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



annual report

2005-2006



Photo: Tim Greenway/Community Leader

Access, encouragement, and direction for lifelong learning...



THE MAINE EDUCATIONAL CENTER FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

THE GOVERNOR BAXTER SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

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Larry S. Taub, Ed.D
Superintendent

March 16, 2007

Office of the Governor
#1 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0001

Dear Governor Baldacci,

We are pleased to share with you the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Governor Baxter School for the Deaf's 2005-2006 Annual Report. Upon perusal of the report, you will find that our mission as a statewide educational agency is to provide programs and services that effectively attend to the myriad needs of students and families who need our services.

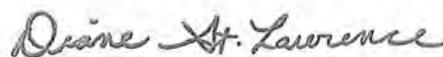
As such, we provide for a large portion of the educational continuum of services as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). The paramount goal of our organization is to fulfill our mission collaboratively with many other agencies that work with us, which is, to instill in all deaf and hard of hearing individuals all the necessary tools to lead successful and productive lives.

The transition to a "quasi-independent" state agency in July 2002 continues on in a positive direction. The school board, administrators, professional support staff, families, children and community volunteers have come together to become a source of inspiration and growth. That will ultimately form the bedrock of the deaf and hard of hearing community for years to come.

We invite you to take the time to learn more about us by receiving the enclosed report. The more you learn about our mission, the greater the difference we can make for the future generations of children who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Sincerely,


Larry S. Taub
Superintendent



Diane St. Lawrence
Chairperson, MECDDH/GBSD School
Board



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

Annual Report 2005-2006

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In keeping with the responsibilities charged to the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MECDHH) and The Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (GBSD), the fourth annual report to the Governor's office has been duly prepared and submitted.

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Executive Summary

In this year's edition of the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf's Annual Report, you will note that our programs and services continue to provide educational programs and support to Maine's Deaf and Hard of Hearing children. To give you a sense of our role as Maine's statewide educational provider of programs and services at a glance, an organization flow chart in the appendix is provided for your reference.

We continue to collaborate with various agencies and educational organizations to achieve the full potential of each student placed in our care; Child Development Services (CDS), all local school districts, Newborn Hearing Screening Committee, Portland High School, Portland Arts and Technology High School, and Community Counseling Services are a few that come to mind. As you peruse through this year's report, you will see the scope of our work as a statewide agency and how we make a difference in the lives of the children and families we serve.

At The Governor Baxter School for the Deaf, literacy continues to be the overarching objective for our students. Training was provided to school leaders and this was sustained throughout the year with support from an outside consultant. Previous training at the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center's Summer Literacy Institute has been implemented throughout the K-5 program. Every morning our students are engaged in writers workshops and independent reading sessions to foster literacy. Since our students are bilingual learners, our teachers assess student levels of development in both American Sign Language and English through their reading skills and written work.

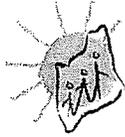
The students who have other disabilities besides being deaf enrolled in our middle school program have been given new opportunities to develop as learners. Rather than stick to a traditional academic curriculum, we have developed a projects-based educational program for them. The experiences they derive from project-based learning with academic support help to foster pragmatic skills for lifelong learning. This program is based on the constructivist teaching and learning model whereby students engaged in various activities learn by doing different things at the same time. The successes and failures they experience throughout the project become the actual learning process in itself. The students develop competencies in the following areas: literacy, numeracy, social-emotional development

through conflict resolution as well as learning to appropriately express their thoughts in various situations.

Brewster Hall, the new academic building, has brought the promise of increased learning opportunities to our students. This is made possible with use of state-of-the-art computer-based equipment as well as the middle school science laboratory for a variety of projects. This learning environment enables teachers to design instructional units for hands-on activities as follows: the gardening project, the boat building project, the pottery project as well as the cooking program.

Our Statewide Educational Services (SES) division continued to provide a very diversified array of services for consumers all over the state of Maine. Outreach services were provided for 571 students in public schools and 110 families who have newborn infants with hearing loss. In addition to working with students and their families, SES provided leadership through other venues such as professional development workshops for teachers who work with students in public schools. The Early Childhood Family Services team made a presentation to Child Development Services site directors regarding our services and to which populations those services can be applied.

Larry S. Taub Ed.D
Superintendent



Vision/Mission Statement

The Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, encompassing the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (the Center School), Statewide Educational Services (SES), and the Resource Center, offers an array of quality services to all deaf and hard of hearing students, their families, and the greater community.

Our Mission

The mission of MECDHH is to provide and support comprehensive educational programming aligned with state performance standards, affording opportunities for all deaf and hard of hearing students to excel in positive learning environments where they are challenged and inspired to achieve their maximum potential.

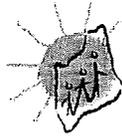
Our Vision

The vision of MECDHH is to expand educational opportunities and promote optimal communication and literacy for all deaf and hard of hearing students. MECDHH will be acknowledged as an educational leader in recognition of its exceptional program and services.

