
**MAINE EDUCATIONAL CENTER FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING
THE GOVERNOR BAXTER SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF**

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MONTHLY REPORT TO THE SCHOOL BOARD

TO: THE SCHOOL BOARD
FROM: DAVID SHERRY
SUBJECT: MONTHLY REPORT – MARCH 2017

Academic Department

The cold winds of January have led to some snowy days in February that have been disruptive to say the least. Despite nature's wrath, school continues!

It has been a very busy month for the Academic Department with many exciting things happening in our Portland Schools-based programs.

Since last fall, freshman Kamron King has been serving as the Portland High School Bulldog mascot for varsity football and basketball games. Kamron is the first Deaf or Hard of Hearing mascot for Portland High School and can be seen at selected games wearing the Bulldog suit whipping the crowds into a mild frenzy. He can be seen "high fiving" kids in attendance and working with the cheering squad to generate school spirit for the varsity team. It is an important role and one that Kamron enjoys. What started as a small local story in the Forecaster last fall has now turned into a national one! Recently, a film crew from NBC Nightly News arrived from California and Chicago to film and interview Kamron and his family at Portland High School. The story will be aired soon and will be available and archived on the NBC website. Most likely it will be part of the NBC news "Inspiring America" series.

At the end of January, reporter Troy Bennett of the Bangor Daily News ran a story about Kamron's role as mascot for PHS. Kamron was quoted, "It's actually not that special of a story." Kam went on to say that "Being a mascot, for a hearing and a deaf person is exactly the same thing." It would appear that Kamron has a great perspective befitting his positive outlook. While he downplays his new found notoriety, the story has taken on a life of its own. Kamron seems to have a great approach to all of this and is taking everything in stride. He pointed out to the reporter, "You know, I'm a deaf person first but I want to be the first deaf person to be a mascot for Portland High School. That's kind of cool." In fact, it really is pretty cool and the smiles on kids and parent faces prove just how cool it is.

Photo Courtesy of Troy Bennett. BDN



Midterm finals for the 1st semester have come and gone already and the 2nd semester is well under way. Course descriptions for the fall are being developed at Portland High. There is a great demand for ASL courses in many Maine public schools and we are optimistic that, in the not too distant future, ASL will be included in more school course offerings. We are hopeful that the first expansion will happen at PHS. This will serve to broaden the social access to peers for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students throughout the state.

The basketball team traveled to Buffalo, New York on February 16th for the Annual ESDAA Tournament. We had a team of 8 players attending who had a lot of opportunities to enjoy the competition and reestablish old relationships while make a few new ones.

The Academic Department would like to wish our ASL instructor, Lenore Boerner, all the best in her move to the Florida School for the Deaf in mid-March. Lenore has been teaching ASL to Portland students at Lyman Moore Middle School and Portland High School since 2009. This year she has also been enjoying teaching our elementary

students at East End Community School. Best wishes to Lenore and her family. It is unlikely that she will need to bring her snow shovel along!

While the delivery of instruction via ASL (along with spoken language supports) remains a strong and vital approach to learning, the Academic Department continues to look at how Cued Speech (CS) might be incorporated into our array of literacy supports. We are engaged in learning more about how CS could potentially benefit students and how we could possibly expand access to this phonetically-based technique. It is important to note that cueing's main purpose is not for speech but for literacy. The professional community at GBSD is reviewing the research and seeking more information from other programs around the country.

A huge "THANK YOU" goes to our maintenance crew of Bob, Andy, Bill and Steve for their outstanding work maintaining passable roadways and walkways during and after stormy weather. Without them we would certainly be challenged to get across the causeway and into buildings safely.

Business Operations

Business Office

Doreen, Traci and Bob have been collecting data on staff, facilities, policies and procedures for the NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) project with Preschool. Thank you for everyone's cooperation that helped us to gather the information needed during this process. Our office has seen a large increase in grant activity over the last month. Thank you to Therese for creating new contracts, establishing reports, and keeping accurate records for our grants. Kathy has been extremely busy trying to keep up with all our "road warriors".

