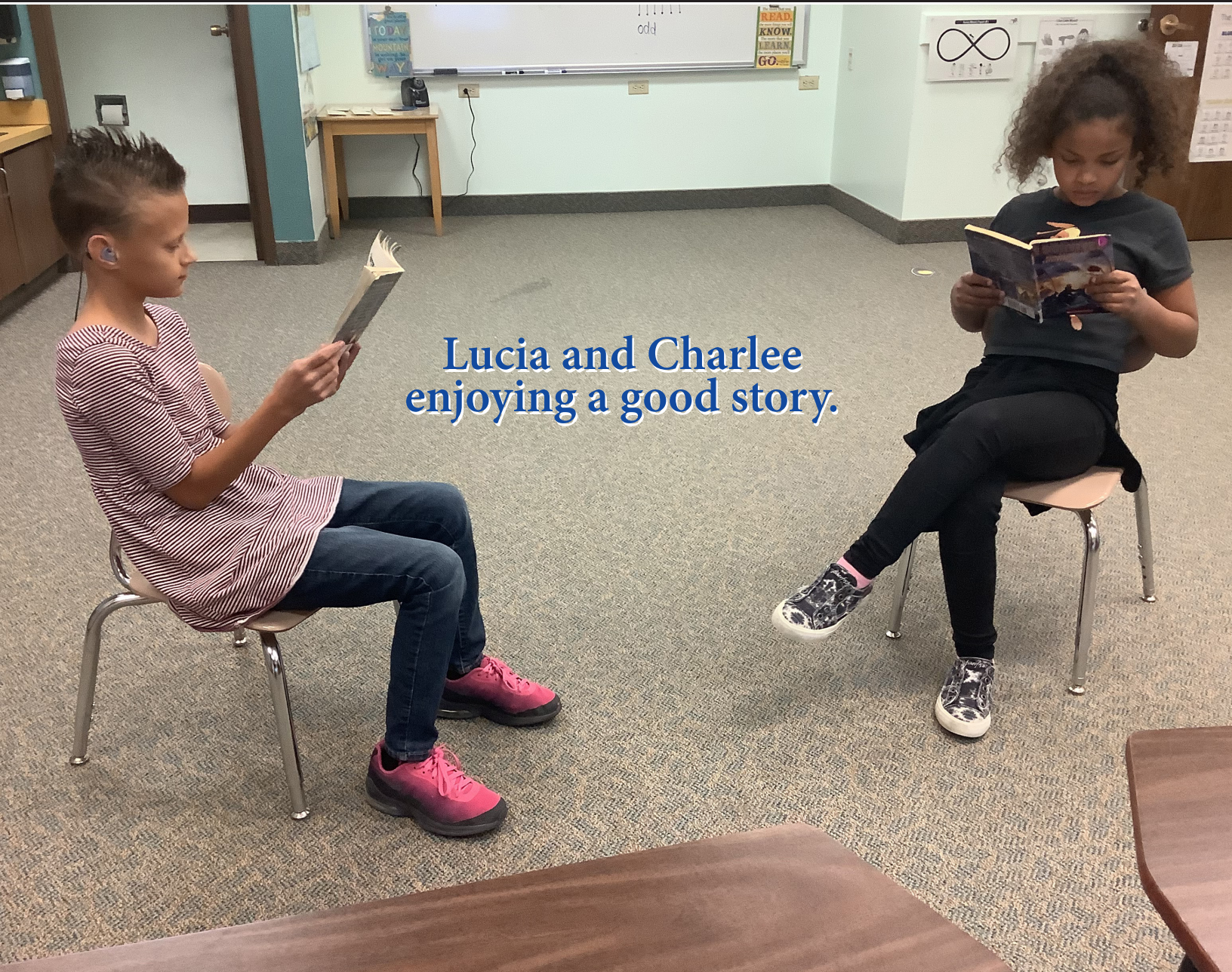




MONTANA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF & THE BLIND Express

lifting students beyond expectations

Volume XXXII Issue 1, Fall 2021



**Lucia and Charlee
enjoying a good story.**

From Our Superintendent



Wow!! I am not sure what changes more drastically; the weather or the current society landscape in which we live. Nonetheless, MSDB is dedicated to our students learning and progressing to meet the goal of independent living. At the conclusion of last year it felt like Spring around campus, as we looked forward to implementation of all our new initiatives we had planned. There was a bounce in our step and glow in our eyes. However, just four short months after; it definitely feels like Fall around here. At times it feels as if all our springful ideas are just starting to fall to the ground as we prepare for another year similar to last year. All our energy built up over the summer to implement our ideas has been diverted to daily checks on new COVID guidance. Ok! Enough of that! I am ready to share all the great things that are happening right now at MSDB.

I could not be more proud of my staff and our students. They have been champions and come to school daily ready to learn. The excitement of teachers when a new strategy is working with a student (or a group of students) makes my job the best. At the end of last school year, we had 13 openings at MSDB for employment. The new staff have been a welcomed addition to our school. They have brought years of experience and in some cases, some youthful ideas and energy that we need right now for our students. But wait, it's not just the new Mustangs on campus shining; many of our veteran staff members are as well, as they have taken on mentoring roles for our new staff, formally and informally. I cannot say thank you enough to the mentors and mentees that are working with this last minute initiative.