Our Beliefs and Expectations for Student Learning

Our statewide community of students, families, personnel, alumni, and school board affirms its commitment to honor and respect each student as a unique and whole person. We support activities that promote physical development, emotional maturity, leadership, fellowship, and build strength of character. We also dedicate ourselves to providing a continuum of educational opportunities which will assure that each student:

- is held accountable to the highest expectations for academic achievement and personal responsibility;
- has the opportunity to grow to full potential as a contributing member of society, with an awareness of the meaning of freedom and the responsibilities of citizenship;
- will acquire skills in evaluative reasoning and effective communication;
- is nurtured to develop a sense of respect for self and others as well as an appreciation of others' views;
- is encouraged to complete school and aspire to advanced education;
- is provided the tools to make learning a life-long experience.



Center School Programs

Language Philosophy

The Language Philosophy of Governor Baxter School for the Deaf is based on the Bilingual-Bicultural approach. The focal point of the philosophy for students is on the development of language and the realization of their language potentials.

In reflecting the mission statement of the school, American Sign Language (ASL) and English represent the framework of the communicative environment. ASL is the accessible, primary language used for communication and thinking among students and is the language of instruction. English is learned through reading and writing. The school values and promotes competence in both languages as necessary for the development of a complete and successful individual.

GBSD's Center School on Mackworth Island provides educational services to Maine's children who are deaf/hard of hearing from birth to 21 years of age. GBSD provides the only residential placement in Maine for children ages 13 to 21 with hearing loss. In addition, GBSD offers two unique programs: a preschool for children who can hear but who are experiencing language delays known as the Communication Garden, and a middle/high school program for students who are deaf with multiple handicaps called the Community Based Education Program.

Altogether, GBSD serves 63 students, 12 of whom are residential. (*See Appendix p.2*)

Lastly, GBSD provides Maine's public with an Adult Education Program specializing in American Sign Language. The Center School services and programs are delineated below:

- **Parent/Infant/Toddler Program – birth to 3 years of age**
The Parent/Infant/Toddler (PIT) program is designed to provide early intervention instruction to deaf infants and toddlers as well as their families. Because family members have the most significant influence in children's lives, it is vital that early childhood professionals provide information and resources to families as soon as their children are diagnosed with a hearing loss.

Families come to the Center School for sessions lasting 2.5 hours each on Tuesdays and Thursdays. In keeping with GBSD's Language Philosophy, infants and toddlers are provided developmentally appropriate activities by a highly qualified multi-disciplinary team of professional staff who utilize a dual language approach with ASL and spoken English. These staff members include:

- A certified Teacher of the Deaf/Parent Infant Specialist
- A Deaf Cultural Consultant
- A Speech Language Pathologist

- An Occupational Therapist
- An Educational Audiologist

On Tuesdays, the children's families are provided a 1.5 hour support group led by a licensed family therapist with an extensive background in Deaf Education. The main goal of this group is to foster an understanding of cognitive and language development to these families. On Thursdays, the families are provided 1.5 hours of instruction in ASL through our ASL for Families classes.

- **Preschool – 3 to 5 years of age**

GBSD's preschool provides 2.5 hours of instruction, four days a week. The class is taught by a Deaf professional who is a certified Teacher of the Deaf with assistance from an Educational Technician who communicates in ASL. The class activities are typical of those found in any quality preschool with a greater emphasis on experiential, particularly visual, learning experiences.

- **Elementary School - Kindergarten to 5th grade**

In keeping with the GBSD bilingual philosophy, the elementary faculty instruct and converse in the students' dominant language, American Sign Language. Strategies for teaching English as a second language are employed to foster the students' comprehension and production of written English. Mastery of English is developed optimally by communicating with students in their native language while consistently reinforcing learning with printed English instructional materials. For the fifth year in a row GBSD fourth graders participated in the MEAs.

- **Grades 6 - 8**

As is the mission for all middle schools, GBSD strives to prepare pre-adolescents for the essential transition to high school. In addition to the implementation of the Bilingual Philosophy, our current group of middle school students are more engaged in hands-on or constructivist learning programs. For the sixth year in a row, GBSD 8th graders took the MEAs. Those who are unable to participate in the MEAs, personalized Alternative Assessment portfolios track student performances.

- **High School programs - grades 9 -12**

In order to comply with the Department of Education's request to increase the expectations for deaf and hard of hearing children at the high school level, GBSD developed a very innovative partnership with Portland High School. This collaboration continues for the third year and the components of the high school program include:

- an academic program at Portland High School
- after school sports and activities programs at GBSD
- a residential program at GBSD

The high school students who attend Portland High School still have the option of Portland Arts and Technical High School (PATHS) for part of their academic day. These students for the 2005-2006 school year have access to classes at Portland High School and Portland Arts and Technology High School (PATHS) by means of sign language interpreting services funded by GBSD.

The students were active members of the Northeast Schools for the Deaf (NESD) league for both soccer and basketball. Aside from that, they participated in interscholastic sports competitions hosted by the Eastern Schools for the Deaf Athletic Association.