Maintenance

SNOW, SNOW, and more SNOW! That's what has been taking up most of our maintenance department's time over the past few weeks. I think we can all agree that they have done a fantastic job clearing all this snow. I'm so proud to say that these guys all pulled together as a team, hunkered down overnight on island during the blizzard, and took care of business. They even enjoyed some laughs and good food along the way. Thank you so much for all that you do for us!

Maintenance Updates

The maintenance staff have been working on:

- heating issues with Brewster hall and the gymnasium
- electrical issues due to surges from outside sources
- electric stove installation in the kitchen
- set ups for regional overnight program, Hands & Voices
- plowing and sanding
- transportation for the basketball team
- new burner installation on the furnace

Public School Outreach

Public School Outreach and Community Services

Public School Outreach staff have been working on providing Functional Listening Assessments to students in mainstream settings all over the state. We have had much success in using this tool to help others understand the complex listening needs of our students. It creates an understanding of why a child performs differently in different listening environments. It has been a sharp learning curve for our consultants and itinerant teachers as they develop skills in using technology, determining testing protocol, and analyzing data.

Our Deaf Mentor, Liz, along with Conrad have developed a great ASL for Families program. Check out their preview video in the resource section of our website. During the last session, we had 14 people attend from three different locations.

Our new SLP (Speech Language Pathologist), Amy, has been on the road with consultants supporting some very complex communicators and the staff that work with them. It is great to see school personnel beginning to really understand the difference between communication and language. She also is enjoying a little time with students as she participates in our KLM (Kids Like Me) programs.

Regional Programs

Regional programs continue to grow as our itinerant teachers become well known for their collaborative way of sharing their expertise. It is exciting to know how supportive the DOE is with regard to further expanding our program to new regions in the future. We continue to be hopeful that our proposed statewide model will be a reality up the road and available to all. For now, our three established regions in Hancock, Mid-coast and Oxford County will continue to build a positive reputation for our services.

“Kids Like Me” and Family Fun Days

This has been a busy month. With five programs presently running, the impact of snow cancelations, and overnight planning details, Patty Cook Stewart has been in overdrive with coordinating the programs. KLM K-5 has served 34 kids this month in Falmouth, Kennebunk, Portland, and Norway. These groups contain a lot of “first timers”. It is exciting to see how motivated the 6th-8th graders who participate in our weekly program are to jump at the chance to join the fun of the overnight program.

A group of 20 students enjoyed the great Maine outdoors at Robert’s Farm in Norway and the Seacoast Snow Park in Windham during our second KLM 6-12 overnight February 3rd & 4th. Students learned how to x-country ski and snowshoe with great enthusiasm! Check out the pictures on our Facebook page!! Many of them are already planning their next outing. Several parents of new students shared that it was very positive for their children to meet and make friends with “peers” who they could relate to and share their feelings openly with. Many recognized the positive impact our KLM programs have. As one parent stated so nicely, “I think the confidence he gained in knowing he is not the only one will last a lifetime”.

Webinars

Our fourth webinar entitled, "Conductive Hearing Loss - Supporting Children with Otitis Media in Early Childhood Classrooms" will be on March 7th 3:00-3:30 with a Q&A session from 3:30 to 3:45.

The webinar will provide an overview of what constitutes a conductive hearing loss and a sensorineural hearing loss. The presenters will offer strategies to implement in the home and in the classroom for optimal language access and discuss the adverse effects of ongoing conductive hearing loss (Otitis Media) on social emotional and language development.

Participants will:

- learn what constitutes a conductive hearing loss
- have a general understanding of how the auditory system processes speech and sound
- gain an understanding of the developmental effects of a conductive hearing loss

About the Presenters:

Megan Kish holds a Masters in Linguistics from Gallaudet University specializing in first language acquisition. She works for MECDHH as an Early Intervention Specialist and Teacher of the Deaf for children birth through age 5 and their families. Kathryn Carmina holds a Masters of Science from Canisius College specializing in Deaf Education. She works for MECDHH as an Early Intervention Specialist and Teacher of the Deaf for children birth through age 5 and their families. Please come join us!

