

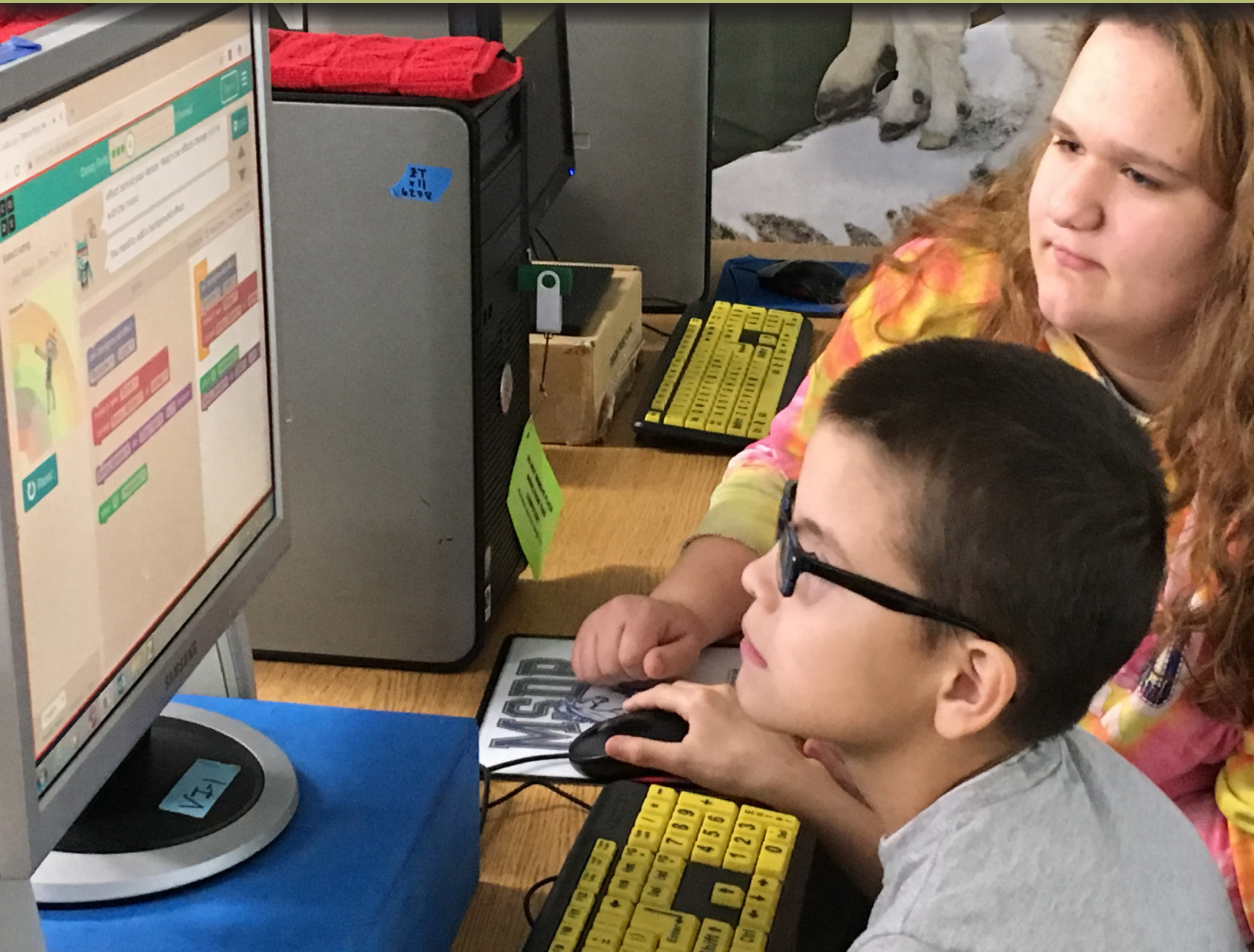


Express

MONTANA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF & THE BLIND

giving kids the building blocks to independence

Volume XXV, Issue 2, Spring 2019



Computer Science
Page 5

Lion's Club Project
Pages 8 & 9



Dear Families, Students, Staff and Community Stakeholders,

As I type, winter is truly here. The snow waited until February and then it came and hasn't stopped. Here at MSDB, we haven't stopped either. We are constantly working to improve our programs and services for students and families. We are finishing up Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing for on-campus students. Residential students are getting to know new staff and are engaging in new routines (swimming is back on Thursday evenings for our students). Outreach students are gearing up for the next Deaf Enrichment Weekend (DEW), Visually Impaired Enrichment Weekend (VIEW), and VI Games.

In Education, we are continuing to pursue Accreditation with AdvancED and with the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD). Paul Furthmyre, our Principal, has been leading the charge in this endeavor. In our Residential program, Jim Kelly, our Student Life Director continues to lead staff in discussions about the concept of Student Life. In Outreach, Carol Clayton-Bye, the Outreach Director, leads Consultants in serving students across the state. Our Administrative team continues to build relationships with our partner organizations such as Montana Hands and Voices, Montana Deaf-Blind Project, and the Office of Public Instruction (OPI).

The legislative session is well underway. Fortunately, we have some wonderful supporters in the House and Senate. This year, we are not currently looking at any budget cuts. Both the Governor's budget office and legislators have supported the continued one-time only funding for student travel and for staff stipends for extra-curricular activities. We appreciate this funding as it gives our students access to activities such as sports, after school clubs, and performing groups such as Expressions of Silence and Flying Hooves.

Our Foundation continues to provide support for the "extra-extra" events and opportunities such as the Enrichment weekends (also supported by OPI), Family Learning Weekends (also supported by Gallaudet University, Comprehensive System of Professional Development – CSPD, and OPI), and individual student and family needs.