- **Residential Programs - ages 13 - 21**

The GBSD Residential Program provides a living and learning environment where students can communicate easily with Residential Advisors who are either Deaf themselves or fluent in ASL. GBSD's residential setting provides positive adult role models, 24-hour access to communication, after-school activities, a mandatory two-hour evening study period, and adult-monitored television, internet and phone use. While residential placement is clearly not a requirement for every deaf student, it is, however, essential for many.**

There has been continued professional growth this year in our Residential Program on Mackworth Island. All of our Residential Assistants are now certified in First Aid and CPR. We have instituted a comprehensive incident reporting system and notify parents immediately of any behavior problems that arise in the dorm. In addition, we have the services of a consultant in social and developmental behaviors of deaf and hard of hearing children. As a clinical psychologist whose entire career has been dedicated to working with deaf/hard of hearing people, he is charged with the task of helping the adult staff, both in the dorm and school work more effectively and professionally with challenging behaviors and mental health issues as they arise. This has been instrumental in reducing behavior problems and improving the quality of the school's learning environment.

- **Communication Garden – 3 - 5 years of age**

This program is designed for hearing children age 3 to 5 years of age who have delayed speech and language and who need a social situation to receive developmental therapy. It is a language-based program designed to support and facilitate continued language development through social interaction and imitation. The program can include up to four typically developing children to provide peer models for social interaction and language opportunities.

* Student learning and development continues at the end of the school day in this program. An independent learning skills curriculum is used to foster learning about cooking, budgeting, and making good social judgments. We also have a teacher of the deaf who comes in to the residential program at the end of the school day to provide academic support to high school students who need extra help.

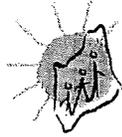
The program is in session for 3 hours, four days a week. The classroom teacher has degrees in Early Childhood Education, Speech Pathology and Audiology and a Master's Degree in Special Education. There is a Speech and Language Pathologist who works in this integrated model to provide appropriate language support, within the context of the curriculum. An Occupational Therapist is available to provide services as well as to consult with the Teachers. An Educational Audiologist consults with the teachers to provide input for adaptations to the classroom, as they are needed.

- **Community-Based Education**

This program provides a variety of community-based activities for deaf/hard of hearing students with additional disabilities or medical conditions. The program is run by a certified Teacher of the Deaf and requires a high staff to student ratio. Students engage in a variety of activities designed to foster the development of adaptive daily living skills.

- **Adult Education: American Sign Language ASL classes**

GBSD Adult Education Program provides one of Maine's longest running programs in American Sign Language instruction. GBSD offered ASL 1 last year. Classes are affordable and fees are waived for family members of GBSD students and GBSD volunteers. Many of Maine's professional service providers working with Deaf people today as teachers, interpreters, social workers and in other capacities can trace their earliest exposure to the language and culture of Deaf people to GBSD's Adult Education Program.



Statewide Educational Services

Outreach services are provided throughout the State of Maine by GBSD's Statewide Educational Services (SES). SES consultants work with deaf and hard of hearing children from birth to 21 years of age who do not attend the Center School. Five consultants cover school districts south and west of Augusta. One full-time consultant works from a satellite office in Fort Fairfield covering Aroostook, Washington, Piscataquis, and Northern Penobscot Counties. Three full-time consultants are based in the north central Maine region.

The two major components of SES are:

- **Early Childhood and Family Services - ages 0 - 5**
 - For birth to three-year-old children, the emphasis is on educating families on how to raise deaf and hard of hearing children.
 - For preschoolers, the MECDHH/GBSD consultant works with various mainstream preschools to help them make their environments as appropriate as possible for a child with a hearing loss.

- **Public School Outreach (PSO) - grades K -12**
 - The emphasis is on assisting the student's regular classroom teacher in making appropriate accommodations for the student with hearing loss. This includes providing the services of an Educational Audiologist.

Social and Emotional Wellness

Recognizing the social isolation that many of their students experience due to lack of communication from peers, SES PSO provides services through a variety of programs designed to develop the social/emotional skills of mainstreamed students. These programs include:

- **Peer Support Groups** - six weekly half-day sessions at both the Center School and other regions throughout the state
- **Regional Programs** -two annual overnights on Mackworth Island
- **ASL Classes** - for both the students as well as their hearing classmates
- **Diversity Awareness Programs** - designed to increase acceptance of individual differences

SES reaches out to the families of mainstreamed deaf/hard of hearing students by offering:

- Family Learning Day during the month of July
- Monthly Family Connections
- The Deaf Mentor Program - which can involve home or classroom visits

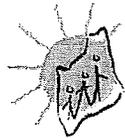
Video Conferences

This year MECDDHH/GBSD continued its efforts to decrease geographic isolation through the use of Video-Conferencing technology. This technology is used for SES Department meetings and GBSD All Staff meetings. The utilization of this technology enables state-wide educational service providers in three locations: Falmouth, Brewer and Aroostook, to maintain strong communication links throughout the year. This effectively negates geographical barriers and minimizes the need to travel long distances to attend meetings.

SES consultants and support staff also shared their expertise this year with families, public school teachers and other service providers across the state. The consultants offered:

- Information-sharing sessions on cochlear implants to MECDDHH/GBSD staff and families of Center School and Outreach students
- Training in auditory skills development to parents
- A series of three workshops on the education of deaf and hard of hearing children in the mainstream
- Monthly presentations to first-year medical students from the University of New England regarding hearing loss and early identification

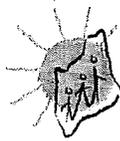
(See Appendix page 3 for SES Student Data.)



