
**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 – APRIL 2017

Academic Department

It's nice to see some warmer temperatures as we move deeper into March which has historically been the snowiest month in Maine. Let's hope that the many snow day disruptions that occurred in February do not repeat themselves in the next few weeks. It has been challenging to gather instructional momentum with so many interruptions but we have managed to keep things moving forward.

The basketball season ended in February with the annual ESDAA Basketball Tournament which took place in Buffalo, New York at the St. Mary's School for the Deaf. Our team gave a spirited effort and really enjoyed their time meeting some old rivals and friends. The last game which was against the West Virginia School for the Deaf almost tipped in our favor as we led for the first half of the game. Unfortunately the Islanders came up a bit short in the 27 – 20 loss but there were some great individual performances. Our newest student, Alister Hannah, earned an "All Star" honor and our team once again won the Sportsmanship Award. Many thanks to Coach Matt Welch and Assistant Coach Josh Seal for their support of our team throughout the year. They helped bring the team a long way in a short time.

Another annual event, the Academic Bowl competition, took place over the February vacation and included the GBSD team of Asad, Kailey, Emma (an Outreach student) and Taylor. This year's competition was held at the Indiana School for the Deaf. The team won 3 matches and lost 6 which was a respectable showing. Coach Lenore Boerner and Assistant Coach Jon Connick deserve a lot of thanks for their efforts supporting the team.

Summer school and fall planning are already underway in the Academic Department. We are exploring the possible relocation of a classroom or two at PHS among the larger school population. Updates to GBSD course offerings were adjusted and are now in the new course catalog available online at the PHS website. Potential new students for our programs are also being considered. We are working with other departments and school districts to identify children who would be good fits for accessing GBSD services within Portland Public Schools. In order to meet the needs of our students as they move from grade to grade, the Academic Department made adjustments with

staffing assignments and course selections. The work of our teams continues to improve with ongoing support and professional development opportunities.

Many changes will be forthcoming from the Portland Public Schools and indeed for all public schools in Maine as we move to Proficiency Based Education and Proficiency Based diplomas. The Academic Dept. is working to fully understand the new plan that we will be following. We will be supporting our students as they work toward earning their diplomas. Information will be shared with staff and families in the upcoming months.

Finally, the Academic Department said goodbye to our ASL Instructor, Lenore Boerner, who moved to sunny Florida on March 18th. Lenore will be assuming the job of ASL Instructor at the Florida School for the Deaf in St. Augustine. We have all enjoyed working with Lenore and appreciate her work with the Portland Public School students and most recently with our elementary-aged children which she thoroughly enjoyed. We wish Lenore the best of everything in her new surroundings and we thank her for her years of service to our programs.

Business Operations

IT

The State of Maine is looking at a new MLTI plan for next year. Rich Foisy attended a webinar on March 17th to learn the details of what the State is planning for equipment and how this will impact our staff.

Maintenance

Are we done yet? I'm sure that is what they are all thinking on the snow crew! Thank you yet again to Bob, Bill, Andy, Steve, and Caleb for staying overnight to clear out after another big storm. They all have great work ethic and can always be counted on to get the job done! Thanks for all that you do!

Public School Outreach

Public School Outreach and Community Services

It's getting close to that time of year when transition planning begins all around us with: planning for preschoolers entering public schools, IEP teams meeting to discuss progress and planning for next year, and high school students thinking about their future and what they need to do to realize their dreams. All this planning takes a lot of time and collaboration to make sure things go smoothly. We know where our outreach staff will be!

Liz and Conrad's "Travel and Transportation" theme class brought 17 people to three different locations: Houlton, Brewer, and Falmouth. Many thanks go to Liz and Conrad, Donna, Kim and of course Rich for all their help facilitating the success of this class. The next session is scheduled for April 12th 5:00-6:30. Check out our website soon to review our next topic. I wonder if it will include SPRING!?

Regional Programs

Regional programs continue to grow. Our statewide service is doing a great job making sure that students moving from one school or district to another are supported. Recently, a student moved into a district in one of our regions. Within the first day our Teacher of the Deaf was needed. You know things are going well when this happens. Nice job!

“Kids Like Me” and Family Fun Days

As we head into spring, Patty will start her planning for the last round of KLM programs. It is hard to believe that there are only 3 months left to the school year. I guess time flies when you are having fun, which is what seems to be a major part of all the KLM programs. The next K-6 programs will be in Cape Elizabeth and Brewer. Planning has also begun for our trip north to Aroostook which will include two additional KLM programs and a Family Fun Day for our friends in “The County”.

Our final KLM overnight for the 6th-12th graders will be May 19th & 20th. We are considering a very special outing for this one. Stay tuned! Once we secure the location, we will make sure you are all well informed. Just a hint, we are excited to have our students enjoy Maine at its best!

Webinars

Our fourth webinar entitled, "Supporting Children with Otitis Media in Early Childhood Classrooms" on March 7th was a great success. Twenty five people out of 50 who registered attended. That is a very good ratio for a free webinar! Meg and Katie were calm, cool, and collected as they shared much information about students who have conductive hearing losses.

Our fifth webinar entitled, “The Significant Impacts of a “Tiny” Hearing Loss”, presented by Katie Duncan and Donna Casavant, will give an overview of minimal and mild hearing loss. They will define common hearing situations and describe the educational, communication, and social impacts on children in school.