Did I mention last year that we received a \$400,000 literacy grant? Yes, sir!!! Throughout the summer months you could find several Mustang staff members working on this grant. They spent a great deal of time making sure the program had an appropriate literacy assessment for our students to measure growth. They then began putting together a Core Literacy program for our students. That is the goal of the literacy initiative this year, implementing this core program and building on it next year to even better support our students. I will share more about the core program in the next issue of the Express.

Expanding opportunities for our graduates after high school is another initiative that is starting to show signs of blooming. This year, MSDB has developed the LEAP Program (Living, Employment, Academics Program). The goal of the program is to provide an 8-month intensive program to students that are still transitioning between high school and independent life. It has been awesome to watch these students already and we are only in the first two months. These students have been expected to feed themselves, take care of their rooms, and develop employability skills. The program is working in conjunction with a students vocational rehabilitation counselor to ensure support is there after the program. I cannot wait to share year end data with everyone on the effectiveness of the program.

Lastly, now that we reached our accreditation goal in June we continue working with Cognia to develop our long-term vision (3-5 years). This initiative will consist of a group of individuals working towards envisioning the future while we consider the current educational reality. We will work to develop a bridge between the two and develop yearly initiatives to move forward with meeting our goals. The current reality will be created with staff, student, parent, and community input; so please be on the lookout for surveys towards the end of October. Then in November, we will create focus groups to better understand what was illustrated by the survey data.

As you can see, MSDB students and staff are actively working to make MSDB the best school it can be. Yes, we will continue to monitor and deal with COVID; but we will not let it dictate our school year. We will Spring into the rest of the year with open minds and ideas. I truly believe MSDB is ready for a great year! Thank you to our staff, students, and parents! ❖

Best, Paul Furthmyre
Interim Superintendent
pfurthmyre@msdb.k12.mt.us

Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind Earns Cognia Accreditation

Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB) is proud to announce that it has earned accreditation by Cognia, a nonprofit organization that provides quality assurance for schools, school districts, and education service providers.

Cognia, formerly AdvancED, nationally recognizes districts that meet rigorous standards focused on productive learning environments, equitable resource allocation that meets the needs of learners, and effective leadership. Earning accreditation from the Cognia Global Accreditation Commission means that the school is accredited, and that MSDB is recognized across the nation as a school that meets Cognia Standards of Quality, and maintains a commitment to continuous improvement.

“School accreditation as conferred by the Cognia Global Accreditation Commission provides MSDB a nationally recognized mark of quality for our school,” shared Interim Superintendent Paul Furthmyre. “It demonstrates to our community our commitment to excellence, our openness to external review and feedback, and our desire to be the best we can be on behalf of the students we serve.”



To earn Cognia accreditation, a school district also must implement a continuous process of improvement, and submit to internal and external review. Schools in good standing can maintain their accreditation for a five-year term.

Dr. Mark A. Elgart, president and CEO of Cognia, stated, “Cognia Accreditation is a rigorous process that focuses the entire school and its community on the primary goal of preparing lifelong learners in engaging environments where all students can flourish. MSDB is to be commended for demonstrating that it has met high standards, and is making progress on key indicators that impact student learning.”

Cognia is the parent organization of the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI). Parents and interested community members can learn more about the Cognia Accreditation at cognia.org ■■

IN THIS ISSUE

Page 2

- Letter From Our Superintendent

Page 3

- Cognia Accreditation

Page 4-5

- Meet Our New Staff

Page 6

- Preschool Corner

Page 7

- Strolling Through Campus

Page 8-9

- Letter from Foundation Board Chair
- Kristina Rosenberg
- 5 Ways to Give to MSDB
- Seeking Board Members

Page 10

- Indian Education for all Week

Page 11

- VRBS & Pre-Ets:
Two Fabulous Programs

Page 12

- Learning In and Out
of the Classroom

Page 13

- Stages of reading

Page 14

- Job Training Opportunities at
the School Store

Page 15

- Magnificent MaKayla

Page 16

- Letter from the Editor
- The Pandemic and The Importance
of Being Kind

Meet Our New Staff



Howdy!

Jaime Jones - Teacher

My name is Jaime Jones. I was born and raised in Livingston MT, after I graduated from high school I attended college at MSU-Billings. I got a degree in Music Education and got my first teaching job in Drummond MT! I went from one of the largest cities in Montana to one of the smallest cities! I loved it though.

I moved up to Kalispell and continued teaching, it was a fun and wonderful place to work and enjoy nature. Besides music and instruments, I enjoy hiking, fishing, hunting, and biking. I also enjoy playing sports like volleyball, tennis and golf.

I am married to a wonderful man and have one daughter. I am sure that most of the students at MSDB know her already, her name is Gracie. She is the reason I came to work here at MSDB. Gracie decided last spring she wanted to attend MSDB and it's been the best decision. She is visually impaired and loves this school!