Distance Learning Programs

GBSD continues to take the lead in Maine by providing distance learning opportunities from their Asynchronous Transfer Mode (ATM) site. MECDDHH/GBSD is proud to have on faculty a teacher who holds national accreditation in teaching ASL from the American Sign Language Teachers Association. Deaf herself, she broadcasts daily to four high schools (Greely, Massabesic, Houlton, Mt. Valley) reaching a total of 70 high school students who are earning their high school foreign language credits over ATM.

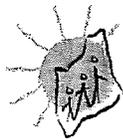
Deafness as a low-incidence disability poses a challenge in some parts of Maine and other New England regions where critical mass is small. Distance-learning technology allows our students to engage in collaborative discussions with individuals from a variety of perspectives all over. This opportunity will immeasurably foster growth for students, both as individuals and as members of a larger community. In recognition of this need, the school/center is exploring possibilities with the federal government for funding to strengthen this link.



Student Support Services

The Student Support Services program continues to provide teachers, students, residential advisors, and families with support in dealing with issues related to social and emotional growth of the students. The program includes a Guidance Counselor, an Educational Psychologist, a consulting Clinical Psychologist, counselors from a community agency, and the School Nurse. The collaboration between the school and Student Support Services has yielded a positive impact. Results are already apparent with reduced discipline problems, less burnout of teaching staff, and more productive classroom participation.

The Student Support Services Team is also mandated to conduct triennial evaluations for all deaf and hard of hearing students throughout the state. Local Education Authorities currently send most students out of state for such testing. Fees for billable services will be assessed for services rendered by our multi-disciplinary team of specialists.



Finances and Operations

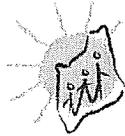
The Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing attained “independent” status as a State agency on July 1, 2002. This transition expands Board responsibilities statewide, in effect making MECDHH a statewide educational agency.

The Business Office has established a new accounting manual and is now audited annually by an independent, outside accounting firm in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. The accounting firm issues the annual audit along with a management letter to the School Board for their review and implementation.

Policies and procedures continue to be reviewed and updated as necessary. Negotiations between the school and the two unions: MSEA and AFSCME took about a year to culminate in the last collective bargaining agreement for 2005-2007.

As the MECDHH/GBSD budget continues to evolve during these lean economic times, additional adjustments were made to ensure that continues with its mission as a statewide educational agency. The budget continues to be very tight. Covering costs of sign language interpreters for students attending Portland High School continues to escalate. The cost to GBSD for interpreters for FY'06 was about \$275,000 with an expected increase for FY'07.

Other expenses were maintained at or below previous fiscal year funding, despite rising costs for energy and other related expenses. Our budgetary needs for capital renovations continue to demand attention. As our buildings and structures continue to age, funds must be devoted to repair and replace as necessary. All of our buildings, with the exception of the new elementary school, were built in the 1960's. Wear and tear as well as time has taken their toll and their continued use during the upcoming fiscal year will be challenging as we attempt to address these needs.



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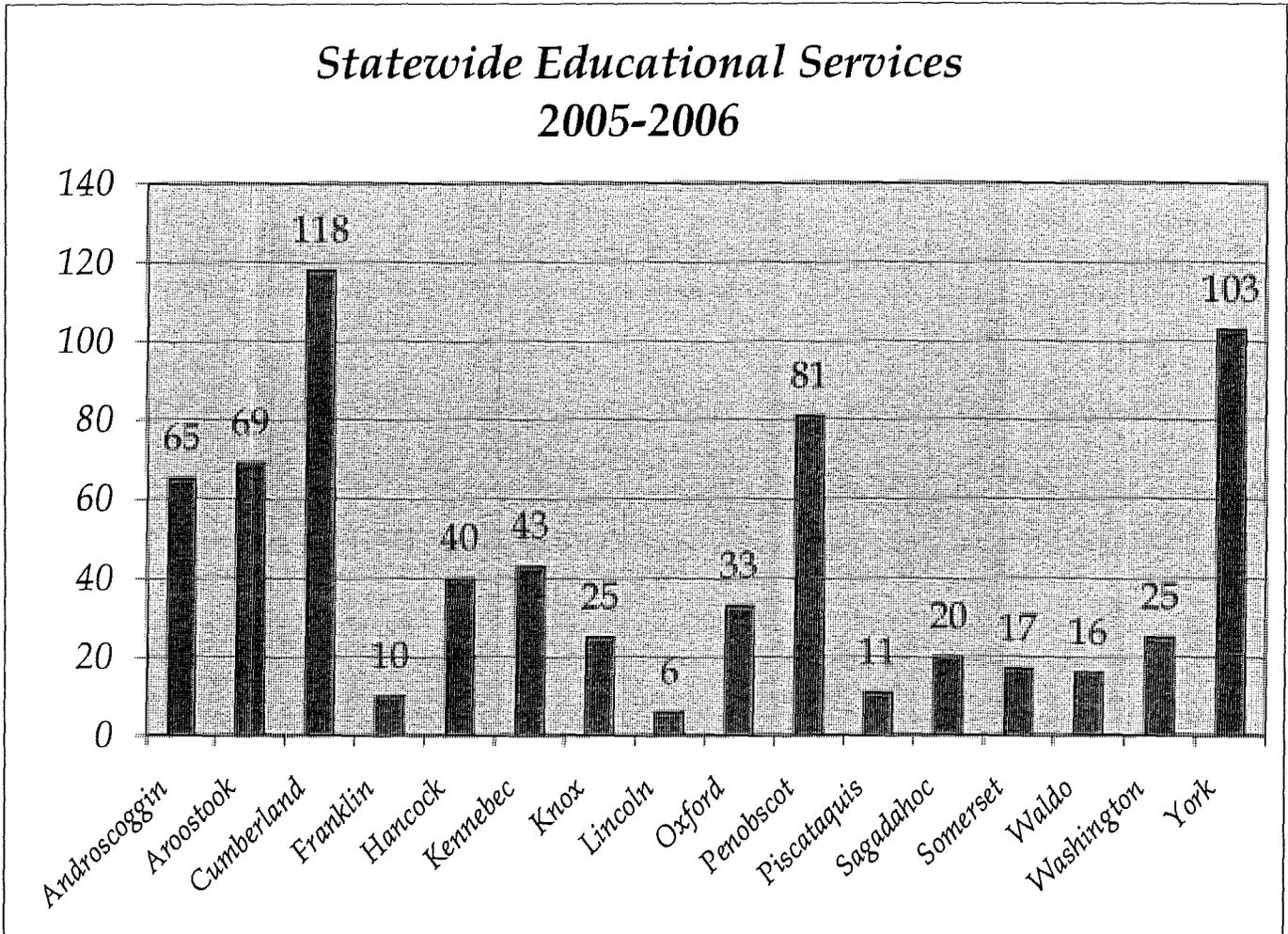
Enrollment at Center School On Mackworth Island

