

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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# annual report

2006/2007

## Center School Programs

Serving Children and their Families from  
Birth through High School

### 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; and 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



GBSD's Stacey Smith of Richmond takes part in Pinwheels for Peace, one of many collaborative educational events organized with the mainstream schools on Mackworth Island.



Bella Hernden brushes up his painting skills in GBSD's Communication Garden. This program is for children ages 3 to 5 who are experiencing language delays.

goal of this group is to offer support and networking opportunities to families and to foster an understanding of cognitive and language development. 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

The Governor Baxter School for the Deaf's preschool provides 4 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.

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## Executive Summary

### A Message from Superintendent Dr. Larry Taub

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 opportunities and support to Maine's Deaf and Hard of Hearing children.

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 our center school, The Governor Baxter School for the Deaf, literacy continues to be the paramount objective for our students. Training was provided to school leaders and was sustained throughout the year with support from outside consultants. The consultants assisted our administrators and teachers with bring-based learning assessments and teaching strategies. This also gave rise to the development of reading and writing aids based on American Sign Language. 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 deafness that are 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, our newest 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 that promote entrepreneurship as follows: the fashion design program, the pottery project and the cooking program. These activities culminated in the marketing and sales of the students' wares. Money raised from these projects was then donated to worthy causes of the students' choice.

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 570 students in public schools and 102 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.

## Center School Programs

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### Communication Garden 3 - 5 years of age

This pre-school program is designed to evolve from year to year and adapt itself to meet the ever changing needs of the community. Communication Garden in 2006/2007 was designed primarily for hearing children age 3 to 5 years of age who had delayed speech and language and who needed 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.

In the current 2007/2008 year, Communication Garden includes programming for children with mild to profound hearing loss. It is one of MECDHH's fastest growing programs.

### 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

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## Center School Programs

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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.



On June 7, 2007, MECDHH/GBSD hosted graduates of the Portland High School/GBSD program along with other outreach graduating seniors and their families for a lobster dinner and celebration of their graduation. Dr. Frank R. Turk, a Deaf educator and rights advocate gave the keynote address.

### 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, MECDHH developed a very innovative partnership with Portland High School. This collaboration continues for



Three young readers in MECDHH's Communication Garden program. This program is designed to evolve from year to year and adapt itself to meet the ever changing needs of the community.

the fourth year. The components of the high school program include: an academic program at Portland High School; after school sports and activities programs at GBSD; and a residential program at GBSD.

The high school students who attend Portland High School also have the option of Portland Arts and Technical High School (PATHS) for part of their academic day. These students for the 2006-2007 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 Northeastern 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. 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. A teacher of the deaf joins the residential program at the end of the school day to provide academic support to high school students who need extra help.

All of the GBSD Residential

A teacher of the deaf joins the residential program at the end of the school day to provide academic support to high school students who need extra help.

Assistants certified in First Aid and CPR. We have also instituted a comprehensive incident reporting system to notify parents immediately of any social or emotional issues that may arise in the dorm. In addition, we provide 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, this consultant is charged with the task of helping the adult staff, both in the dorm and school work more effectively and professionally with challenging behaviors

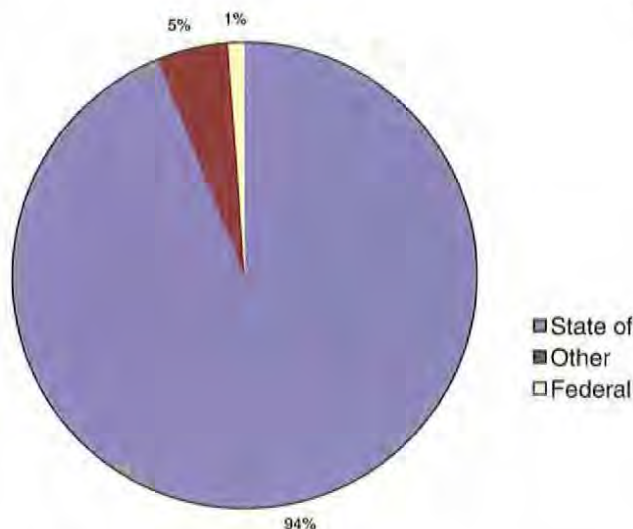
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## Finances and Operations

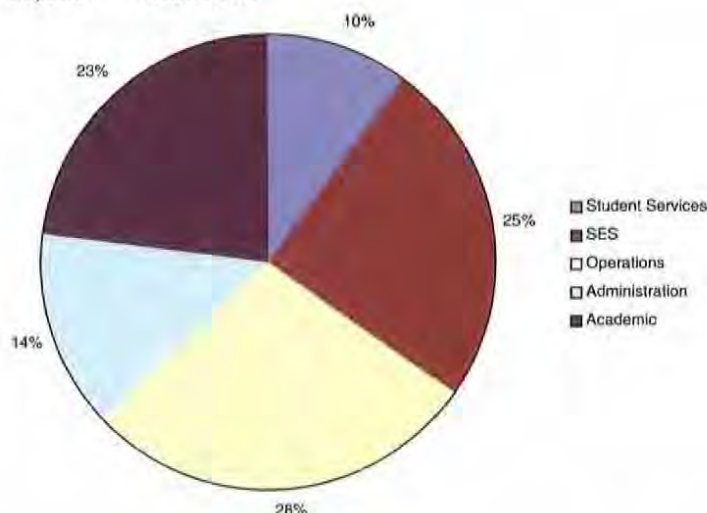
### TOTAL REVENUES

\$6,254,718	State of Maine
\$342,524	Other Income
\$74,208	Federal Funds



### TOTAL EXPENSES

\$649,215	Student Services
\$1,561,708	SES
\$1,781,525	Operations
\$912,441	Administration
\$1,468,012	Academic



During the 2006/2007 fiscal year, MECDHH successfully completed negotiations between MSEA and AFSME, the two unions representing most of the staff working on Mackworth Island. A two-year agreement was signed by both unions and cost of living increases of 2% for each fiscal year highlighted the negotiations.