I am very happy to be here and I am loving this school as well! The students, teachers and staff that work together at this school are helpful, amazing and inspiring. I am almost always greeted with a smile! I am excited to see what the rest of this school year will bring. 🍀



Hi!

Alissa Kline - Teacher

My name is Alissa Kline, and this is my 17th year teaching. When I moved to Great Falls almost 20 years ago, I started my career at MSDB as a substitute in the DHH department. Then I was hired by Great Falls Public Schools where I taught elementary grades (K, 1st, 3rd, 4th and 5th). I am really happy to be back at MSDB teaching 1st and 4th grades in the DHH department.

As for my family, my husband runs the Service Shop at Bighorn Outdoor Specialists. We have a daughter in 5th grade and a son in 2nd grade this year. We love to do things as a family, especially spending time outdoors like biking, hiking and swimming. My kids and I enjoy cooking/baking, sewing and reading together.

Thank you for such a warm welcome to MSDB! 🍀



Hello!

Morgan Makar - Teacher

My name is Ms. Makar. Growing up in Utah, I constantly volunteered to work with students. In that experience I found a passion for teaching. My first teaching experience began in high school teaching children how to swim.

I was fortunate enough to have the experience of being taught ASL from Deaf friends and eventually used that knowledge to teach swimming to a deaf student.

At MSDB, I teach communication, science, ELE, and social studies to elementary students.

I enjoy swimming, water polo, crocheting, and reading. My favorite subject is science because of the fun experiments we get to do! The color I use the most when coloring a picture is purple. I don't have any pets, but I love cats. 🍀

Meet Our New Staff



Hello!

Crystal Oring - Outreach

My name is Crystal Oring and I have been involved with MSDB for over 10 years. I first learned about MSDB as a parent of a Deaf child. My family received so much information and support from MSDB, Family Advisors, the Outreach Team, and incredible Deaf mentors in our community that I wanted to be a part of that support system for other families. I received my bachelor's degree in American Sign Language-English Interpreting from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, Colorado, and I recently accepted the Outreach Consultant position for MSDB, covering the southeast region of Montana. I am so excited to be part of this team, and to help provide resources, support, and encouragement to d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing Montana students and their families.

To view a map of my service area, visit <https://www.msdbmustangs.org/outreach/outreach-overview/>.

■ ■



Hi!

Mikhael Rosenberg - Teacher

My name is Mikhael (Mike) Rosenberg, and I am a new teacher here at MSDB. I am currently teaching Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing students a wide variety of classes, Social Studies, Algebra, Woodshop, and Life Skills just to name a few. I recently moved here from Southern California where I taught Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing students at California School for the Deaf in Riverside for 14 years. I look forward to making Montana and MSDB my new home as well as having a successful year, learning with the students. ■ ■



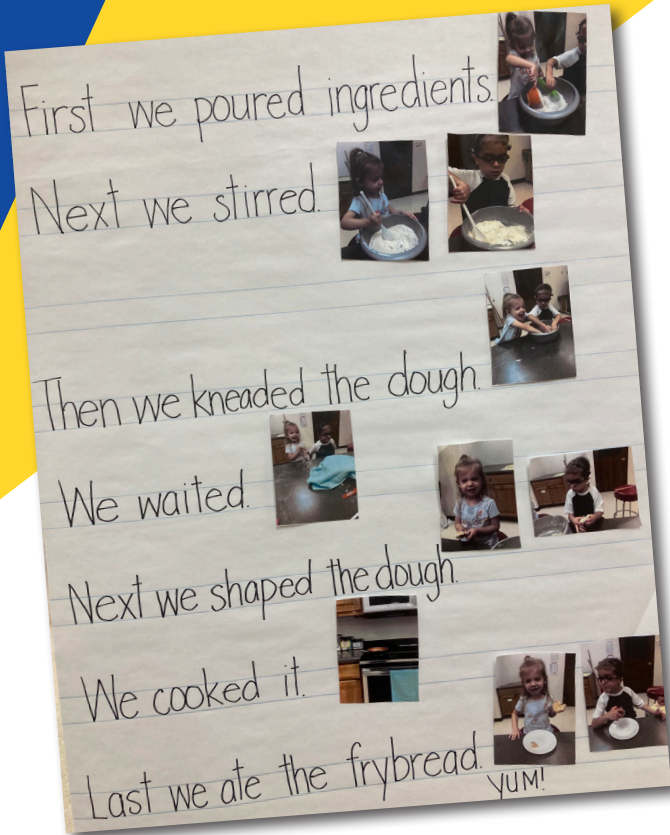
New staff at MSDB.

Preschool Corner

Miche Jarvey & Jaime Jones - VI Preschool

Amber Bateen - DHH Preschool

VI3 and DHH preschools are busy rooms and in each issue we'd like to share a few skills the preschool students have been working on. We hope you get as much joy from their smiling faces as we do!



DHH preschool making fry bread for Indian Education.



Jack demonstrates his independence with the baster to transfer water.



During a water exploratory lesson, Ms. Jarvey shows Jack how to transfer water from one container to another using a baster.



The smile says it all! Wyatt is feeling proud of himself for catching the rolling ball.