2005 – 2006

Program	Number of Students
Parent Infant Program.....	11
Preschool.....	9
Communication Garden.....	10
Kindergarten.....	5
Grades 2 – 3.....	5
Grade 4.....	5
Grades 5 – 8.....	7
High School.....	8
Community Based Education.....	3
Total	63



SES Students Served in Maine Counties



Enrollment through January 1, 2005:

Public School Outreach Program – 565

Early Childhood and Family Services Program – 89

Parent Infant Toddler Program – 7

Preschool Programs – 21



About the MECDHH/GBSD School Board

Pursuant to Title 20A, MRSA Chapter 304, section 7406, the MECDHH/GBSD School Board is to be comprised of 17 members with experience or special knowledge in the areas of law, finance, organizational issues, management, education, human resources and collective bargaining. Board composition also calls for two student representatives; one who attends the Center School and one who receives Outreach services. At this time, the School Board is working with the Governor's office to fill all board vacancies.

Aside from holding regular monthly board meetings from August through September, the following committees convene on an as-needed basis:

Ad Hoc Committees

Legislative Action Committee
Board Development Committee

Standing Committees

Policy Committee
Finance Committee
Human Resources Committee
Strategic Planning Committee
Building Committee

The Policy Committee

David R. Gaul
Roxanne Baker, Chair
Romy Spitz

The Finance Committee

Donald Miller, Chair
Nick Nadzo
Susan Blethen

The status and qualifications of School Board members of MECDHH/GBSD are as follows:

- 1. Roxanne Baker** *Term Expired 10/31/05*
Rep. Deaf Community
Organizational Issues

Roxanne Baker has been serving as a representative of the Deaf Community on the School Board since it became a self-governing board in 1997. She serves as a member of the Board's Policy Committee and Strategic Planning Committee.

Ms. Baker is a graduate of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf. She teaches American Sign Language/Deaf Culture at the University of Southern Maine. Ms. Baker graduated from Gallaudet University in Washington DC. Also, Ms. Baker

has served on two Legislative Task Force committees to review and study the educational programs of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf and its governance system.

2. Susan Blethen *Term expires 09/17/08*

Rep. Parent of Deaf/HH student receiving outreach services

Ms. Blethen twenty plus years experience as a public school speech/language clinician and is currently working for the South Portland Public schools. She has worked with deaf and hard of hearing children in both mainstreamed and self-contained settings as well as with the Outreach staff from the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf. She is married and the mother of two boys. The younger, age 16, is deaf and attends Portland High School. She has taken courses in American Sign Language and as an interested parent studied the history of deaf education.

Ms. Blethen's college background consists of a B.S. in Speech and Hearing Handicapped Education from the State University of New York in Geneseo, 1975 and an M.A. in Communication Disorders from the University of Maine, 1979.

3. David R. Gaul *Term Expires 09/17/08*

Rep. Deaf Education
Education

David Gaul has been a member of the Governor Baxter School Board since 1998 and serves on the Board's Policy and Strategic Planning Committees. Mr. Gaul retired as a full-time Maine School Superintendent in 1996 after serving thirty-six years as school superintendent and professional educator in Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. In 1997 to 1998, he served as the interim Superintendent of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf for a period of eight months. He is currently employed part-time as the State Agent/Superintendent for the Town of Long Island in Casco Bay.

