



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,

As I read our monthly reports from our lead teachers, coordinators and directors, I am in awe of all that our staff do each day on behalf of deaf and hard of hearing children throughout the state. We are fortunate to have such dedicated and creative staff. I hope you take the time to enjoy learning about our programs each month.

Each month seems to go by faster than the last! March has been an incredibly busy month for all MECDHH/GBSD staff. March is typically a long month for educators with no break or days off. The Leadership Team decided to focus on staff support this month and came up with a variety of ideas to pull our community together and offer support throughout the month. Our new HR Director, Lori Levesque, created a wonderful calendar of positivity that we shared with all staff. We are planning a virtual self-care session for staff on April 13th with Elizabeth Seeliger from Wisconsin. Elizabeth is an EHDI (Early Hearing Detection and Intervention) coordinator who has done a lot of work on compassionate self-care and infant mental health. I am hoping she offers our staff a bit of respite from their busy lives.

Our preschool team has been busy getting ready for our DHHS licensing visit and our NAEYC accreditation observation. Both happened this past week. We passed our licensing visit with flying colors! We will not know our status of the NAEYC visit for a few months, but did learn that we did not have any safety violations and passed all the "required" aspects of the visit. Our staff did an amazing job coming together as a team to prepare and show our observers what an incredible program we offer. The preschool students loved having the visitors and were proud to show off their classrooms and even pictures from home! Our NAEYC observer shared that she learned a lot about Deaf Culture and Deaf education in her time with us and wants to bring her colleagues to our program to model how to provide site visits in programs that offer unique programming such as ours!

Our early intervention staff and several other Maine professionals and parents had the honor of attending the virtual EHDI conference this month. This conference brought many opportunities for new learning and collaborative discussions. I presented on Deaf Leadership in EHDI programs with two other states and a session on pragmatic development. Our sessions were well received and have brought further discussion both within Maine and nationally. We are preparing for our EHDI stakeholder state meeting which will take place soon with all EHDI meeting participants.

The legislative process is in full swing. LD 1632 the Chapter 304 legislation is currently undergoing language review. Once this is finalized the House and Senate will vote, then it will go to appropriations. I have been working on the fiscal note which is quite extensive due to the number of positions needed to appropriately meet the requirements of this law. The law ensures that students will receive services from MECDHH/GBSD no matter where they live in Maine. It is very exciting that the Department of Education wants us to support in this manner! I have spent much time talking with the DOE about our strategic plan and where we are headed in the future. We are getting much support from our partners at the State level for all of our initiatives.

The Mackworth Island Master Plan committee will be on island Friday, April 1st for its first official meeting. The planning firm was on island today with eight engineers to gather information about our buildings. Thank you to Steve Kimball and his team for spending so much time with them today showing your knowledge of our facilities.

The 65th birthday committee has been busy planning for a fun three days this summer! We hope you will plan to join us July 29th, 30th and 31st for a fun weekend of celebrating our past and future! More information on this exciting event will be forthcoming.



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It has been wonderful to welcome our Deaf Seniors back to our island this month. We are exploring opportunities for student engagement with this wonderful group! We are so fortunate to have their stories and wisdom. Thank you all for your continued guidance and support and I hope you are enjoying the longer days and warmer weather.

Warmly,

Karen Hopkins

Karen Hopkins, *Executive Director*



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Early Intervention and Family Services

Natalie Austin, *Director*

I love seeing all the green flora emerge from its winter slumber on the ground and in the trees as spring makes its presence known. Having the sun leave the sky later and later each day also brings the chance for more sunshine on our faces. Getting to work with the children and families we serve outdoors presents so many wonderful opportunities for language and communication growth opportunities in these natural settings.



Our EIFS team had a joint retreat with the Guide By Your Side team in Augusta. We collaborated with Amber Woodcock, the GBYS coordinator, to facilitate this important event. Our EIFS team shared information on our Exploring Language and Communication Opportunities process, providing Routines Based Intervention, and gave the GBYS team a glimpse into a day/week in the life of our early intervention team.



At this event, we did a round of “speed dating” where we rotated through our EIFS team members and the Guides to get to know each other better to encourage continued collaboration. We were able to observe recorded sessions of a family working with a DHH Guide and talk as a collective team on how to best implement this support moving forward. We developed a plan for how we can continue our work as a collective team to better meet the needs of children who are DHH and their families across the state of Maine.