MECDHH and the State of Maine agreed to a biennial budget for the upcoming two fiscal years that included small increases relating to fuel and energy consumption but overall reflected no other increases for all the other expenses. Areas of concern continue to be covering the costs of sign language interpreters for students attending Portland High School as the program grows in popularity. The growth of this program has also resulted in an increase in our residential program and an increased demand for resources.

Our budgetary needs for continued capital renovation and

improvements remain at the forefront as our physical plant continues to show its age. The Patriot's Day storm of 2007 required emergency allocations from the State of Maine as major damage occurred throughout Mackworth Island, in particular, damage to the causeway that connects the island to the mainland. MECDHH has submitted claims to FEMA seeking reimbursement for the removal of downed trees and overtime associated with the storm.

Finally, our on island tenants, the Real School of Windham and the Friends School of Portland continue to expand and have requested additional space for the next fiscal year. With the additional rental income MECDHH is exploring options to access this money to leverage capital money to renovate or construct new structures on island to meet changing and demanding unmet needs.

## Center School Programs

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or mental health issues if they arise. This has been instrumental in reducing behavior problems and improving the quality of the school's learning environment.

### Student Support Programs

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.



## Statewide Educational Services

Outreach services are provided throughout the state of Maine by the MECDHH Statewide

Educational Services (SES) department. SES outreach 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 Caribou covering Aroostook, Washington, Piscataquis, and Northern Penobscot Counties. Three full-time consultants are based in the north central Maine region from an office in Bangor.

### Early Childhood and

#### Family Services - ages 0 - 5

For birth to three-year-old children, our Early Childhood and Family Services (ECFS) consultants emphasize educating families on how to raise deaf and hard of hearing children. For preschoolers, the MECDHH/GBSD consultants work with various mainstream preschools to help them make their envi-

ronments as appropriate as possible for a child with a hearing loss.

### Public School Outreach grades K -12

The emphasis in Public School Outreach is on assisting mainstream classroom teachers 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, Public School Outreach offers 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



Public School Outreach consultant Roxane Davis with student.

## Statewide Educational Services Students Served by Program and County

Counties	Public School Outreach	Early Childhood Family Services	Parent Infant/Toddler Program	Preschool Programs
Androscoggin	61	15	1	10
Aroostook	73	11		
Cumberland	90	19	1	
Franklin	15	1		
Hancock	34	7		
Kennebec	35	4		
Knox	15	11		
Lincoln	5	2		
Oxford	26	6		
Penobscot	75	9		
Piscataquis	10	8		
Sagadahoc	15	2		3
Somerset	13	2		
Waldo	14	1		
Washington	14	4		
York	95	15	2	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>589</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>

SES also 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



## Distance Learning

### Distance Learning Programs

**M**ECDDH/GBSD continues to take the lead in Maine by providing distance learning opportunities from Mackworth Island to sites across the state. The distance learning program offers four levels of **American Sign Language as a Modern Language**. This course for high school credit is currently offered to Greely and Mountain Valley High Schools. **ASL for Families** is also offered via distant learning. This course, free of charge for the families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing, is offered in the fall and spring to families in the MECDDH community who wish to increase their communication skills with their children. Also in the fall and spring via distance learning, MECDDH/GBSD offers **ASL for a Hearing Community**. This is a tuition based 15 week course available to the anyone in the greater community interested in learning American Sign Language.

MECDDH/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 high schools throughout the state reaching a total of 38 high school students who are earning their high school foreign

language credits over the distance learning network.

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, 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.

### Video Conferences

**T**his year MECDDH/GBSD continued its efforts to decrease geographic isolation through the use of Video-Conferencing technology. This technology is used for or Statewide Educational Services department meetings and MECDDH/GBSD All Staff meetings. The utilization of this technology enables state-wide educational service providers in three locations: Falmouth, Bangor, and Aroostook, to maintain strong communication links throughout the year. This



ASL teacher Sandy Morrison demonstrates a sign to students present in the classroom and to remote classrooms in other parts of the state.

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 MECDDH/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.

## The Foundation for Maine's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children Building a Community through the MECDDH/GBSD Fundraising Organization

**T**he Foundation for Maine's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children is a 501(c)3 charitable corporation organized under the laws of the state of Maine. The Foundation, which is fiscally and legally separate from MECDDH/GBSD, exists for the sole purpose of providing support for programs and activities that enhance the quality of education and expand the educational opportunities for students served by MECDDH/GBSD.

The Foundation activities and resources are managed by a Board of Directors comprised of residents of Maine. Board members, who serve without compensation, bring to the Foundation a community perspective and high level of management and leadership skills. These individuals have a strong interest in the well being of students and families served by MECDDH/GBSD. They are committed to using their talents, energy and influence to generate regional support for MECDDH/GBSD.



The 4th Annual Mackworth Island Show & Shine, a car show sponsored by the Falmouth Rotary Club and the Downeast Region Porsche Club of America is great family fun and raises thousands of dollars each year.