Using a ball with a sound source, Wyatt is learning how to take turns by rolling a ball back and forth with a partner.

Strolling Through Campus...

By Emily LaSalle - Outreach Consultant

As a member of the Outreach Team I can say our visits to the MSDB campus are treasured. In mid-September we met for our monthly meeting for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing Outreach team. This month we discovered that MSDB has a student run store. Erin Faulkner, Cottage Behavioral Counselor, was gracious enough to open the school store so we could experience it while on campus. The store is stocked with cold refreshing drinks as well as healthy (and not so healthy) snacks. The store is in the activity room of the Yellowstone Cottage and is open on Wednesdays at 2:30 and Fridays at 3:15.

Through the dining room down the hall past the infirmary, take a left and I found myself in an area of the cottage that is undergoing renovation. How exciting to see the rooms enhanced with new life. The area is being prepped to house our new Living, Employment, Academic Planning (LEAP) Program. The program invites high school graduates to experience a transitional program in a safe residential space.

Back outside on campus I spy one of our Physical Education classes outside playing "floor hockey" on the grass. The students were having a great time being physical while outside on a beautiful morning. Welcome Mr. Joel Auers, our new Physical Education and Health teacher. It's great to see the students outside!

Now head west on campus to the new home of our Outreach office! We are housed next door to the Museum off 38th and Central. We are appreciative of our maintenance staff that



Mackenzie Merja and Carrie Dawes with LEAP.

worked diligently to clean things up for us. We, the consultants, are also appreciative to our Outreach Director, Carol Clayton-Bye (and her family!) for moving mucho boxes from one building to the other building and then organizing the new space.

Our time on campus is important for the connections that intermingle students and staff on campus with outreach students and staff. Between us we are the leading resource for Deaf, Blind, Hard of Hearing and the Visually Impaired. ■■



Mackenzie explaining the program to Daemien, Dakota, and Sam.



Montana School *for the* Disabled

LIFTING STUDENTS

5 WAYS TO GIVE TO MSDB



1

GIVE TIME

Phasellus dapibus risus
et odio rutrum iaculis.
Aenean vitae nisi non
odio dapibus
fermentum.

2

GIVE VOICE

Phasellus dapibus risus
et odio rutrum iaculis.
Aenean vitae.

3

GIVE MONEY

Phasellus dapibus risus
odio rutrum iaculis.
Aenean vitae nisi.

4

GIVE SKILLS OR GOODS

Phasellus dapibus risus
et odio rutrum,

5

SHARE OUR MISSION

Phasellus dapibus risus
et odio rutrum iaculis.
Aenean vitae nisi non.

GIVING TUESDAY

November 30, 2021

How You Can Help

With your help, the MSDB Foundation has been able to provide funds for services and equipment for the students at MSDB for 40 years.

The Foundation is committed to funding academic and extracurricular activities that help prepare students for independent lives.

Please join us in that commitment by making a tax-deductible donation to www.msdbmustangs.org or mailing it to:

MSDB Foundation • P.O. Box 6576 • Great Falls, MT 59406

For more information, please call 406-771-6040

The Deaf & Blind Foundation

ITS BEYOND EXPECTATIONS



Kristina Rosenberg

I am the new Administrative Service Director who helps Montana School for the Deaf and Blind Foundation by working with the community and the committee chairs to administer funds on behalf of the Foundation. It is my belief that donations, no matter how large and small, contribute to the advancement, care, and education of the students that attend MSDB.

In the past 30 years, through various administrative positions, such as call center coordinator and grocery store management, I have been serving my community and customers through close interpersonal relationships I was able to develop through our interactions. I have a passion for serving the community and the children thereof. I have always been customer service oriented, especially with children, as I have worked with students with various needs as a school bus driver for five years in my previous community.

I am originally from California and just made a big move with my loving husband and two children to the beautiful, wide-open country of Montana. I am so excited to learn, grow, explore, and support Montana and the communities therein. ■■

The MSDB Foundation nominating committee is seeking two passionate board members to serve for a term 2022-2025.

Nominees from areas such as Kalispell, Missoula, Billings, Bozeman or Butte are preferred. The board is seeking members to serve on committees including Finance, Development, and Public Relations.

For more information, please contact us at 406-771-6040 or email Foundation@msdb.k12.mt.us.

Shawn's Fun Fact on Birthdays

From Summer 2021 Express:

A fun fact: there are two Board members with the same birthday as the Foundation but only one has the exact same birthdate as the MSDB Foundation, Inc. Can you guess which one?

Answer:

November 13
Hollis Fudge and Shawn Tulloch

Please be aware that all of MSDB's emails have changed domain. We can now be reached at the following:

(name)@msdb.k12.mt.us

"Individually, we are one drop. Together we are an ocean." – Ryunosuke Satoro

MSDB Foundation Board of Directors

Shawn Tulloch, Bozeman, President • Mark Willmarth, Great Falls, Vice President • Laura Walker, Great Falls, Sec/Tres

Cathy Copeland, Billings
Bonnie Denoma, Great Falls
Dee Dee Franzen, Glasgow
Hollis Fudge, Great Falls

Paul Furthmyre, Great Falls
Mary Heller, Havre • Board Liaison
Jim Kelly, Great Falls
Doug Little, Great Falls

Gary McManus, Great Falls
Travis Stevenson, Great Falls
Rick Thompson, Glasgow

Indian Education for All Week

By Missie Hill - Indian Education Coordinator



Desirae KillEagle and Payton.