Every week, our family playgroup here on the island grows; we love seeing our regulars as well as new faces who join each Friday. A highlight of these weekly gatherings is always story time when themed books are read and signed for children and families. This is a great opportunity for families to connect with others who are going through similar experiences, as well as chat with our professionals to get questions answered in a safe, supportive environment.

Our north EIFS team and families went to the Maine Discovery Museum in Bangor for their monthly playgroup. Dinosaurs and fossils provided some amazing language expansion opportunities for this group and a dino-mite time was had by all. Families also got to jump for joy at the Orono Trampoline Park and FunZ in Lewiston at events sponsored by our incredible Hands and Voices chapter. Family to family connection remains a top priority for our work and we are so fortunate to live in a state that values and supports this venture.



The annual EHDI (Early Hearing Detection and Intervention) conference transitioned to a completely virtual format again this year. This of course came with pros and cons, but a major pro of this shift was that all of our EI Specialists, in addition to some of our SEFS staff, were able to attend. We set up shared Google Docs and a Slack channel to be able to keep connected in this virtual space and talk about salient points that were brought up and how we can implement what we learned throughout Maine. The conference was excellent and I have already seen a tangible impact in application through our providers ordering resources, connecting with remote audiology support options from other states, and connecting with future presenters to come to our island to continue this important work.



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It has been wonderful to walk the hallways and connect with staff, families, and students mask free the past several weeks. What a difference. We look forward to continuing to increase these safe interactions and get back to more in-person connections, both professionally and with the families we serve. What a resilient team we have. I remain so incredibly grateful for their continued commitment to high level, thoughtful services they provide to families each and every day.

Human Resources

Lori Levesque, *Director*

I have been very busy in my new role as Director of HR! I have been working on developing a tracking and collection system for all staff regarding certification. The first part, the tracking part, is complete and seems to be extremely useful for those who are supporting staff with obtaining or renewing certification. I will begin part 2 soon!

I continue to firm up the onboarding process and am also training the necessary people on CINC approvals and billing as I will be transitioning out of that role soon. I am helping them develop processes and systems that will be efficient and consistent for their departments moving forward.

My favorite thing I worked on recently was the March Madness calendar we sent out to all staff at the beginning of March. We did a food drive at all our locations, encouraged positive reflection, Karen and I delivered lunch to all the staff, and we put together snack baskets for each site as well. I have included a copy on the following page for you to see. It was a great month!!

Thank you for the opportunity to do this work.



March 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4 Enjoy your coupon sometime this month! See email....	5
6	7 Thank someone you are grateful to and tell them why.	8 Look around and spot three things you find unusual or pleasant in your travels today.	9 Get outside and notice how the weather feels on your face.	10 Enjoy your lunch on MECDHH!	11 Focus your attention on the good things you take for granted.	12
13	14 Bring something for the food drive this week!	15 Take a 15 minute walk with a co-worker - no "shop talk".	16 Choose a different route today and see what you notice.	17 Compliment someone today.	18 Vote for an MECDHH charity donation! See email....	19
20	21 Notice something that is going well, even if today is difficult.	22 Pause to just watch the sky or clouds for a few minutes today.	23 Appreciate your hands and all the things they enable you to do.	24 Bring to mind people you care about and send love and positive thoughts to them.	25 Choose to spend less time looking at screens today.	26
27	28 Be kind to yourself.	29 Notice three things you find beautiful outside.	30 Take three calm breaths at regular intervals during your day.	31 Enjoy your snack baskets!		



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Mackworth Island Preschool Cathy Lushman, *Coordinator*

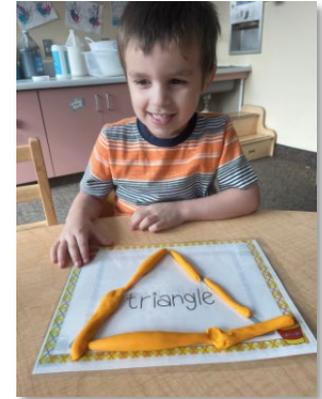


The ocean room loved investigating shapes and numbers this month! Our favorite activity is exploring the sensory table.