Early Childhood Programs

Early Childhood and Family Services (ECFS)

The ECFS team has been doing collaborative work with CDS as we continue to roll out our new Memorandum of Understanding. Karen Hopkins, the Director of Early Childhood Education, along with the ECFS consultants assigned to each regional CDS site has been traveling the state to meet with various CDS teams. These meetings continue to offer us the opportunity to improve our services for deaf and hard of hearing children statewide. The various teams discuss: best practices for deaf education, special education laws, family-centered early intervention and special education and role definition. It's been a great opportunity to review our process and also highlight each ECFS consultant's role on their teams. Feedback about our staff and services has been extremely positive in these sessions. During our monthly team meetings, our team expands on the discussions held during the CDS meetings. We will be focusing our efforts these next few months on firming up our process with children in Part B (ages three and up). We will also be preparing to support families in the transition to kindergarten process through observations, recommendation reports and continued collaboration with teams.

Karen Hopkins assisted Maine Hands & Voices and Maine Newborn Hearing Program (MNHP) in the hiring of two new contracted providers. Tonya Ng has been named Maine's new Parent Consultant for the MNHP. In this role, she will be calling all

families referred through the newborn hearing screening and encourage them to go on for audiological testing. This parent to parent connection has proven to be invaluable in Maine's follow up process. It helps in supporting children who are deaf or hard of hearing get into early intervention services as soon as possible. We have also contracted with Becky Brady to be the new Maine Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side (GBYS) Coordinator. Becky will be overseeing the GBYS staff and overall program.

Both of these ladies are parents of deaf or hard of hearing children who bring a wealth of personal experiences to our programs in Maine. Welcome!

Training opportunities have been put in place for these two positions. Members of the ECFS team are assisting with this process. Our ECFS audiologists will provide training on: audiology 101, newborn hearing screening processes in Maine, and hearing assistive technology for infants and young children. Members of the ECFS team will also offer information and training on the new early intervention process in Maine and will be involved in other in depth trainings.

The National Early Hearing Detection and Intervention meeting is taking place in a few weeks and Maine will be widely represented. We are fortunate to have received grant funding to support our participation in this conference. Karen Hopkins, Corri Saunders and Melinda Meyers will be involved in various presentations, meetings and discussions. Karen and Mindy will be presenting two sessions with members of the National Hands & Voices board to share how we have implemented a process that ensures parent to parent support and deaf adult support that is embedded in early intervention in Maine. Karen and three parents (Darleen Hutchins, Tracy Henderson and Amber Woodcock) who had children in our Bilingual Bimodal preschool program will present a session on Social Emotional Growth in Bilingual Bimodal programs. Corri Saunders will be presenting a session on the ECFS 6-visit process of communication opportunities. Karen is also doing a presentation with the Clerc Center at Gallaudet University. As our ECFS model has been named one of two in the nation to model linguistic competence, it will be highlighted and explained in this session. In addition, Karen will be: sitting on a panel presentation representing early intervention for deaf children nationally, involved in a national Part C planning meeting, participating in a deaf mentor learning community meeting, and involved in the EHDI Coordinators meeting discussing the HRSA grant that we are still hoping to be awarded. The entire ECFS team can be proud of the work they do and the recognition our team continues to receive. Stay tuned for more exciting information from our team after this conference!

Mackworth Island Preschool

We can't believe it is February already! Time is flying by here in preschool. The last few weeks have been very busy. Cold and flu season are upon us and we are trying to keep everyone as healthy as possible. The winter weather is cooperating and giving us lots of opportunities to go sledding, make snowmen, and just have some plain old fun in the snow.

We are currently involved in a Jan Brett curriculum unit which is proving to be a lot of fun. We are reading *The Mitten*, *The Hat*, and *The Gingerbread Baby*. The children really enjoy acting out the stories and making the book come to life!

Much of the focus for preschool is still on achieving NAEYC accreditation. The accreditation process is lengthy, detailed, time consuming but important. The staff are committed to seeing this process through. We have submitted our candidacy materials and now are waiting for the date of our site observation.