Francine StiffArm and Payton.



Lexi making a Devils Tower.

IEFA week was a time of excitement for the students at MSDB. They always look forward to the activities and the fun. The older students discussed reservations and boarding schools, while the younger students made paintings, fry bread, and other art projects.

New stories were introduced this year and the students were full of ideas and energy with every activity.

The culminating activity was fry bread and wild rice chicken soup in the cafeteria. A big shout out to the cafeteria staff for making the soup and definitely a shout out to the students for helping make over 200 pieces of fry bread!!

My science classes worked on the stories of the Devils Tower National Monument and how Montana tribes that go to Wyoming to visit it each year. They created their own towers and incorporated their own ideas into them. It was so much fun!!

This is always one of my favorite times of the year. I love sharing new information and working with all of the students and I think they like it too.

This year I even received pictures of one of our outreach students, Payton, with her two aunts in full regalia. We are celebrating Native Americans all over Montana!!

To learn more visit <https://www.visitmt.com/indian-country>. 🍌



Charlee and Lucia loving the frybread.



JD making horses.



Aquila and Weston making frybread.

VRBS & Pre-Ets: Two Fabulous Programs!

By Trudy Hill



When our students turn 14 and enter grade 9 they have the opportunity to apply to Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services (VRBS) and for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-Ets).

VRBS is a part of the Montana Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS). Pre-Ets is a program within VRBS specifically for students with disabilities.

VR/BLVS

As it applies to students at MSDB, Vocational Rehabilitation works with eligible individuals to assist them in finding a job, maintaining a job and advancing in their job. A VR counselor will meet with our students and their families, explain the program and help them with the application process. There is currently a wait list for services in Montana and students will come off the waiting list on a first come first served basis, starting with those with the most significant disabilities, so the sooner you apply the better!

Some of the services a student may receive from VR/BLVS are:

- Assistive Technology
- College Tuition Help
- Transportation
- Independent Living
- Interpreters
- O and M
- Job Training, Placement, Coaching, and Support

And much more! Please see the link above for more detailed information, or better yet, contact the MSDB VRBS counselor Sheri Devlin at 406-454-6064 or sdevlin@mt.gov.

Pre-Ets

An MSDB student is eligible for Pre-Ets services if:

- They have a documented disability
- The student is between the ages of 14 and 21
- They are in high school, college, or another recognized educational program

Services at MSDB are offered through Life Skills and Employability classes in collaboration with the school counseling office, The MSDB Transition Program and Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind-Low Vision Services.

Pre-Ets services include the five categories below (due to space limitations the descriptions do not include all services which may be offered in each area)

Job Exploration Counseling which may include interest and other inventories, identifying career pathways, researching jobs of interest through job related videos, local business tours and information regarding in-demand occupations, local labor markets. Students are invited to attend the Montana Youth Transition Conference, job fairs and job expos.

Work Based Learning Experiences Work-based learning experiences for MSDB students could include work experiences to explore the student's area of interest through paid and unpaid internships on or off campus, apprenticeships, short-term employment, or on-the-job training located in the community.

Counseling on Opportunities for Enrollment in Post-Secondary Education Including classroom guidance regarding the college application process, the difference between college and high school, attending a college fair, listening to presentations from college admissions representatives, financial aid and disability services.

Workplace Readiness Training may include social skills training, independent living skills, financial literacy, and employment soft skills such as writing a resume, filling out a job application, time management, understanding employer expectations and mock interviews.

Instruction in Self-Advocacy in a group setting may include generalized classroom lessons in which students learn about their rights, responsibilities, and how to request accommodations or services and supports needed during the transition from high school to postsecondary education and employment. Students may also participate in Leadership training such as Montana Youth Leadership forum traditionally held each summer at Carroll College in Helena.

The VRBS Pre-Ets Specialist working with MSDB is Lillian McGinn 406-454-6060 or Lillian.McGinn@mt.gov.

Please be sure to take advantage of all the opportunities offered through these incredible programs!

If you have questions contact Trudy Hill at MSDB at thill@msdb.k12.mt.us.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Pre-Employment Transition Services <https://dphhs.mt.gov/detd/vocrehab/>
<https://dphhs.mt.gov/detd/PreETS/index> ■■

Learning In and Out of the Classroom

By Julie Dee Altm - Interim Principal



Students participating in Jogging Jokers.

School is back in session and classrooms are humming with activity. All of the expected sights and sounds are present as students explore new and interesting things. However, learning experiences don't stop at 3:10 when classes end.

At that time, students' attention shifts to activities outside the classroom. There are a variety of after school opportunities that allow students to explore and develop other interests. Students can express themselves in performing groups like Expressions of Silence (EOS), Visually Impaired Performers (VIP) and Flying Hooves. Students of all ages can get moving with Jogging Jokers, where everything from running to yoga could be part of the fun. Leadership is fostered in groups such as Jr. NAD (National Association of the Deaf) and the Cottage Student Council.

