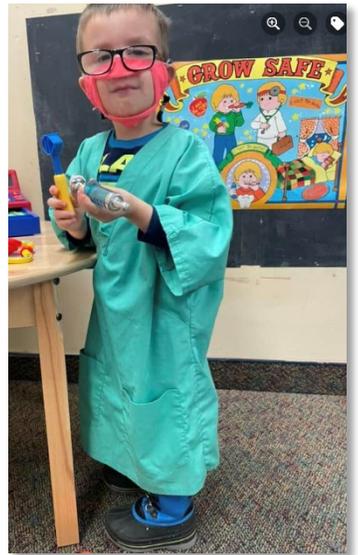


We are looking forward to gathering with the Guide By Your Side team in Augusta. Amber Woodcock, the GBYS coordinator, has been working with us to organize this exciting event. Our team will be sharing information on our Exploring Language and Communication Opportunities process, providing Routines Based Intervention, and giving their team a glimpse into a day/week in the life of our early intervention team.

Here's to a great March and capturing the joy with longer days of sunshine.

## Mackworth Island Preschool

This month in preschool we have been learning fun ways to keep our body healthy. We tried some healthy snacks (bear toast), in addition, we practiced brushing our teeth, and we got lots and lots of exercise outside. We had fun exploring all the MUD too! We love playing outside on our playground and in the quad area too! We are all excited for our February break and time with our families.





**East End Community School (Elementary)**

Melanie Bowlus, *Lead Teacher*



During February in the Baxter classroom, we celebrated Valentine's Day and 100 days of school - on the same day! The day was full of making and sharing Valentines, making a 100 word list, counting to 100, and more "100" activities.



In order to increase literacy exposure, teachers and ed techs have started wearing a "Word of the Day" on their lanyards. Each morning students try to guess what the new word says.

The Baxter classroom is continuing with Bilingual Grammar Curriculum, with one group working on identifying subjects and

predicates, while the other group is combining subjects and predicates to create a sentence making one complete thought. Our youngest group is sequencing using "first, next, then, last" and listing step-by-step instructions. In Foundations for Literacy, one memorable activity was planning and having a tea party. Another fun activity was constructing paper airplanes - then students let them fly to see how far they could go!



In math, one group has been measuring items with centimeters, and have now started converting those measurements into meters. Another group is working on comparing multiplication and division. The youngest group is working on shape and color identification while using tangrams to form shapes.



Science class has started a new unit on the solar system. So far, students have learned about the sun, stars, space, and the planets. Students are also studying forces - how objects exert

forces on each other plus examining cause and effect relationships.

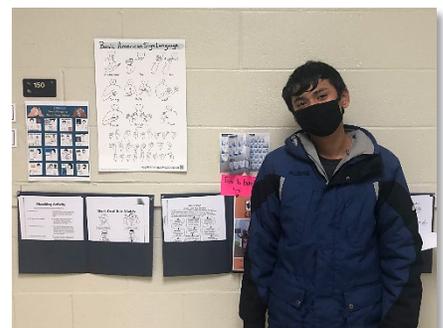
February is a short month with winter break. We hope students and staff enjoy time with families and return refreshed for March!

**Lyman Moore Middle School**

Megan Garrity, *Lead Teacher*

The activity and hustle does not slow down here! Our students, staff and interpreters have been extra busy these past few weeks.

All of our students participated in a student-led Parent/Teacher conference with their advisor and parent(s). Students reported out on their goals, what's working well for them and what they enjoy most at school. They also identified areas that they would like to improve on





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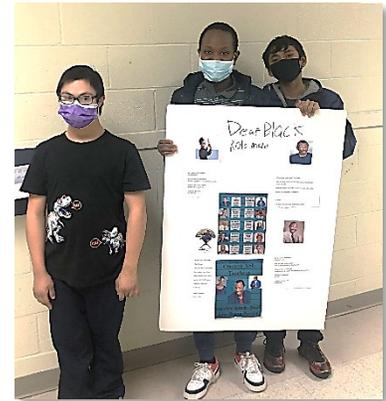
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and set new goals for themselves. We also have several 8th grade students in the midst of considering the transition process from middle school to high school programming.

Other highlights include celebrating Black History Month with an emphasis on Black Deaf History. Students have explored several history-making Black Deaf individuals and created a poster to display outside of our room. We also have



displayed resources for all LMMS students to participate in the rich history of Black Deaf models.

Students have also shown great perseverance with school-wide testing and assessments. As I shared before, we have been busy! I must share a personal highlight, as the lead teacher here at the middle school programming I have not been able to participate in commonly used listening checks for student assistive technology since my start at MECDHH/GBSD (2016) because of my own personal hearing aid technology. However, with the great help of our Educational Audiologist, Stacia Thomas, we have been able to locate a company, Pacific Coast Lab Communication that creates listening tubes for staff with hearing aids and cochlear implants. This was incredibly encouraging to be able to model to my own DHH students as a DHH adult, not only the importance of advocating for yourself but also demonstrating that we can partake in educational and audiology needs. I am beyond grateful that we have been able to find a resource that works!