About the Presenters

Katherine (Katie) Duncan received her Doctorate of Audiology (Au.D.) from the Ohio State University. She has worked as a private audiologist in Maine for five years. This is her fourth year as an educational audiologist with MECDHH.

Donna Casavant received her Master’s degree in Deaf Education from Smith College and a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Special Education from the University of Maine. She has worked with students who are deaf/hard of hearing from birth to high school. This is her fourth year in Public School Outreach with MECDHH.

Who Should Attend?

The target audience for this webinar is all family and school staff members who work with students with a diagnosed hearing loss or suspected hearing loss. This includes: parents, administrators, teachers, educational technicians, and occupational/physical/speech therapists. Participants will be able to define a minimal/mild hearing loss and identify potential causes. They will also be able to identify some educational, communication, and social impacts of minimal or mild hearing loss on children in school.

Please feel free to join us. I'm sure you will learn something new!

Early Childhood Programs

Early Childhood and Family Services

The ECFS Team is gearing up for Kindergarten transitions! Observations are being scheduled, reports are being written and transition meetings are being set up. Many questions arise during transition time and the ECFS team is ready to help answer them.

An informational meeting is scheduled on March 30th at 4:30 and March 31st at 9:00 on Mackworth Island for parents who have children transitioning into kindergarten. The Director of Early Childhood Education and Family Services will be joined by our Preschool Coordinator, the Director of our Public School Outreach Program and the Director of Instruction for the MECDHH/GBSD academic program for an informational session on our K-12 programs for Deaf and hard of hearing children.

The "Community of Practice" providers who work with children throughout Maine who are birth to age five and are Deaf or hard of hearing will meet March 31 to continue their work together in supporting families to provide early intervention and early childhood deaf education. This group includes: providers from our Early Childhood and Family Services Program, ASL Specialists, Listening and Spoken Language Specialists from hear ME now, Cued Speech Providers and other providers from around the state.

Save the date! The annual Maine Hands & Voices conference is scheduled for September 23 at the Augusta Civic Center. We are excited to be able to continue our involvement with this conference. We are bringing in nationally known presenters to offer professional development opportunities to Maine professionals and families.

It is March madness here in preschool! We have quarterlies, spring assessments, many annual IEP meetings, and transition reporting all due this month. The teachers, Ed techs, and therapists are working really hard! All the snow days the past month or so have made task completion a challenge to say the least.

One of our part time Ed techs has given her resignation. Wendi will be leaving to pursue other career goals. However, she will stay on to substitute for us. This is fantastic news! We wish her all the best and will miss having her in preschool every day. We still need more subs. If you know of anyone who is interested, please let us know!

We are currently working on a healthy eating and habits unit. The children are learning about healthy versus not healthy foods, exercise, and tooth brushing. They are having fun brushing the dinosaurs' teeth with toothpaste in the sensory table!

Most of the focus for preschool is still on achieving NAEYC accreditation. The staff is committed to seeing this process through as we are in the home stretch now.

Administrative Updates

The merger between the Foundation for Maine's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children and the proposed Percival Baxter Foundation for Maine's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children continues to move forward. At a board meeting of the current Foundation on Monday, March 16, they voted unanimously to move ahead with the merger and the stated conditions of the merger with a few minor clarifications and additions. The next step in this process is to review all associated documents with the Attorney General's office. After approval for the merger and associated documents are given by the A.G.'s office, the Development Committee will meet to establish a process for securing six members for the Percival Baxter Board. Once these six members have been formally named, the bylaws will be finalized. The next step will be to design and distribute an application for board membership to fill other board seats available. Our hope is that the Percival Baxter Foundation for Maine's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children will be established and functioning by June 1, 2017.

Our first collaborative meeting toward creating opportunities to support Maine's young Deaf adults (post high school, aged 18-25) took place on Wednesday, March 8 on Mackworth Island. Individuals and/or agency representatives present were: MECDHH/GBSD (staff and School Board members), Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Department of Labor, Pinetree Society, Disabilities Rights Maine (DRM), and Barbara Keefe. Time was spent discussing potential projects, initiatives and programs that might support Maine's young Deaf adults. The group brainstormed possible subcommittees such as: fundraising, grant writing, admittance criteria development, research of state and local legislation and statues, to name a few. They will meet again in late March/early April and create committee membership, develop a work plan and move forward. This is very exciting work!

We are extremely excited about hosting the upcoming Region 1 Junior NAD (National Association of the Deaf) convention which will take place on April 7-9. Seven schools have been invited to participate in this leadership training and awareness opportunity. Advisor Darleen Hutchins and her Assistant Advisor, Jonathan Connick are working diligently to create, plan, and organize a fun and meaningful weekend, focused on leadership.

The Lead K team gathered on March 8 to continue working toward the development of a bill to be presented to the Legislature. Much of the Lead K bill will reflect the work that we have been doing since May of 2015 as part of our MOU with Child Development Services (CDS). We will expand the group to include: representatives from the Department of Education (DOE), Child Development Services (CDS) and local Legislators. Currently, representation includes members of: MECDHH/GBSD, VR, the Deaf Community, parents, the School Board and the Leadership Team.

All members of our staff continue to work hard on behalf of the Deaf and hard of hearing children/students of Maine and their families. Every day their perseverance, dedication and passion for their work moves us ahead as an organization and does more to expand the programs, services and supports available to the students and families with whom we work. Each and every one of them makes our organization stronger, better, and more effective!