We are so fortunate at MSDB. We have incredible staff members that go above and beyond to ensure students educational and social-emotional needs are being met. Staff members often put in hours above their paid or contracted time. Staff members continue learning new techniques, both formally and informally, in working with our students. Our stakeholders support our school and our Foundation with their time and their dollars. Clubs and organizations support us by raising money for specialized equipment for our students. (Thank you, Lions Clubs and MSDB Foundation!!) There has never been a better time to come and visit us! Stop by and see the amazing work our staff and students accomplish every day. Call your Outreach Consultant and ask them about their work. Come to a weekend event and watch students bloom out of their shells gaining independence and leadership skills.

Most importantly, continue to support MSDB and our MSDB Foundation!

We love to hear from you! ❖

Peace Always,

Donna E Sorensen
MSDB Superintendent

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Flaming Ducks and Bubbles

By Chris Gutschenritter - School Psychologist

The funny thing about the job title “School Psychologist” is that it brings up so many interesting comments and questions from people who work outside a school setting. I have been asked where I obtained my M.D., if I’ve ever performed electric shock treatment, how many patients I see a week, and what a typical day looks like.

As I keep a short list in my head of what my “typical” duties are, I have to laugh. On paper, school psychologists work with school-aged children and perform educational, cognitive and behavioral/social/emotional assessments. We listen to concerns from parents, teachers and students regarding academic, social, emotional and familial problems. We promote prosocial behaviors. We counsel parents on topics such as substance abuse and communication. We always have control of the situation and everything makes sense. And we always have research-based solutions to the things that come our way.

I love my job at MSDB. I have a variety of duties, get to work with a great staff, wonderful students and parents, and pretty much have a clean canvas each morning. Each day I arrive to a detailed list that I’ve prepared for myself at the close of the day before. Typically it lists things like:

- Call Mrs. So-and-So about a topic that her son wanted to talk about at the Lunch Bunch today. He may need to talk about it a little more in a private setting, and will need some support at home
- Call the public school about a student being referred to us and the paperwork we need
- Talk to admin about a student group we want to start
- Visit with a student about a report of mean girl behavior and call her parents to brainstorm support strategies
- Test “Suzie”
- Get report written prior to meeting

Then reality hits...there is a “flaming duck” at my door. Flaming ducks are situations that trump everything on the list. They must be dealt with at this very instant and may lead you to even more flaming ducks such as a couple of students who will not be able to focus in class until they settle the rift between them. It may be something that needs to be handled delicately, such as the mother who needs to process some horrific news and wants help telling her child. Any number of situations that truly need to be dealt with swiftly and thoroughly in order for individuals to be able to get back into the proper flow. There may be a few more flaming ducks that day, and maybe not.

Fortunately, some of the flaming ducks, the situations that can seem all consuming, can become much more approachable after some good old fashioned bubble blowing! I keep a very large bottle of bubbles in my office for my visitors, as well as myself! After a few minutes of the bubble blowing, i.e. controlled, focused breathing, problems seem much more approachable. Obviously, many of life’s struggles are far beyond what bubbles can impact, but the real point is to try to gain control of the situation, as mentioned previously. The goal is to help the person to get some control and perspective, and perhaps to focus and relax a bit. Only then can the problem solving begin.

So stop by and blow bubbles if you’re ever in the area! ❖

IN THIS ISSUE

Page 2

- Dear Families, Students, Staff and Community Stakeholders

Page 4

- Braille & Tactile Duplicator

Page 5

- The FUNdamentals of Computer Science

Page 6

- MSDB Consultants Teaching Far and Wide in the “406”

Page 7

- MSDB Bully Free Since 2013/ Olweus Bullying Prevention Program at MSDB

Page 8-9

- One Step at a Time: Sunrise Lions Club Working to Improve Learning Experiences at the MSDB

Page 10

- It’s a Bird! It’s a Plane...

Page 11

- Shelly Danaher
- Guess The Photo Location
- Electrifying Science

Page 12

- Fay Schweiger
- 3D Printing

Page 13

- Fall Fun at DEW!

Page 14

- Testing the Waters: Block Schedule for Reading and Writing Classes
- Braille Specialists - Virtually Reaching Out

Page 15

- Sandra Ortiz
- Close Up: The Ultimate Experience
- Times - They are a Changin’

Back Cover

- Gallaudet-Clerc Day Celebration
- 2019 Spring & Summer Campus Events
- When Life Gives You Lemons...



Braille & Tactile Duplicator: Bringing Pictures to a New Level

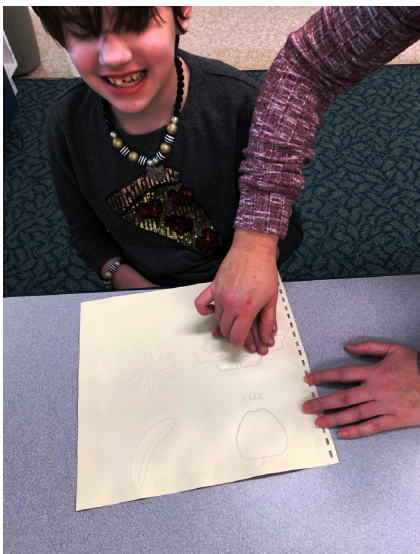
By Sue Stewart - Media Clerk, Braille Transcriber/Paraeducator

How do you make a picture more accessible to students who are blind and visually impaired? You take it to another dimension!! Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind now has the capability to do just that, thanks to the MSDB Foundation getting a grant.