Now we are soon to go onto our February break and I have such a tremendous amount of gratitude for all that goes on behind the scenes to make our learning possible here at the middle school. From the students themselves, to parents, teachers, education technicians, interpreters, service providers, and transportation drivers. A huge thank you!

## Portland High School

Shannon Winter, *Lead Teacher*

During the learning center, some of our students made a project about deaf black history month. Each student brought many great questions about deaf black history. Also, they researched and wrote an essay about it. Our students enjoyed doing their projects about deaf black history.

A few weeks ago, one student went on a field trip to see the Fire Department to observe how to clean the truck. He was excited to see the fire truck as he watched them clean the truck. Also, the fire department taught him how to use a water hose and soap to clean the fire truck from the top to the bottom. The fire department was impressed that he was able to hold the water hose and use the soap.

Our PATHS and academic students have caught up on their school work and are improving their grades. Again, we are grateful for our deaf and hard of hearing students who are doing well and doing the best they can. Gratitude



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## Brewer Community School Site-based Program

Linda Koehler, *Lead Teacher*

Kindergarten had an adorable Valentine's party. Our student has been doing a great job advocating for optimal remote mic use and has grown in her independence in handling her own equipment effectively.

Our first grader is improving in his sight words.

Our third grader did some strong self-advocacy which is resulting in positive changes.

Our seventh grader is making great efforts to connect with his peers which is new for him this year. He is also picking up new math concepts very quickly and successfully applied them in his science class.

## Public School Outreach, North

Donna Casavant, *North Coordinator*



The Brewer office mascots are sending you a message for February. They're still COLD and still waiting to be packed up and carried to May Street.

Kaitlyn and North staff are wrapping up their consultation times. Kaitlyn has met with our site based TODs, Taylor and Linda, and most of our North outreach. The staff then follows up with Donna to ensure that lessons learned will carry forward.

Statewide PSO meeting was canceled due to snow for the second month in a row. We're hoping for a face to face meeting on March 11. What's on the agenda for that meeting? SafeCare, GoalBook, Audiology updates, and serving 3-5 year olds.



We're excited to welcome back Kim Matthews to our north outreach teams for some part time work. So glad to have you back, Kim! A few Aroostook county teams are especially thrilled!

We also heard that our hopeful Aroostook county TOD replacement elected to stay a little further south. Glad she's with us at MECDDHH but sorry that she's not joining us in the north. I'm sure details will come from Kevin on this news.

Regarding progress on Infinite Campus (IC) Student Information System, Donna met with the Leadership Team on February 16th to share progress and get their thoughts on data to make accessible. We were able to provide Karen with the information she needed to meet with the legislature about Chapter 304. The system still needs work but it's getting better every day.

Linda Koehler digging through the huge snowbank that covered the windows of our BCS room thanks to the back to back snow storms which dumped more than 12-15 inches each on two consecutive Fridays. She worked hard to bring back some sunlight from one of the two windows in the room.



### **Public School Outreach, South**

Kevin Bohlin, *Middle/High School and PSO Coordinator*

February is the shortest month but has been incredibly busy for the Public School Outreach program in the southern part of Maine. The outreach staff are incredibly fortunate to have February break as this provides them the energy boost needed to enter March and tackle the increase of service requests for our 3-5 years old students. We are grateful for our collaborations with EIFS (Early Intervention and Family Services) as their knowledge of the younger Deaf/Hard of Hearing students has been valuable for PSO.

We are very excited to welcome Alyssa Guldager who will be joining PSO as the Teacher of the Deaf in the Oxford region. She comes from Connecticut and is bringing extensive experiences as a Deaf/Hard of Hearing itinerant teacher for birth to 18 year old children.

On February 15th we had a good crowd participating in the *Finding Your Inner Hero* webinar and received feedback from families that they are interested in having more webinar opportunities to attend. We love receiving community input regarding topics for future webinars.

With Maine's new law of allowing students to stay in high school until they are 22 years old, there has been increased conversations among service providers, site-based program teachers, public school staff and external agencies about how we can provide supports and prepare students for post-secondary opportunities whether academic-based, vocational training or work-based opportunities. PSO is committed to being a part of this discussion/process along with The National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes (NDC), Maine's Vocational Rehabilitation, Maine Department of Education's 18-22 years old programs, and Maine's Apprenticeship. Through this collaboration we hope to provide our Deaf/Hard of Hearing students more opportunities to explore and experience their independence and gain the confidence needed for life after high school.

One of the biggest outcome of this collaboration was that we were able to identify a way to allow Deaf/Hard of Hearing students to earn high school credit by participating and completing the online module program that was developed in 2020. The program has been recognized as unique by the NDC and other states are interested in using this model for assisting students to earn credits.

On March 11th PSO North and South team members will meet in Augusta for an all-day conference which would be the first time in few months (as our monthly meeting has been canceled due to weather) and we are looking forward to being together. During this conference we will focus on 3-5 years old development, educational audiology updates, strengthen our IEP skill and discuss about how we can improve the department to ensure that there are equity of services statewide.