Team sports such as basketball, volleyball, football, and swimming are just some of the options for students through a partnership with Great Falls Public Schools. Goalball is also back at MSDB for visually impaired students. These and other groups provide students with experiences that foster individual growth

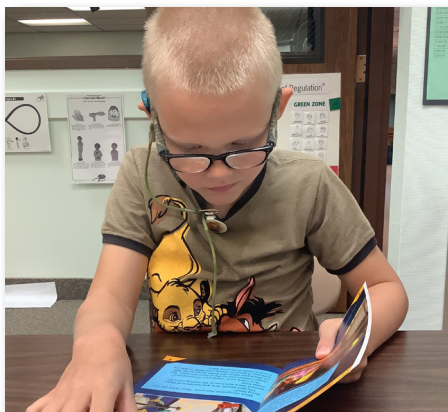
and creativity while also encouraging cooperation and teamwork. They are great examples that reflect MSDB's commitment to helping students develop education, communication and independence skills for life. ■■



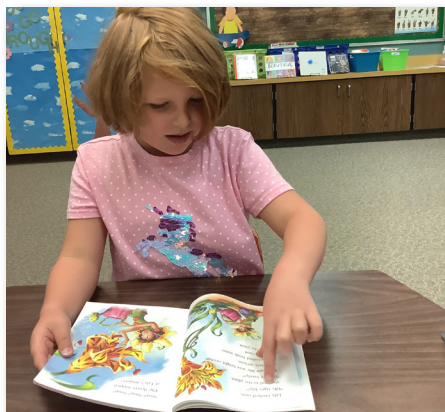
Students practicing in EOS.

Stages of Reading

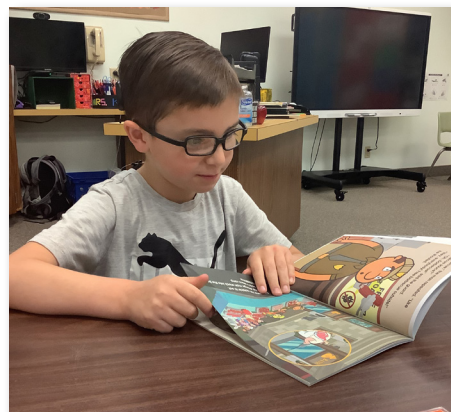
By Alissa Kline - DHH Teacher



Morris reading a good book.



Myra reading new words.



Elijah excited with his book.

What is reading? It may seem like a silly question. Isn't it seeing words in print on a page and knowing what they say? Interestingly, it is much more than that. Understanding the stages of reading will help you support young readers to develop and progress through the stages. The five stages of reading are outlined below along with suggestions about how to support your reader during each stage.

Stage 1: Emergent Literacy

During this stage, you will notice that your reader is beginning to recognize letters and words in print. This may be in books, on signs, familiar names and other words in their environment. Other signs of this stage include pretending to read books as they look at the pictures as well as memorizing the words of frequently read books in order to "read" them. Children are developing the concept of how books work and showing interest in reading during this stage, so celebrate this stage with your child!

Stage 2: Alphabetic Fluency

During this stage, your reader is beginning to recognize words and point to them (tracking) as he/she reads. He/she will be able to read to someone else by reading the print as well as use pictures and context to figure out certain words. Readers in this stage will also be able to admit when there are words they don't know. Children in this stage need support and encouragement, especially when they come across words they don't know. Encourage your child to use reading strategies he/she has been learning in school.

Stage 3: Words and Patterns

During this stage, readers develop more fluency in their reading and strengthen their comprehension. You will notice that they need less support to figure out what the words say.

They are less reliant on the pictures for clues and are able to read more of the words automatically. When a word or phrase is read incorrectly, they are better able to recognize it and correct it without being prompted. They also develop a better understanding of what the text is communicating, such as being able to identify the characters, the setting, the plot of the story, and even deeper level thinking such as the theme/lesson in the story.

Stage 4: Intermediate Reading

During this stage, children are becoming much more independent readers. They are able to read longer texts such as textbooks and read for various purposes such as for entertainment, to gather new information and to develop an opinion about a topic. Readers will become very interested in learning new vocabulary during this stage.

Stage 5: Advanced Reading

During this stage, reader become confident, independent and capable of reading complex texts with strong understanding and an ability to retain what they have read. Readers in this stage use reading as a daily tool to gain new information. They enjoy reading various types of texts.