Mr. Gaul received his Bachelors Degree from the University of Maine, Farmington and his Masters Degree from Bridgewater State College in Massachusetts. Graduate work was completed at the University of New Hampshire and Boston University. Mr. Gaul is a native of Maine and the parent of four children. He and his wife have resided in Damariscotta for the past 27 years.

4. Donald Miller *Term Expires 09/17/08*

Rep. Public
Finance

Mr. Miller, a native of Portland, graduated from Portland schools and has a BA in Business and Economics from the University of Maine in Orono. He brings with

him over 30 years in the banking industry specifically in the area of Cash Management and Data Services.

A longtime member of the Portland Rotary Club, Mr. Miller was also active in the Advance Gifts area of the United Way of Greater Portland.

5. Nicholas S. Nadzo *Term Expired 10/31/05*

Rep. Public at Large

Law

Nick Nadzo is an attorney with the Portland law firm of Jensen, Baird, Gardner & Henry and concentrates his practice in the area of environmental and energy law, with a focus on municipal solid waste and hazardous materials. Prior to joining the firm, Nick served as Assistant Corporation Counsel for the District of Columbia and as Trial Attorney in the Lands and Natural Resources Division of the US Department of Justice. In addition, Nick has represented numerous public and private schools throughout the State.

Nick received his B.A. from Hamilton College (1965) and his J.D. from George Washington University Law School (with honors, 1968). Currently, Nick is President of PCA Great Performances and serves on the Board of Trustees of the Portland Public Library. He formerly served as a member of the Governor's Task Force on the Maine School for Visual and Performing Arts, and held two elected terms on the Portland School Committee. He and his wife Elaine, who is a special education teacher with the Falmouth Schools, have lived in the historic Stroudwater section of Portland for over 20 years. They have three grown children.

6. Diane St. Lawrence, Chair *Term Expires 09/17/08*

Rep. Deaf Education

Joining the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf Board in 2001, Diane St. Lawrence serves as an educator of children who are deaf and hard of hearing. Ms. St. Lawrence also serves as a member of the Board's Strategic Planning Committee. She has more than 20 years of experience in the field of education and has worked as a teacher in the Maine School Administrative District #48 in Newport since 1981. Ms. St. Lawrence is a graduate of Southeastern Massachusetts University and holds a Masters Degree in Education of the Deaf from Gallaudet University in Washington, DC.

7. Sylvia D. Schroeder, Vice Chair *Term Expired 09/17/05*

Rep. Public

Human Resources

Ms. Schroeder represents the general community. Through her work as a clinical social worker, Ms. Schroeder became aware that there were no mental health services for deaf children and their families. Her interest began in Massachusetts and continued in Maine. Now retired, Ms. Schroeder continues her work through volunteering on various boards, and securing scholarships for future deaf social workers and fund raising.

8. Romy V. Spitz *Term Expires 09/17/05*
Rep. Deaf Community
Education

Romy V. Spitz has served on the School Board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf as a member of the Deaf Community since 2000. She also serves as a member of the Policy Committee and as the Board Representative to the Teacher Certification Steering Committee. Dr. Spitz has almost 20 years experience in research on communication in atypically communicating populations including children and adults with spoken and signed language impairments and specializes in the cognitive and communication abilities of deaf individuals who fail to develop language due to lack of exposure to any accessible language model (i.e. "homesigners") both here in the United States and in Nicaragua. In addition to research, Dr. Spitz leads the Communication Assessment Team for the Bureau of Behavioral Developmental Services in Maine. She received her doctoral degree at the University of California, San Diego.

9. Vacant Rep. Parent of GBSD Student

10. Vacant Parent of Student Enrolled in Residential Program

11. Jesse Zorski Student Representative receiving outreach services

12. Clayton Marr III Student Representative GBSD

13. Vacant Rep. Parent of Deaf child receiving outreach services

14. Vacant Rep. Deaf Community

15. Vacant Rep. Public - Special Education

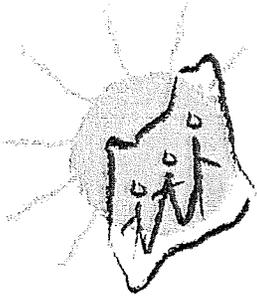
16. Vacant Rep. Public - Management

17. Sarah Whitfield *Term Expires: 10/10/08*
Rep. Public

Sarah Whitfield has been a member of the Governor Baxter School Board since 2006 and serves on the Strategic Planning Committee and is chair

of the Legislative Action Committee. Sarah is a sophomore at Colby College majoring in Government. Sarah is also in her second term as a member of the Wiscasset School Committee where she serves on the Wellness Committee and is co-chair of the Physical Plant Committee.

Sarah is currently an intern in U.S. Senator Susan Collins office in Augusta and is a research assistant in the Government Department at Colby. When not at Colby, Sarah resides in Wiscasset.