The EZ-Form Braille & Tactile Duplicator is a machine that is the most accurate way to reproduce braille text and tactile graphics for students. This machine is used by VI Staff/Braille Transcribers to make tactile graphics that can be used over and over again. We can transcribe any materials that involve a lot of measurements and graphs and produce braille text right on the page with tactile graphs rather than separate sheets. This will minimize the amount of paper we will use.

The finished product be used in variety of different areas. Math classes can benefit from thermoform tactile graphics when learning about geometry, graphs, and charts.

Science classes use tactile graphics to illustrate diagrams and large-scale concepts such as landforms, the universe, the human body, etc. Tactile maps can be created using the thermoform machine to teach independent travel skills during orientation and mobility training. Social Studies classes can make tactile maps of all continents, regions, countries, mountain ranges, rivers. Preparing tests with a lot of graphics, charts, maps, etc. has now been made easier for our students to access. We cannot thank the Foundation enough for this wonderful machine! ❖



The FUNdamentals of Computer Science

By Denise Rutledge - VI Teacher



The co-founder of Apple, Steve Jobs, once said, “Computer Science is a liberal art: it’s something that everyone should be exposed to and everyone should have mastery of to some extent.” At MSDB, we are making sure our students have access to and practice in Computer Science.

This is the first year we have offered an on-campus course in Computer Science (CS). This(**CS**) class is a year-long course. At this point in the year, students have had exposure to HTML coding and have created their own websites. They have also had experience with using coding language to program robotics. Recently, they created mazes and then programmed their robots to successfully navigate the maze. Currently, students are learning the basics of another coding language, Javascript, in order to create their own animations and simple games. Additionally, students are practicing CS fundamentals by exploring Adobe and Google applications, completing digital citizenship activities, and connecting CS principles to art by creating digital signage, video productions, and stop-motion animations.

During the first week of December, MSDB joined thousands of schools across the world to participate in the “Hour of Code” event. Our CS class ‘hosted’ the event. We had many MSDB students and staff join us to trial the latest coding activity from code.org, which consisted of programming digital characters to complete dance routines. Students from the CS class worked in a “paired programming” situation in which they could help navigate and assist while their ‘student’ was the driver—manipulating elements on the screen by keyboard and mouse. Paired programming is used throughout our CS

class to give each student the chance to be able to teach and explain a concept while their partner completes the hands-on portion of the task. It helps cement the concepts, and also builds communication and problem solving skills while preparing students for work environments that include professional relationships between colleagues. As a mixed population of both deaf students and those with low vision, we rely on the help of interpreters to assist with completing the communication between students. It is a great opportunity for our deaf students to learn more about the magnification, contrast settings and assistive technology required for our students with low vision to access their materials. Likewise, our students with low vision are learning how to utilize an interpreter to communicate with their deaf peers. Coding is its own language and one that we share in our class.

As the world’s reliance on computer science increases, we benefit from the advances in making this program of study accessible to all. MSDB is proud to embrace the challenge! ■■





MSDB Consultants Teaching Far and Wide in the “406”

By Kitty Griffin - DHH Outreach Consultant

MSDB is one of a kind; it serves a very unique function in Montana. MSDB is recognized as the leader in providing resources and education for children with visual impairment and/or hearing loss to our geographically huge state. MSDB's Outreach Consultants travel hundreds of miles to care for more than 700 children in their home areas. MSDB's DHH (Deaf and Hard of Hearing) Consultants stop to teach some classes for our colleagues across Montana. In 2018, Consultants taught in Billings, Helena, Missoula, Bozeman and more.

MSDB Consultants Kim Schwabe and Cathy Jury taught at the Montana Educator Association (MEA) convention. At their presentation “I Have a Student with Hearing

Loss...Now What?”, educators learned about MSDB's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Outreach Services, the impacts of hearing loss on learning, amplification devices, and instructional strategies and accommodations to provide access to the curriculum and to classroom communication as well as some basic signs.

In addition, Kitty Griffin, Leann Goss and Brenna Herlson spoke to a packed room at the Montana Speech Language and Hearing Association (MSHA) convention in October 2018. Their presentation featured information on auditory learning and visual learning in a fun loving presentation entitled “Throw Me a Line, Throw Me a Sign”. Those in attendance included parents, Speech Language Pathologists, audiologists, aids/paraprofessionals as well as a sprinkling of college professors.

MSDB is proud of its staff, both those on campus and those driving to school campuses across the state. We are grateful to be invited to teach at these important venues and cherish the moments when we gather with our colleagues to share valuable information on hearing loss, amplification choices, communication options, and a wide variety of topics to help them boost a child's/student's communication development.

If we don't answer our phone on the first ring, we are probably tumbling back into the car or gassing up somewhere in the beautiful 406! Keep trying, we promise to call you back from the nearest rest stop! To learn more visit <http://www.msdb.mt.gov/outreach/index.html>. ❖



MSDB Bully Free Since 2013 /Olweus Bullying Prevention Program at MSDB

By Yvette Smail - Behavior Specialist, Olweus Program Coordinator

MSDB has proudly been using the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program since 2013. Olweus is a school-wide program that involves every student and staff member from our preschool students to our transition students as well as members of our food service team, Infirmary and maintenance crew. The founders of Olweus feel that every student and staff member are vital to the success of the program because bullying can happen and have serious impact in any area of a school or facility. The program is designed to be preventative and responsive, focused on changing norms and restructuring the school setting. It is research based and is not time-limited, but requires systematic efforts over time.