Things to Remember for All Readers:

- At all ages, read with your child! Everyone loves to be read to. In college, my Children's Literature professor read to us and we soaked it up. You are never too old to read together.
- Take turns reading to each other. You and your child can decide how often you are going to switch. Every page? Every book (for shorter books)? Every chapter?
- Make reading fun! Mix it up. Read the back of cereal boxes, recipes, children's magazines, comics, put on the closed captioning on your TV, etc. Help your child discover what he/she is interested in and develop a love of reading.
- Remind your child to use his/her decoding and comprehension skills that are being used in school to help figure out how to read unknown words and how to better understand the text.
- Find time to read. Busy schedules getting in the way? Try reading in the car. Read first thing in the morning instead of trying to fit it into hectic after school schedules. Dedicate time for reading like you would for other important things happening in your life.
- Most importantly, read, read, read! Children gain important skills just by having exposure to books and talking about the stories they are reading. Have fun and keep on reading! ■■

Job Training Opportunities at the School Store

By Erin Faulkner & Cheri Luongo - Cottage Counselors

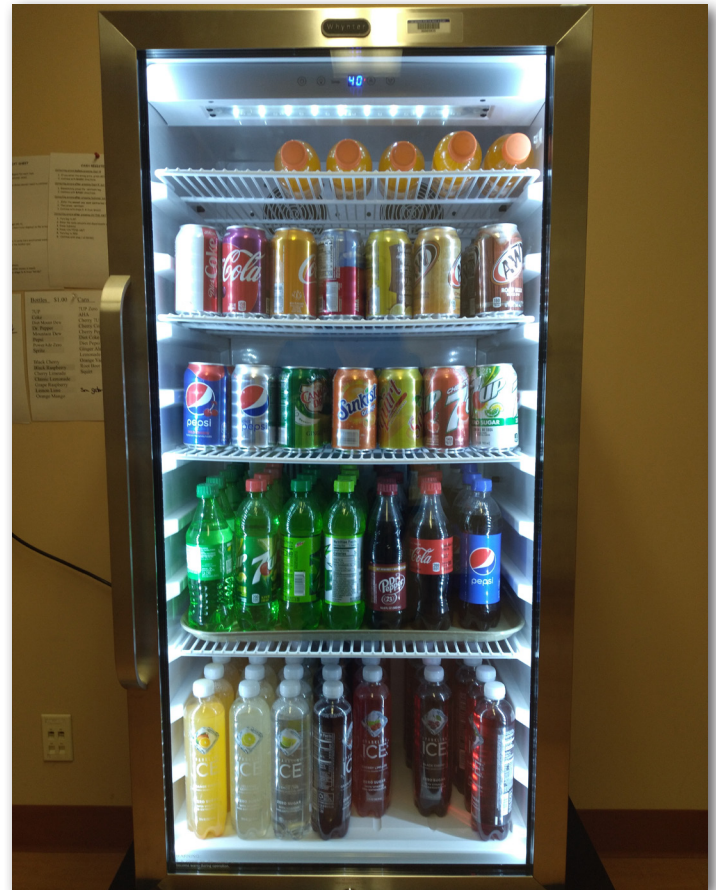
In December 2019, the Student Council was given the opportunity to have a concessions booth at the annual Downtown Christmas Stroll as a fundraiser for that group. With the surplus of inventory following that event, the School Store was born. In the beginning, inventory included Gatorade, water, some candy bars, cookies and trail mix. Currently, our inventory has increased to include chips, snack cakes, and almost 30 beverage options including flavored waters and soda pops.



Madison buying items at the school store.

Students were using a cash box and calculator to make change. Over the last two years, we have elevated the School Store from an ongoing fundraising event to a pre-employment training opportunity. These opportunities would not have been possible without help from the Pre-Employment and Transition Services (Pre-ETS) grant. Pre-ETS are activities that provide an early start at job exploration for students with disabilities ages 14-21 to assist with transitioning from school to postsecondary education or employment. In the Fall of 2021, with funding from Pre-ETS, Student Council was able to purchase a cash register and a few product displays to provide the students with experience in cashiering and stocking. High school students operate the cash register on Wednesdays and Fridays when the store is open. Middle school Student Council members assist with stocking inventory and customer service. These tasks are performed as part of their Student Council fundraising efforts.

This Fall, we were gifted with a beverage refrigerator from Pre-ETS, a wonderful addition to the school store. Pre-ETS is also supporting our efforts to make the School Store a job experience opportunity by funding our paid positions. These jobs include Inventory Checker, Pop Stocker, Buyer, Bookkeeper and Janitor. High school students interested in the positions must apply and interview. They will have new opportunities each quarter unless additional training and practice is needed.



Many things to drink at our store.

We are so thrilled that the School Store has provided so much to the students and staff in the Cottages. It is an opportunity to buy affordable snacks and beverages, socialize, and learn valuable job readiness skills, such as responsibility, dependability, customer service, and retail tasks. Thank you to Trudy Hill, MSDB Guidance Counselor, and Montana's Pre-ETS program for their support! 🍷



Angelina and Madison working behind the counter.

Magnificent MaKayla

By Barb Peterson - Outreach Vision Consultant

Meet MaKayla Carlos, a bubbling young lady full of vigor and ambition for life who is now almost twenty years old. When I first met MaKayla, she was all of sixteen. MaKayla was referred to the outreach program at MSDB by a medical office that was seeking vision support to help her. MaKayla lost her vision as the result of a tragic reaction to a medication that caused scarring throughout her entire body. MaKayla also lost her vision. On a good day, MaKayla shares that she can see colors and shapes well. She is bothered by bright light and she cannot see print.