We are working diligently to complete our portfolios which have proven to be a massive project. The whole team is conducting internal observations and has formed subcommittees to help address any areas of concern.

We have filled our last Ed Tech position. Yay! Please welcome Megan Garrity to our team. We are so happy to have her.

We still need more subs. If you know of anyone who is interested, please let us know!

Next time you are in the lobby, you'll see our preschoolers' pictures running through on the television! 😊

Our preschool students' artwork below!



Administrative Updates

We continue to move ahead with a variety of initiatives. First and foremost is the development of the Fiscal Year 2018 (school year 2017/2018) school budget. As the demand for our expertise and services increases, our funding, via the Legislature and D.O.E., is not increasing at the same rate. This means that, as we craft a budget proposal and as the School Board considers that proposal, we must be creative, frugal and diligent about our priorities as an organization. Certainly, we are in a much better place budget-wise than we were last year at this time. This is the result of hard work, conscientiousness, and efficiency on all of our parts. The FY18 budget will be impacted by the loss of revenue from the REAL School lease (The REAL School will be moving to Brunswick at the close of the school year). It will also be impacted by:

increases in retirement contributions made by MECDHH, other increased costs incurred by our organization that we have no control over, returning the Executive Director position to five days, and reinstating the benefits that go along with that position.

A merger between the Maine Foundation for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children and the newly developing Percival Baxter Foundation for Maine's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children is well underway. We have received approval from the Attorney General's office to move ahead with this merger. Barbara Keefe and I have met with the Maine Foundation and reviewed our plan. We have also shared criteria related to the merge with the Foundation's Board Leadership. This will be shared with the Foundation Board at large at their next meeting. The bylaws for the Percival Baxter Foundation are being finalized and we will begin recruiting members for the board of that new foundation. This is very exciting for our organization. It gives us a clear and consistent means of raising monies to support our organization and the children, families and professionals whom we serve.

The Salary Study Committee continues to collect data from a ten school pool and other schools for the Deaf in the Northeast Region. This has been akin to "pulling teeth" in order to get the data we need so that we can find a true "average" salary for each year of experience, degree and position and calculate in the value of benefits. In anticipation of attending the conference for Executive Directors and Superintendents of schools for the Deaf, I have asked that participants to either email me or bring a hard copy of their contracts. I want to thank Joanna Spano, Ann Scarponi, Steve Kimball, Doreen Spear and Traci Drake for their continued work on this effort.

Our next Lead K Adhoc Committee will be held in early March. We continue to work toward the creation of a Lead K bill (quite similar to the work we are doing with the birth through five population already) that can be presented to the Legislature. Members of the Adhoc Committee are: Jen McCann, Liz Seal, Terry Morrell, Michelle Ames, Roxanne Baker, Jonathan Connick, Larissa Pelletier, John Jones, Angie Bruno, Karen Hopkins, John Shattuck, Frances Frost and me.

We are fast approaching the time of year when transition IEP meetings will be taking place. This includes transitions from: preschool to academic, preschool to public school, preschool to P.S.O., K-5 to middle school and middle school to high school, academic to PSO, PSO to academic, and, of course high school to college and/or the world of work. Each of these transitions is a potential challenge for students and parents. It is imperative that we maintain open, consistent lines of communication so that no one experiences surprises or is left without necessary information. Let's all work together to make each student transition smooth, informed and beneficial for both students and parents.

Finally, I know you are all working together toward the development of a new Strategic Plan for our organization. This is extremely important work. It guides our journey as an organization by setting our priorities, impacting how we use our human and fiscal resources and helping us to evolve and morph as a high quality educational resource for children with hearing loss and their families. I urge you to think deeply and critically about where we have come from as an organization, where we want to and need to head, how we can get there and what we will "look like" after working on this

new strategic plan in June of 2022. Thank you for your good, hard work. It will benefit each of us, our organization and, most importantly, our students and their families.

Never forget that together we can and do make huge differences in the lives of the children and families with whom we work!