According to the Olweus program, bullying is defined as “when someone repeatedly and on purpose says or does mean or hurtful things to another person who has a hard time defending himself or herself.” It is important to note the three types of bullying:

- **Direct**- Hitting, taunting, threats, name calling, threatening or mean gestures
- **Indirect**- Rumors, exclusion, cyber bullying, getting someone to physically harm another
- **Relational aggression**- Relational aggression or alternative aggression is a type of aggression in which harm is caused by damaging someone’s relationships or social status. Although it can be used in many contexts and among different age groups, relational aggression among adolescents in particular, has received a lot of attention.

Children who are at a higher risk of being bullied are children with disabilities, have special needs, or health problems, children who are obese, and children who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or who are questioning their identities.

Following the Olweus program, MSDB students have weekly class meetings that enable discussion related to bullying both directly and indirectly. The topics often include areas such as relationship building, self-esteem,

accepting differences, conflict resolution, self-regulation, and community mindedness. Discussion can also include things that the students may be dealing with currently and we can help process and guide through those areas.

Olweus has also given us the opportunity to have some fun events here at school. We have had a “Kick-off” event that enabled us to design and provide shirts for all students and staff, and have a school carnival for students and their families that included “Orbit” (mascot of the White Sox AAA baseball team that plays in Great Falls), as a special guest. We had a terrific time having a pie throwing event where kids who earned the most “kindness tickets” got to throw whipped cream pies at select staff members. The students really enjoyed throwing water balloons at the principal and P.E. teacher for our summer appreciation celebration and our most recent event included our students and Olweus committee members making and serving a pancake breakfast to show appreciation of the great work we do each and every day.

Olweus has been a great reminder for us to be community minded. We have had the pleasure of having two food drives, one for our Great Falls Foodbank and one for the Lewis and Clark Elementary Food Pantry. MSDB has also had two donation drives for The Cameron Center which is a shelter in Great Falls that houses and cares for families in need as well as help them to “get back on their feet.” MSDB has no shortage of generosity and it is always a joy to see how many kind and giving students and staff we have here.

MSDB is fortunate to be involved in the Olweus Program. We see the effects and often tragic and lasting impact that bullying can have and we strive to be preventative, positive and solution-based as we work with our students and staff about the importance of being kind and tolerant of others.

MSDB Olweus Committee Members: Julie-Dee Alt, Kim Cortez, Diane Eddy, Paul Furthmyre, Chris Gutschenritter, Missie Hill, Trudy Hill, Miche` Jarvey, Jim Kelly, Cheri Luongo, and Yvette Smail. ■■



Montana School *for the* DEAF AND THE BLIND

HELP US GIVE KIDS THE BUILD



One Step at a Time: Sunrise Lions Club Working to Improve Learning Experiences at the MSDB

By Enya Spicer - Great Falls Tribune • Originally Published Dec. 14, 2018



Tribune Photo: Enya Spicer

The Sunrise Lions Club has completed phase one of its latest project with the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind, and phase two is well on its way.

The club recently repaired the playground area at the school. Different surfaces surround the playground called a tactile track. These surfaces include concrete, asphalt and a wood plank. They are used to help the students when learning how to use their canes in different areas.

"It's for kids who are learning to work a cane, who are sightless," said club member Jack Beckman. "It tells them about the different surfaces that they are going to encounter as they go around the world."

Beckman said when club members first met with the school, the boardwalk was in such bad shape the children couldn't use it because they feared for students' safety.



Michael Black, Vernon Severson, Mitch Martin, Mike Hannula, Jack Beckman, Scott Schuman, Geri Darko & Logan Stevenson.
Photo: Enya Spicer

Sunrise partnered with United Materials to repair the surfaces at the park. Sunrise completed the boardwalk as United Materials laid the gravel and asphalt. The company even donated half the price.

In addition to the tactile track repairs, the roof on the church was repaired.

"There's all kinds of these maintenance (issues) because that playground is now 30 years old," said Beckman. "It is not covered under the state's facilities."

Therefore, the Sunrise Lions Club stepped in.

Next spring, they are working to add a brick section to the surfaced track surrounding the park. This gives students a new texture to work with as they further their skills.

The Sunrise Lion Club isn't stopping here.

Around last January one of the club members became a member on the board of the Montana School of the Deaf and the Blind Foundation. This foundation specifically raises money for needs that are not funded by the state. One of the needs is specialized equipment.

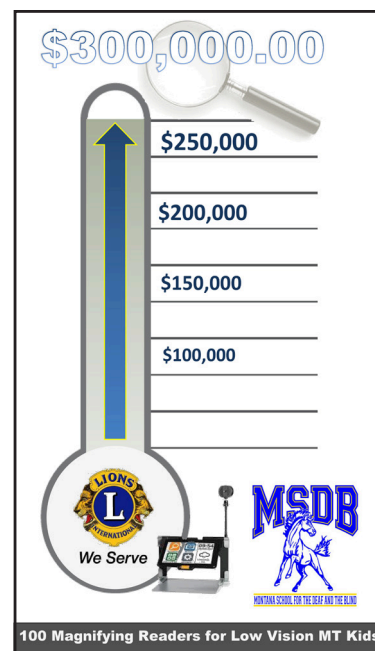
"Some of the specialized equipment is funded for the school, but they don't provide specialized equipment to every child that is randomly located around the state," Beckman said.

The club have partnered again with MSDB to raise \$300,000 to buy 100 Prodigy Connect 12s, which are portable, digital magnifier and tablets. It has an android platform that also allows the access to Google applications.

The magnifiers the students are using now cause prints to become blurry as they are magnified.

"These kids are using a substandard version of print because of the expenses," said Beckman.