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

STRATEGIC PLAN

August 24, 2006

AGENCIES

Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Bureau of the Budget

State Planning Office

Office of Fiscal & Program Review

Office of Policy & Legal Analysis



Strategic Plan

Introduction and Environmental Assessment

The Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and The Governor Baxter School for the Deaf are the primary resources in Maine's ongoing commitment to providing a continuum of educational programs and services for its deaf and hard of hearing children in accordance with Title 20-A, MRSA Chapter 304, section 7401. However, MECDHH & GBSD have a unique role and function in ways beyond that of traditional public schools. As both a public school and an agency of the state, MECDHH/GBSD provides educational services statewide through programs at the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf on Mackworth Island and through educational outreach services. We are charged by the State of Maine to ensure that all deaf and hard of hearing students acquire a free and appropriate public education as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in one of our direct service programs or at the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf. The intent of the law is reflected in our organizational mission and vision statements and the values posited in both statements clearly articulate the direction of the two major components that enable MECDHH/GBSD to carry out its role as an education instrumentality and agency of the state.

To accomplish this vision, MECDHH/GBSD provides a broad range of quality services tailored to the diverse linguistic and cognitive needs of all of Maine's deaf and hard of hearing students. The population we serve has diverse needs and involves children with unique communication approaches that require educational programming that cannot be adequately addressed in any one setting. In order to meet their needs, we must expand and modify service options to appropriately serve students while meeting Maine's high expectations for student learning and outcomes on an annual basis. Currently, at the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf, we provide instruction to deaf and hard of hearing children utilizing the dual language model whereby American Sign Language (ASL)/English serves as the language of instruction based on individual student needs. Accordingly, all professional staff are trained at nationally accredited teacher and related professional training programs specializing in deaf education. Deafness is a low incidence sensory disability and MECDHH/GBSD competes with all other schools for the deaf for this very limited pool of highly specialized professionals.

In view of the diversity of deaf and hard of hearing children, each program experiences different challenges from year to year based on ever-changing student needs. MECDHH/GBSD meets these challenges with proactive and innovative programming to achieve educational goals. Students who are enrolled in public schools in their home school district ideally should be those who stand the most chance of success studying and learning in the general educational curriculum with their hearing peers with a minimum of support. These students are either hard of hearing or deaf with literacy skills close to, or at, grade level. For these students, we are implementing additional support programs recommended by the Needs Assessment Team (NAT). This team was appointed by the State Board of Education in its February 2002 report to the State Legislature's joint standing Educational and Cultural Affairs Committee in order to increase the level of services administered by our educational consultants. These consultants are certified Teachers of the Deaf.

At the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf, it is imperative that enough students are enrolled to achieve optimal learning through cohort groups; the critical mass needed to generate learning among peers. These deaf children need to be grouped together to foster linguistic, academic and social emotional development. We strive to keep a community of learners together to thrive in this learning environment of like peers at each grade level. For students of high school age, we have established a viable partnership with Portland High School towards this end. Our deaf students are given the opportunity to access the general curriculum while still staying within their cohort group. This arrangement fosters effective group learning among peers who have a common language.

Since student needs are ever-changing, it is necessary to be proactive and to do innovative programming. We are now making adjustments to meet the needs of a new cadre of students entering the Kindergarten program next fall. The developmental needs of these children who have cochlear implants or are hard of hearing necessitate that we adopt and provide a half a day of instruction in American Sign language and the other half day in spoken English.

We are preparing teachers and all the other related service professionals to address their communication needs.

As previously noted, current funding levels make it necessary to re-allocate funds to achieve as many program modifications as needed. We will do this as a first option. However, current funding will only engender limited expansion so we have begun to consider other sources of revenue in addition to the state allocation to achieve programmatic growth and development on a larger scale.



STRATEGIC PLAN

Which changes occurring will affect us?

A. Funding

Funding sources were modified since the enactment of the legislative task force recommendations into Title 20-A, MRSA Chapter 304, section 7404. As MECDHH/GBSD continues with its mission, budget planning and expenditures have been achieved to the extent possible allowed by the current funding levels. Careful budget planning allowed us to meet all student needs and fulfill all educational mandates. Alternate budget plans were made to meet new needs or sustain current services and programs. The status of such funding is described below:

1. Support Services

Since 2000, GBSD provides for all funding to cover expenses for key support services, such as interpreters and one-on-one Educational Technicians when the state ceased charging SAUs for such additional services. Now, the only way MECDHH/GBSD can procure funding for new services is to submit Part II budget requests if new students require additional services currently outside the scope of our current operating budget for FY '07. GBSD's partnership with Portland High School includes the expectation that we provide a team of sign language interpreters; the cost has risen over the past few years from \$200,000 to about \$280,000. So far, MECDHH/GBSD has been able to cover this cost within the present budget. Projections for next year indicate that the costs should remain stable.

2. Mandated Satellite Site

Title 20-A, MRSA Chapter 304, section 7404.17 mandates that the school board do what is required to establish a satellite school program in North Central Maine in accordance with the February 2002 recommendations of the Needs Assessment Team. Since that time, a satellite program has been established and it now serves 198 deaf and hard of hearing children. MECDHH/GBSD will continue trying to expand its scope of outreach services outlined in the NAT's recommendations now that the state legislature has given us the opportunity to generate alternate revenue through the lease of unused building space and a fee-for-service system for increased services when requested by the SAU...