These preferred activities help our language expand.

The Meadow room has been working on social-emotional skills. They have been learning a lot about diversity and inclusion.

The Forest room has absolutely loved learning about shapes and numbers. We have been doing a lot of hands-on group activities using our whole bodies to learn!



East End Community School (Elementary) Melanie Bowlus, *Lead Teacher*



Now that spring has officially begun, we are all looking forward to warmer temperatures! This month we completed spring family conferences and really enjoyed meeting with each family. We were able to talk about the growth and progress of students, while providing families with a glimpse into the daily experiences their student has at EECS.

March is National Reading Month, and students have been challenged to increase their reading frequency.

They receive a star on a chart for each day they read - and students have risen to the challenge!



have risen to the challenge!

Two of our fourth grade students have increased their general education time. This change is reflective of their educational growth that has occurred this year. They are now mainstreamed all day except for literacy and science. Our science curriculum continues its focus on the solar system.





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Every Thursday, teachers and ed techs are involved with their Readers Theater dramatic presentation of the book, "Charlotte's Web." Additionally, literacy lessons are built around this book to provide a deep dive into the book's characters, setting, and plot.



This month students celebrated filling up the class marble jar with marbles. Students received marbles as they demonstrated positive

character traits taught previously this year. Traits include kindness, respectfulness, helpfulness, courteousness, responsibility, friendliness, etc. As a reward for filling up the marble jar, students enjoyed an ice cream party!

ASL Specialist Emily Blachly started reading "James and the Giant Peach" by Roald Dahl during her weekly "Storytime with Emily." Students are enjoying this descriptive book!

Staff in the Baxter classroom at EECS are receiving training on the Grammar Shapes method, and have already begun implementing this program to support written language acquisition. EECS staff are doing a fantastic job supporting students!



Lyman Moore Middle School Megan Garrity, *Lead Teacher*



March has been a wildly busy month, which must be the reason to call it "March Madness." With that said, it is obvious that Spring is in the air!

Students have entered their third trimester for the and today, 8th graders met with Guidance Counselors from Portland High School (PHS) to discuss potential courses for next

year. Knowing that our eighth grade students will be transitioning out from LMMS, will certainly be bittersweet. A good reminder to cherish the time we have together. Speaking of transitions, the lead teacher of the middle school program was able to meet with potential incoming students for next year from EECS and enjoyed getting to meet the students, help answer questions they had, and shared a video made from current LMMS students to help give them a tour. If I could share that here, I would! It was great to see the pride that students share about their school and space. They will certainly be ready to welcome them all next year!

Above are some shots of them in action.





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In addition to all this, students are highly anticipating Spring Sports to start and it is right around the corner. Some students plan to participate in 8th Grade Baseball and Outdoor Track.

Other students are also staying quite busy with their interests in afterschool activities which continues to grow with new offerings. Students are participating in school clubs: SAGA (Sexuality and Gender Alliance), Art Club, Lego Robotics, and the very exciting addition of Anime club.



Basketball photos by Matt Webster

Across grades and content areas, students are hard at work starting their third trimester. The range of learning is quite vast, from learning about functions to the use of currency and the role of taxes in Math. In Science, 8th grade students are presenting on their chosen Elements that they have studied and in 7th grade students are learning about their circulatory systems. The learning is never ending here and it is an exciting time for our students.

Portland High School

Shannon Winter, *Lead Teacher*

Congratulations to one of our high school students who got accepted to Youth Leadership Camp (YLC) for this summer! It is a wonderful opportunity to build great leadership skills.

We have one student who joined The Telling Room in Portland to empower young teenagers through creative writing and how to build confidence in literacy skills.

Every year, high school students who participate in drama clubs will be attending the Maine Drama Festival. One Deaf student will meet new people and perform their play.

The Unified Basketball tournament was successful with two deaf students from Portland High School. Both students deeply enjoyed basketball and they are looking forward to joining the unified basketball team again for next year.