With the new devices, the students will be able to have larger magnification and read sentences instead of short lines. It's also



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 over 30 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.msdb.mt.gov/foundation.html or mailing it to:

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

For more information, please call 406-771-6040

Deaf & Blind Foundation

BUILDING BLOCKS TO INDEPENDENCE

like a small laptop with a camera. They will be able to take a picture of what a teacher is writing on the board and have it on their screen to read it.

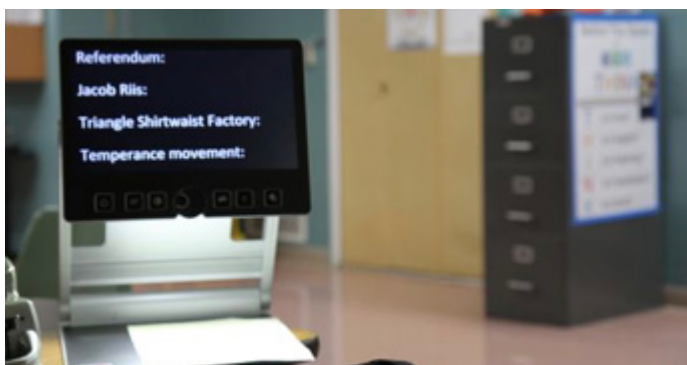
It also allows them to capture the image of the print and have it read to them.

This allows them to be able to study in real time.

"There are kids whose vision could be great in the morning and not as good as the afternoon," said MSDB teacher, Rutledge. "So by the afternoon, they're ready for a visual break and just want to listen to something."

Denise Rutledge and Dakota Randles, student at MSDB, showed an old device and compared it to the Prodigy Connect 12.

In the past, they were using a CCTV.



The CCTV Magnifier the classrooms previously used. Photo: Enya Spicer

"It will still magnify the words and allow the kids to manipulate the colors and make it bigger and smaller, but that was all it did, and it also weighs 15 pounds," said Rutledge. "Portable, yes, it can go, but when you think of a second-grader they aren't going to be able to chuck around a 15-pound machine."

The Prodigy Connect 12 folds up or you can take the tablet out completely. It also weighs less than weight of the old device.

It has internet access and email.

"In a perfect world they can get their print copy from a teacher, put it under, enlarge it, type on it and then email it back to their teacher," Rutledge explained. "All in one."

Randles thinks every visually impaired student would benefit from the device because it's easier to read books, it changes contrast, has an audio option and conforms to what a student needs to see print better.

"Also, it's easy and portable to carry around instead of having to carry a big TV around with you," he laughed.

"We consider this life-changing," said Beckman.

With there being 56 counties in Montana and the big issue of affordability, there is a need for the funding of these readers.

Beckman also shared his comparison of the older specialized equipment and the Prodigy Connect 12.



MSDB student, Dakota Randles, showing the uses of the Prodigy Connect 12. Photo: Enya Spicer

"We had a group of kids who were trying this reader for the first time," said Beckman. "We put print under there...but while we weren't noticing they put a pencil under there...then one of the kids got a coin out."

The students never realized their pencils had writing on them and they finally saw the difference between different coins.

"They always thought the coins had the same things on both sides and that coins were exactly the same," he further explained. "So, imagine now you get out a quarter and there are 50 different sides because of the states...but you never knew this."

These readers could change the ability for these students to be more employable by allowing the kids to see what's going around them as it's happening.

The Lions Clubs is now in the process of raising money to buy 100 Prodigy Connect 12s.

All 66 Lions Clubs in Montana agreed to take on the project to fund the needs for the new reader. The clubs are working on receiving a grant with Lions Club International.

The maximum grant given by Lions Club International is \$100,000, if it is given in early January. If the Lions Clubs of Montana and the foundation raise \$100,000, Lions Club International will match it. However, this still leaves them short \$100,000.

"If they don't have the ability to see in real time, that really puts a hurdle in the road," said Beckman. "Why would we not, as a society, get these kids what they need? ... Wouldn't we rather they live a productive life rather than a life (relying on) support?"

For more information on the project or how to donate, the Sunrise Lions Club meets every second and fourth Tuesday at Perkins at 6:30 a.m.

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

MSDB Foundation Board of Directors

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It's a Bird! It's a Plane...

By Missie Hill - Special Education Coordinator/Indian Education Coordinator



No it isn't THAT Superman. It was better!! The students and staff took a field trip on January 25 to see Supaman!! He isn't a superhero, but he could be.

Christian Parrish Takes the Gun, also known professionally as Supaman, is an Apsáalooke rapper, fancy dancer, and comedian. He grew up on the Crow Agency in Montana and has taken the bad in his life and turned it to good. Supaman brings a positive message to everyone he meets. He is a shining example of how we, as human beings, can overcome poverty, addiction, and abuse to be the best we can be. He pushes for love, acceptance, respect, and kindness.

MSDB students were lucky enough to attend his performance. They were thrilled with his songs, jokes, and dances. The mood in the auditorium was so upbeat Supaman even had the teachers get up in front of the audience and dance. This was definitely an activity that will remain in our minds and hearts for a long time. Maybe we can take some of that positivity and share it!!!

To learn more visit <https://supamanhiphop.com>. ☐☐



Shelly Danaher: Montana's Gem Receives National Award

By Kerri Norick - VI Outreach Consultant



On a typical day you will find Teacher Shelley Danaher chasing her dream of teaching special needs preschoolers in Belgrade, MT. During her free time, Shelley is a doctoral student in the Orientation and Mobility Specialist Program at Texas Tech University (TTU). Shelley's final thesis is a comparative study of the impact of participation in group yoga programs on wellness (physical and mental health) for individuals with visual impairments.