3. Early Intervention Programs

This service has expanded since the last environmental assessment was submitted. MECDHH/GBSD members play an integral role in the provision of early intervention services as mandated under the Part C provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Two

members of our Early Childhood Intervention team are part of the Maine Newborn Hearing Screening Program Board, a commission appointed by Governor Baldacci. There may be a need to further expand the ECFS program and this can be achieved through budget re-allocations. As of this writing, there were nearly 14,000 total births. Of this number, 12,600 babies were screened, 12,325 passed their screening and 284 were referred for further evaluations. Eighty-eight of these babies were evaluated by audiologists, and 24 were identified as having hearing loss. Of the larger group that passed the initial screening, four were evaluated by audiologists and nine were identified with hearing loss. In the past year, we have had 16 newly diagnosed infants assigned to our Early Childhood Family Services Team (ECFS). Twenty-one other children, ages one to five, were also referred to ECFS this year. All told, ECFS now serves 108 families.

B. Resources

1. Technology

As was noted in the prior environmental assessment, we have reduced the isolation experienced by deaf and hard of hearing students in Maine, a state that is “small demographically but large geographically”. MECDHH/GBSD continues to be a trend setter in the creative use of the state’s ATM resources and provides ASL instruction to three different groups: high school students for foreign language credit, families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing and now, as an adult education course.

2. Academic Enrichment

The state and federal mandates for higher standards and student outcomes has resulted in our on-going planning to give all students the opportunity to acquire the fundamental skills needed for life long learning through greater emphasis on literacy and numeracy throughout the school day. At the upper elementary grades we have a cadre of students who have secondary disabilities. This necessitated that we redesign our instructional program with greater emphasis on constructivist based learning. In this way, this student group is given the opportunity to apply what they learn in their classes to relevant projects and community-based activities. As previously stated, new students in need of more intensive services may necessitate the assignment of an Educational Technician III to meet IEP goals. For that to happen, we will have to factor costs in the Part II budget for FY’07.



Impact on the Agency

Summary

Financial and Human Resources

Since the current economy in Maine is still in a state of austerity, it is expected that MECDHH/GBSD's budget will be held at current funding levels for an undetermined period of time. The increases in costs for human resources may be an area that poses some concern. The state Department of Financial and Administrative Services (DAFS) has covered all health benefits increases and intends to add 3% in salaries commensurate with salary increases given to all state employees for FY '06 and '07.

The sustaining of current levels of programs is the best we can expect with current funding levels. If we want to implement a large part of the NAT's recommendations for programmatic expansion around the state, we must look outside traditional sources of funding. The Maine State Legislature has given us their support to lease unused space around the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf campus to generate additional revenue to use towards programmatic growth. This kind of arrangement must be done in keeping with the expectations of the 1943 Baxter Deed. The plan will require creative thinking on how to use money and resources to generate a larger pool of revenue to fully implement the NAT proposal.

MECDHH/GBSD's planned expansion may now have a chance to fulfill its mission with a more comprehensive plan.

At this time, our capacity as a team of professionals is still small but there is growth potential. Such growth will make it possible to eliminate, on a larger scale, the historical trend of limited services to deaf and hard of hearing students around the state. This may be accomplished through sources of funding other than sole reliance on Part II budget funding requests.

MECDHH/GBSD will creatively use revenue from leased space as seed money to build a new cottage-style dormitory for our Independent Living Skills Residential program. This initiative will free up the current dormitory to be converted for professional use and engender an increased cash flow to be used to implement the 2002 NAT proposal.



STRATEGIC PLAN Goals & Objectives

Strategic Goal A: Ensure that all deaf and hard of hearing children in Maine have access to a free and appropriate public education by providing a continuum of educational services that will assist them in achieving their maximum potential.

Strategic Objective A.1: By January 2008, increase the number of deaf and hard of hearing children statewide that achieve successful post-secondary transition to: a job, college, technical program, vocational training or continuing education program.

Program Strategy A.1
Provide a quality educational, residential, and outreach program for Maine's deaf and hard of hearing children grades pre-K to 12.

Performance Measures	FY'04 baseline	FY'05 actual	FY'06 Projected	FY'07 Projected	FY'08 Projected
1. The total number of deaf and hard of hearing student statewide receiving services offered by MECDHH/GBSD as reported by the programs	602	615	703	715	725
2. Number of contacts with students who are the first time users of MECDHH/GBSD services	110	115	104	125	130
3. Percent of students receiving services who complete a program leading to graduation and achieve successful post-secondary transition	100%	95%	100%	97%	97%
4. Number of school administrative units utilizing MECDHH/GBSD services	151	160	168	175	180

Explanatory Notes

- MECDHH & GBSD is the abbreviation for Governor Baxter School for the Deaf, which encompasses the Center School on Mackworth Island and Statewide Educational Services.
- Some numbers are approximate. Estimated numbers are based on anticipated enrollment of preschool children and referrals from public school programs.
- Interagency coordination will occur with Dept. of Labor (Vocational Rehabilitation and Division of Deafness) regarding successful transition of MECDHH/GBSD students.
- There are a total of 285 school administrative units, comprised of 492 municipalities in Maine.
- Number of school administrative units include all 16 Child Development Services (CDS) sites.
- More specific data will be collected to determine transition of students.
- NA = Not available at this time.



Organizational Structure

The Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
The Governor Baxter School for the Deaf