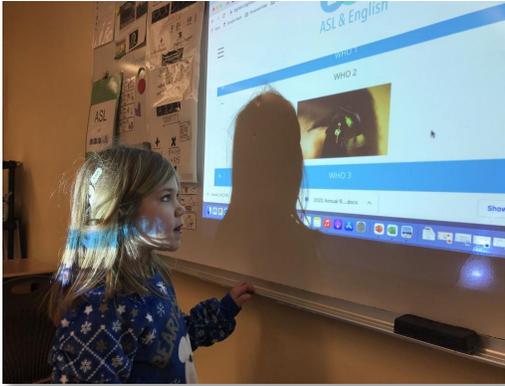
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Brewer Community School Site-based Program

Linda Koehler, *Lead Teacher*



Our two youngest students have started working through the Bilingual Grammar Curriculum. They are doing a good job identifying who or what is the subject of the picture or sentence.



Our third grader is in a new classroom that allows him to better access information auditorily and he's doing really well learning new routines and the fast-paced content of the class.



Our seventh grader has started an individualized STEM class and is loving it! His first challenge was to build a bridge out of spaghetti and have it support a load all the way across. Each time he thought he was finished, he discovered a new



problem and worked to solve it. He learned about the power of triangles in providing strength and stability. He was able to "drive" 5 pounds across his final bridge. His class also got to attend a big science fair with lots of other schools.

Public School Outreach, North

Donna Casavant, *North Coordinator*



← The Brewer Office mascots do not want to be left behind. If you look closely, they've stolen the keys and are ready to jump in a box to be packed. Lease is signed and arrangements are being made for packing and moving day!

Here's their message for the exciting weeks ahead. → Thank you in advance for the help from the maintenance team.

We're excited to extend congratulations to Jennifer and

her husband, Andrew, on the arrival of Bodhi!





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Jennifer, Brittany, Donna, Kim, Heather, Leia, Alyssa, and Christa have teamed up to ensure smooth transitions for many of our outreach students undergoing a change in provider.

Statewide PSO meeting was held on March 11 in Augusta. It was wonderful to be in the same space to reconnect. Shana and Christy started our training on SafeCare. Kaitlyn introduced the team to a temporary resource called GoalBook, which was originally recommended to us by Kristen. Brittany, Donna and Cathy Glover gave the team a presentation on serving 3-5 year olds, including information on developmental domains, developmentally appropriate practice, using the CINC record keeping platform, conducting push-in services, and the importance of engagement, independence and social relationships for preschoolers.

North staff is doing a great job linking with outreach students who have been inactive, helping to clean up our database of archived student cases and re-establishing contact with those who have drifted away!

Public School Outreach, South

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

Public School Outreach staff remains busy traveling around the state providing a wide range of services and planning for the upcoming Fall. We are getting requests to participate in different team meetings for students who will transition from Preschool to Kindergarten next year!

It was wonderful when the North and South PSO team members met on March 11th in Augusta for an all-day meeting. We were able to focus on renewing our SafeCare certification and work with Kaitlyn Millen to learn more about IEP writing/programs that will help us have better data for measuring our students growth.

Katherine Duncan and Stacia Thomas provided a mini-workshop on the latest development/tools that will allow public schools and educational audiologists to better connect. The North office presented on ages 3 to 5 development milestones. The whole team enjoyed a wonderful lunch provided by the Leadership Team. very nice presentation on Age 3 to 5 development-milestone by our colleagues from the Northern office.

The Southern PSO service providers really valued the opportunity to work with Kaitlyn Millen in the past two months on an individual basis increasing their knowledge on writing goals and backing it up with appropriate data measurements.

Part of PSO's mission is to encourage and make connections in public schools with different community agencies to ensure that students receive additional supports and resources outside of the school environment. The department has received several compliments from our partners such as Maine Vocational Rehabilitation and Maine Behavioral Healthcare acknowledging how proactive we are for our students and their families.

The discussion for opportunities and programs for students who are not ready to graduate from High School between the ages 18 and 22 are coming along very nicely and we are identifying many potential opportunities. We are hoping to have a formal layout of plans by the end of May.

The Kids Like Me program being discussed within the department and site-based staff to prepare for next year's programming. The Pine Tree Society, with the supports of MECDDH/GBSD, recently announced that Camp Dirigo will be held during third week of August. This program will focus on 11-14 year old children.

Happily, PSO is bringing back Family Day in several different locations around the state. More information on that to come very soon.