Professor Nora Griffin-Shirley, PhD, coordinates the Orientation and Mobility Specialist Program and is the Director of the Virginia Murray Sowell Center for Research and Education in Sensory Disabilities, as well as the Coordinator of TTU Graduate Certification Program in Sensory Impairments & Autism in Lubbock, TX. She noticed a particular sparkle and shine in the leadership and hard work of Shelley Danaher. Dr. Griffin-Shirley nominated Shelley for the Delta Gamma Foundation Graduate Student Fellowship award. There are only 12 recipients chosen for this award from across the country.

Shelley's outstanding contributions and leadership in the field of visual impairment will be recognized at the 2019 American Federation for the Blind (AFB) Leadership Conference in Arlington, VA. The AFB Conference seeks to improve the quality of opportunities, programs, and services for blind and visually impaired individuals by providing a forum in which scholars and leaders from the education, rehabilitation, and private sectors can increase their awareness of student, client and employee needs, expand their knowledge, refine leadership skills and share concerns and strategies. On your next trip through Belgrade, be sure to stop and congratulate Shelley on this prestigious award. ❖



Folks, we are starting a new thing in this publication. You will see pictures taken from our outreach consultants on their travels. Your job is to guess where it is. We started off easy this time.

The locations will be revealed in the following issue. Have fun!! ❖

Electrifying Science

By Brenda LeMieux - DHH Teacher

Deaf and hard of hearing students recently spent time learning about electricity and magnetism in their science class. They enjoyed studying about electrical charges and static electricity. Hands-on experiments that involved creating open and closed circuits were a hit with all the students.

Toward the end of the unit, a field trip to *Rainbow Dam helped tie all the information together. The students loved seeing the whole electricity making process in motion.

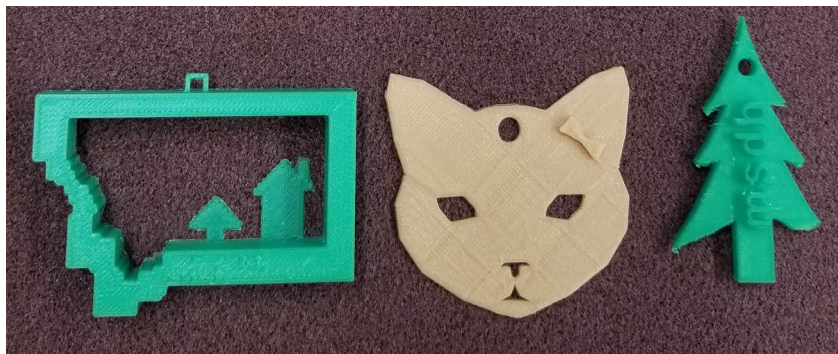
*Rainbow Dam is a hydroelectric dam on the Missouri River, 29ft high and 1055ft long, located six miles northeast of Great Falls. The dam is named for the downstream Rainbow Falls, a 45ft waterfall that is the third of the five Great Falls of the Missouri. Built in 1910, the dam furnishes water to an eight-unit hydroelectric plant with a capacity of 36 megawatts. As the dam's power plant is located over a half-mile downstream, the flow of water over Rainbow Falls and downstream Crooked Falls is significantly reduced during the dry season. The water from the penstocks re-enters the river a few hundred yards east of Crooked Falls. Montana Power Company acquired the dam when it was founded in 1912, PPL Corporation purchased it in 1997 and sold it to NorthWestern Corporation in 2014. ❖



My name is Fay Schweiger. I am the Administrative Assistant for Student Life at MSDB. I emigrated from Germany at the age of 18 with no friends, family, financial resources nor the ability to speak English. I love to go on adventures, learning new things, being outdoors, walking, criminology, and getting shiny and new office supplies! I deeply care about animals, the marginalized people in our society and preserving our environment. I have two Bachelor degrees which I mainly use to win at quiz games or to accidentally scare people about criminal behavior and true crime stories.

I served as an AmeriCorps VISTA member in Wyoming for one year and then served seven months as an AmeriCorps member for *Giant Springs State Park in Great Falls. I look forward through my work to be of great service not only to my supervisor but also to the students and every single staff member of this amazing school! 🍀

*Giant Springs State Park was discovered by the Lewis & Clark Expedition in 1805 and is one of the largest freshwater springs in the county. The spring flows at a rate of 156 million gallons of crystal clear water from the Madison Aquifer per day, the water originates from the Little Belt Mountains and takes approximately 26 years to reach the springs. Amazingly the water is a constant 54 degrees year round, during the cold winter months water vapor covers the air and soaks the trees in the park, which then forms the beautiful ice covered trees shining in the sunlight.



3D Printing

By Erin Barr - VI Teacher

Imagine sitting in class as a student; you are working on an assignment on a computer or iPad. Once completed, you go to retrieve your assignment from the printer, but instead of a sheet of paper, you are retrieving an actual 3D model. This is what students in the VI Department have been learning to use in classes this school year. Students in Ms. Barr's English Language Arts Class created locker tags with tactile names, braille, and logos for students in the Aspen building. Students in Science Classes have created a variety of objects including: plant and animal cells, mazes, flying objects and "aliens" for classification.

Cane Club also used the 3D printer for a very successful Christmas Ornament Fundraiser. VI students and staff were invited to participate in creating ornaments. Those with winning designs were given a "sample" ornament, an ornament he or she created, and winning designs were sold by Cane Club. Winning designers included: Satin (traditional ball ornament), Miracle (cat face with bow), Trenton (Montana outline with a house and tree) and Logan (Christmas tree).