My journey with MaKayla has been incredibly wonderful! MaKayla is one of the most determined and forward-thinking students I have ever had the honor of knowing. She is warm and intelligent and despite her overwhelming struggles in life she has set amazing goals for herself. Shortly after I met MaKayla she expressed to me that she wanted to learn braille. Within a very short time, MaKayla completed her braille curriculum and learned to read and write the braille code. She also learned to use a white cane.

APH InSights Calendar 2022



Featuring Artwork by Visually Impaired and Blind Artists
American Printing House for the Blind, Inc.

InSights-Art-Calendar.

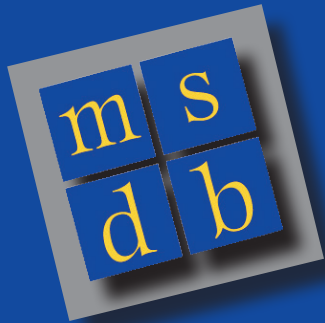
Fast forward... MaKayla is also an amazing artist. She has a passion for art and literature. In the spring of 2020, MaKayla was introduced to the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) InSights Art Competition and she entered. Since 1992, APH has hosted this art contest for artists who happen to be blind. Both amateur and professional artists from around the world enter their artwork in a juried art competition. Original works of 2-dimensional art, sculpture, or craft, are considered each year. Not only was MaKayla's art chosen as a winner... It was chosen to be placed on the cover of the 2022 APH Insights Art Calendar. This beautiful full-color calendar features the artwork of visually impaired and blind artists from throughout the entire

world and can be purchased from www.aph.org/shop/. I believe that this is one of the very first times a Montana artist has won the competition and featured in the Calendar.



MaKayla

Due to her medical challenges, MaKayla was not able to finish high school as she spent a great deal of time in and out of hospitals and doctor offices. MaKayla was recently awarded (with the support of MSDB) funds through the Buffington Trust to complete her high school diploma online. The Joan and Wesley Buffington Trust is a grant program that provides financial assistance to visually impaired residents in the state of Montana. Through the trust, MaKayla was also awarded funds to purchase specialized technology to include a new laptop computer, screen reader software, braille transcription software, a refreshable braille display and so much more. MaKayla is destined to do very well in life because of her many strengths and perseverance. She is learning these new technologies with the support of MSDB and her plans beyond obtaining her high school diploma include going on to college to become a professional writer. MaKayla shares ... "for me, life is a crazy adventure with many paths and goals. I am not yet finished with my goals and will never be finished with the adventure." ❖❖



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Letter from the Editor

By Missie Hill - Editor for the Express

Happy Fall



We are moving right along at MSDB. The kids are happy to be here and the staff are loving the time we have with them. New things are being learned every day and the students continue to amaze us all with their resilience and drive.

I consider myself truly lucky to not only be allowed to work with these kids each day, sharing my passion for science, but also to get to work with them sharing my love for Native American culture and history.

Then, to top it all off, I get to share these things and others with you, our respected readers.

I hope, through each issue, you get a sense of the energy here from the students and staff and for the love we all have for each other. Our goal is to have each student succeed and we do all that is necessary to ensure that happens.

I honestly couldn't ask for a better way to spend my time. I go home at night and know I made a difference. I wonder if the students go home and know they made a difference in all of us as well?

For the parents out there, thank you so much for sharing your children with us.

For the interested readers, thank you for continuing to support us and share in our successes. ❖

Missie Hill, Editor

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Special Education Coordinator

Indian Education Coordinator

Science Teacher

The Pandemic and The Importance of Being Kind

By Yvette Smail - Behavior Specialist

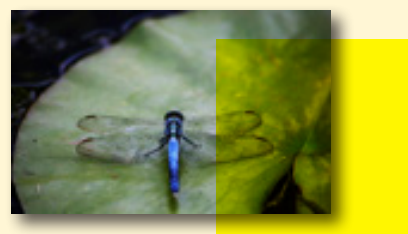
Being a kind person has always been very important to me, and I strive to be kind everyday. I'm typically fairly successful in this endeavour, but I will admit, the pandemic has impacted my "be kind percentage."

Most of us are aware of all the many ways the virus has affected our lives; physically, emotionally, financially, socially, etc. However, how has it changed our humanity? Are we being patient with one another or are we picking sides and being intolerant to the opinions or actions of others? Are we being supportive and kind to the food service workers who took a bit longer to ask for our order? Are we making assumptions in regards to why a person either is or isn't wearing a mask? Do you find yourself in the judgement seat by gossiping about your co-worker and how they selfishly decided to get on a plane and go on vacation?

The pandemic doesn't have control over how we choose to treat one another, only each of us as individuals. So, below I've listed some words to help us remember why it is important to be kind:

- *You never know what someone else is going through, be kind.*
- *Treat others the way you would like to be treated.*
- *"Compassion and tolerance are not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength." -Dalai Lama*
- *"Our sorrows and wounds are healed only when we touch them with compassion." -Buddha*
- *Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them humanity cannot survive." -Dalai Lama*
- *"The highest form of knowledge is empathy." -Bill Bullard*

So, always remember to be kind and that includes being kind and compassionate to yourself! ❖



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