Thanks to an anonymous donor, Cane Club has been able to purchase more 3D printer filament and will be selling Valentine's Day magnets and keychains as an add-on to VIP Club's singing Valentine's. In addition to class time, students also have access to the app outside of school time. This gives students time to explore and create without teacher-set parameters. As a result, students have created "cane tip protectors," token reward systems, book characters, keychains, and more. 🍀



Fall Fun at DEW!

By Kim Schwabe - DHH Outreach Consultant



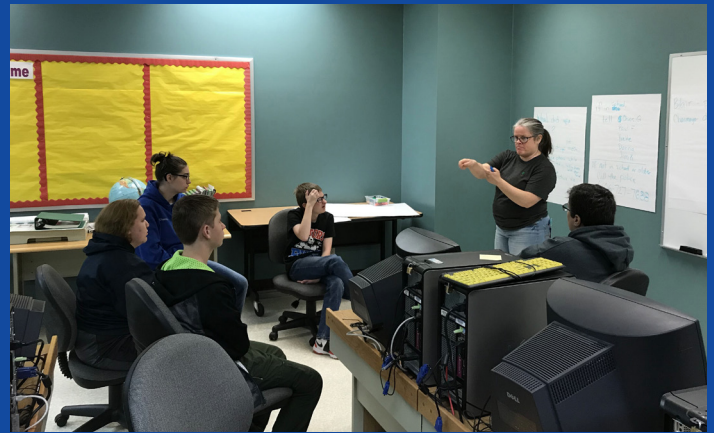
Students gathered for the 2018 Fall Deaf Enrichment Weekend (DEW) on campus beginning the morning of October 26. On this day, outreach students joined campus peers in their regular class schedule. Students were warmly welcomed into various classes to learn with one another. It was exciting to see all the students interacting and developing new friendships.

In the afternoon, our DEW theme of “Safety” was kicked off with Officer Houston (Great Falls Police Department-School Resource Officer) visiting with students on age-appropriate safety topics. In the evening, students ate dinner and then participated in activities that included games in the gym, mask & treat bag decorating, a talk on Halloween safety and Trick-or-Treating centers. After a very full evening, all went over to the cottages to get a good night’s rest!

Saturday’s activities began with a group picture and an ice-breaking activity. Before long, students separated into groups for various activities. Older students worked on creating a public service announcement video on safety while younger students worked on building a city to learn about community helpers. The youngest students talked about street safety, played Red Light, Green Light and practiced street safety by role-playing fun

situations. All of the students had the opportunity to interact with our Deaf Mentors.

In the afternoon, a special visitor came all the way from Texas (via video conferencing) to talk with the students. Our visitor was Police Officer Erika Trevino, who happens to be deaf. Students were amazed that a deaf person could be a police officer and asked her several great questions. By visiting with her, they learned that dreams can come true if you work hard enough. Thanks, Officer Trevino!



As DEW wound down, students shared their work and watched a wonderful slideshow of the weekend. Before long, it was time to go, and students said their goodbyes with hugs and see-ya-laters. Another successful DEW completed!



Thanks to all those who worked at DEW, as well as the faculty and staff at MSDB. Thank you for welcoming students so kindly, making delicious meals and snacks, providing a warm and safe place to sleep, helping with activities and so much more. We appreciate the support from Office of Public Instruction and the MSDB Foundation. We could not have done this without you! See you at Spring DEW! ❖



Testing the Waters: Block Schedule for Reading and Writing Classes

By Lace Lesofski - DHH Teacher

Last year many of our students had only one English-related class for 50 minutes, or they had an English and a reading class taught by one teacher. While this is not necessarily a big deal, it does make teaching and retention harder for students, especially when reading and writing scaffold off of one another making retention and fluency easier. So this year, admin decided to make a shift and try something new: block scheduled reading and writing classes. Students have both their reading and writing classes back to back with the same teacher. This means that students are receiving 90 minutes of reading and writing education every day (aside from early out and travel scheduled days).

This block schedule has provided an opportunity to teach students on a regular basis in a way that best fits their learning style. I often do something holistically as a class and then have students break into different stations that focus on reading and writing using different programs such as *IXL, Read Theory, Reading A-Z, and so forth. As students rotate between stations, they are also working with me individually in areas where they struggle, or areas where they are excelling and need that encouragement that they are doing a great job! One of the stations is also

independent reading without teacher support. The idea here is to build the routine that reading is an everyday thing not only for education, but for enjoyment as well.

At the beginning of the year students struggled with the length of time they were in one room, adapting to the fact that they remained in the same room for two periods. To help make this transition easier for students, students were given 5-6 minutes during the regular scheduled passing period to relax, get up and move around, or even do nothing if they so pleased. Now however, after nearly 19 weeks in the classroom students are rarely taking this time and work straight through both class periods. I have also noticed an improvement in writing and reading skills, as well as confidence in most students. I look forward to seeing scores in the spring from our Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing that will hopefully support this observation!

*For more info:

IXL Reading Comprehension <https://www.ixl.com/ela/reading-comprehension>

ReadTheory www.readtheory.org

Reading A-Z <https://www.readinga-z.com/> ■■



Braille Specialists - Virtually Reaching Out

By Kerris Norick - VI Outreach Consultant

Dot 1, Dot 2, Dot 3 January 3, 2019, marked the first virtual Untangling the Dots support meeting for Braille Specialists in Montana. Participants met on the GoToMeeting platform, which is a web conferencing

software that makes it simple to collaborate online in real time. Due to the passing of the 2006 Braille Bill from the Board of Public Education and the Office of Public Instruction, MSDB Consultants for the Blind and Visually Impaired provide annual trainings for Braille Specialists. These trainings are organized by VI Consultants and the National Federation of the Blind Instructor, Allison O'Day. The next on-campus training is being planned for the spring of 2019.

These virtual meetings give Braille Specialists an opportunity to learn the code, braille formatting rules and individual support for braille lessons. Montana encompasses 147,046 square miles. It is impossible to hold monthly state braille meetings, so as the saying goes, the next best thing is to hold virtual meetings. Below is a list of braille meeting dates to be held on GoToMeeting.

- February 7, 2019 • March 7, 2019 • April 4, 2019
- May 2, 2019 • June 6, 2019

If interested in attending one of these meetings, please contact your Outreach Consultant. If you do not already know how to reach the Consultant assigned to your region, please visit www.msdb.mt.gov/outreach/VIOutreach.pdf. ■■



Sandra Ortiz is a paraprofessional in the VI department, and she is also a bit of a kitchen goddess. Every morning she makes a terrific breakfast for all the VI students that come in off the bus. One of her favorite things about her job is working with young students and learning new ways to communicate with them. She is taking a sign language class, and learning to transcribe braille. Ortiz has held many interesting jobs in the past. She taught kids' swim classes at the Peak, worked at a plasma center as a phlebotomist, and was a nanny for the rich and famous in New York. In her spare time, Ortiz enjoys road trips with her two teenage children, Katrina age 17, and Brendan age 14. She also enjoys hiking and cooking for people that she loves. Ortiz is a hard worker with a kind heart. MSDB is lucky to have her. ■■

Close Up: The Ultimate Experience

By Tyson Patterson

Health/PE Instructor and Athletic Director

Close Up is a real-world experience in Washington, DC, to learn about the political process and how it relates to students. Students make personal connections with others from around the country in the setting that embodies our nation's past and present leaders. It's a way to help young leaders find their unique voice and is a great way to inform our youth who can create a stronger nation.



Starting in 2019 MSDB students will be participating in Close Up. The last time the school participated was in the late 1990's. Close Up will include both middle school and high school students from both the VI and DHH departments.

If you are interested in learning more about this amazing process, please contact tpatterson@msdb.mt.gov. Learn more by visiting www.closeup.org. ■■

Times - They are a Changin'

When I took over editing the Express this school year, I wondered what impact I could have. This publication reaches so many and keeps them in the loop about the exciting things we do here at MSDB. I don't want that to change. I want to continue to share our new ideas, new technologies, and

However, I do think we need to update it a bit. What about a new color scheme? Or better yet, what about a new NAME?? Maybe it is time to rename the publication!

Now, this is no small feat. I have ideas, the ladies I work with on this have ideas, the foundation has ideas..... The list goes on and on. However, I believe that the heart of this publication is our students, staff, families, and those of you that continue to support us. So I am opening up a contest to all of you to help choose a new name for the Express.

I am inviting all students, staff, and you, the readers, to submit ideas for the name by the end of April 2019. These can be submitted to me at mhill@msdb.mt.gov. At the end of the contest, I will have the students and staff vote. The winner will receive recognition in the next issue, bragging rights, and a prize.

I truly want everyone to have the opportunity to be involved in this as all of us together are what make this school and this publication great.

Many thanks in advance.

Missie Hill, Editor



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Gallaudet-Clerc Day Celebration

By Brenda LeMieux - DHH Teacher

In December MSDB students and staff celebrated “Gallaudet-Clerc Day” in honor of two important historical people, Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and Laurent Clerc. They are recognized for their contributions and sacrifices to Deaf Education in the 1800’s and are known as the Fathers of Deaf Education in America.

During the assembly, DHH Teacher Brenda LeMieux shared a brief background about Thomas H. Gallaudet and Laurent Clerc. Students were then asked to work with their peers to match questions and answers related to the information shared. After this activity, students and staff participated in an ASL Handshape game. Groups were given a specific handshape and had to list as many words as possible that incorporated that handshape. Fun was had by all. What a great way to celebrate these important people!

To learn more visit: <https://www.gallaudet.edu/tutorial-and-instructional-programs/english-center/reading-english-as-second-language/practice-exercises/laurent-clerc> ❖

2019 Spring & Summer Campus Events

March 29 - 30

Visually Impaired Enrichment Weekend

April 12 - 13

Deaf Enrichment Weekend

May 3 - 4

Games for the Visually Impaired

May 31 - June 2

Deaf Family Learning Weekend

June 7 - June 9

Visually Impaired Family Learning Weekend

June 16 - June 22

Camp for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Students

July 7 - July 13

Camp for Blind & Visually Impaired Students

When Life Gives You Lemons...

**By Missie Hill - Special Education Coordinator/
Indian Education Coordinator**



You have heard the saying “when life gives you lemons, you make lemonade.” Well, at MSDB, when life gives you lots of snow, you make snow cream.

Ms. Hill’s Earth Science class is studying weather systems, so when the snow hit, we knew just what to do. The students gathered snow from campus, added a little sweetness to it, and shared it with other classes in the building. It was a small thing that taught many lessons such as:

- Snow is a definite thing in Montana
- Even a cold messy snowstorm can bring you joy
- Always share that joy with others

The students had a great time and taught others how to make this simple treat. They, in turn, can share it with their friends or families. The recipe is quick and easy:

- 8 cups of fresh snow
- One 14 oz. can of sweetened condensed milk
- 1 teaspoon of vanilla

Add in all ingredients and mix. You can add in anything else you want. Fresh fruit is great on top!!! Enjoy! ❖

The MSDB Express is published three times a year and is graciously funded by the MSDB Foundation.

The current and past editions of Express can be found on the MSDB website at: www.msdb.mt.gov.

❖ To be removed from this mailing list, please contact Paula Mix at pmix@msdb.mt.gov