



Express

MONTANA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF & THE BLIND

lifting students beyond expectations

Volume XXXIII Issue 2, Spring 2022



Kathy Johnson retires.

**Reflections on the
LEAP Program**

Page 8 & 9

**Kathy Johnson Retiring
After 42 Years**

Page 13

From Our Superintendent



The Year of 2022 is starting to look promising for MSDB. Of course we can talk about how COVID and other social events might be affecting our educational environment, but we would rather talk about how we can improve MSDB to be the best it can be for the 1,000+ students and their families we serve statewide. When others think about educational improvements, they usually don't think of how infrastructure improvements can have a positive impact on the students. With support from the 2021 Legislature and the MT Department of Administration, some of those projects will become a reality before the next school year. These projects include:

1. **Updating campus phone system.** Have you ever tried to call the main campus and wonder if we just hung up on you? I promise the answer is no. However, the phone system is so out-of-date that no one will work on the system. We appreciate the legislature for providing us with the funding to update our phone system. The new phone system will include faster connection speeds with VoIP phones and network equipment.
2. **Upgrading lights in all campus buildings.** We are beyond excited to partner with the Department of Environmental Quality and the Department of Administration to install new lighting in all buildings. In the educational buildings this will include different settings that the teachers can adjust to best meet the needs of the students. This includes changing the temperature and colors of the light. MSDB will be the first school in Montana to utilize this new technology and plan to be a model for other schools and state agencies in the future.
3. **New elevator lift for Bitterroot Building.** The current lift is not always reliable. Having the updated elevator will help us ensure that all individuals that come to MSDB will have full access to the building. Many community groups use the basement for meetings, and training and it is exciting to know that all participants will now be able to fully participate in person.
4. **Cottage building new roofs** to minimize the amount of water that leaks into our cottages. After many years of patching up the roof, stepping around buckets, we are beyond happy to have the legislature support the finishing of this project.
5. Installing outside **door entrance systems** to provide a safe environment for our students and staff. It was our hope to have key fobs installed for all doors around the campus, but we underestimated the project. The educational buildings will be the first buildings to install a lock system that includes a fob or card. It will also include a camera system to see who has entered the building. This will help us make sure doors remain locked, limit access to certain times, and cancel a card if lost.

Oh, and it is time to start preparing our list for the 2023 legislature to consider. (1) We currently plan on asking for a parking lot that provides a safer environment for buses and parents. If you have been to campus, you will see the construction cones and signs. We hope to replace those with a system that meets the needs of all. (2) Only a small portion of the campus has video surveillance. This limits the ability to make sure our grounds are safe. We plan to ask for a camera system that will not only cover the outside areas of the campus but all the open areas in our buildings.

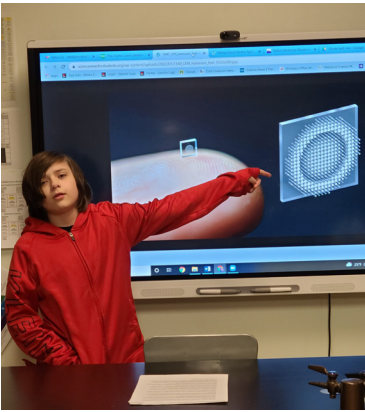
If you have any suggestions on other infrastructure activities, please let us know. Together we will continue making MSDB the best place for students to attend school.

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



Smartboards

By Paul Furthmyre - Superintendent



Logan showing a microcamera on the smartboard.

One of the projects that foundations and donors have supported the past two years is making sure that a Smartboard is located in every educational setting on campus. This includes the main classrooms but also cottage programs as learning never stops at MSDB. Why did we ask donors to support such a project? The answer is simple. Interactive technology, such as the Smartboard, provides our students and staff the opportunity to expand learning. It can help make the learning environment come alive. We want our students to engage with the subject and concepts they are learning. These devices allow

for easy use by the staff and more importantly, the students. Students use kinesthetic learning when using the devices. Having the students learn out of their seats and on the Smartboard gets them moving. It can also develop confidence as now they get to present to their peers and teacher. We appreciate everyone that helped make this project become a success!

Our next major project is to design an environment that will allow all our students to develop a desire for life-long physical fitness by updating our equipment in our exercise rooms. ■■

Poetry from the Braille Class

By Naomi Witham-Travers - Teacher

This year's middle school and high school braille class has been putting their braille skills to good use. It is much more fun to know a "secret code" like braille when you get to use it!

Ms. Barr and Ms. Witham-Travers have been working on more than expanding skills of braille, but have also been exploring a variety of different kinds of poetry. Sometimes they are simple, sometimes silly, but always unique to each student. From simple Couplets, to complicated Villanelles, they have tried a little of everything. Please enjoy a few samples of their works! ■■

She thinks that it is really fun,
Sleeping in the sun.

— A Couplet by Levi W.

Ice cream is great in the summertime,
It can only cost a dime,
But on my tongue it feels like slime.

— A Triplet by Maci. L

I love flying kites,
I'm not afraid of heights.
I could fly and fly all day,
But that is not going my way.
If I could fly as high as a kite,
I would go into the white,
In the clouds I shall stay,
I will be back another day.

— A poem with aabb rhyming scheme by Lexi M.

The ground grows dark, the sky is dark and gray.
The alarm sounds, but it is too late to keep the
shock wave at bay.

Planes still fly overhead to our dismay.

— A Pearl Harbor poem by Daemien S.

A Class Villanelle

In the winter we are surrounded by white,
Dropping temperatures are the start.
Shivering from cold, not from fright.

The winter sky is a delight at night.
The light of the moon fills my heart.
In the winter we are surrounded by white.

The reflection of the sun is so very bright.
Winter is depicted by art.
Shivering from cold, not from fright.

Walking through the deep snow can be a fight,
The bare twigs of the trees stand apart.
In the winter we are surrounded by white.

The storm blows with all its might.
The moon rides across the sky on a go cart.
Shivering from cold, not from fright.

The scene of winter is such a sight.
Slowly the winter will depart.
In the winter we are surrounded by white.
Shivering from cold, not from fright.

IN THIS ISSUE

Page 2

- Letter From Our Superintendent

Page 3

- Smartboards
- Poetry from the Braille Class

Page 4-5

- VIEW Success

Page 6

- Life Skills Training at MSDB

Page 7

- Bearmz Away

Page 8-9

- Two Students Reflect on Their First Year of LEAP Program
- Donations From July 2020 -June 2021

Page 10

- Red Ribbon Week
- Preschool Corner

Page 11

- Early Intervention

Page 12

- Meet Our New Staff

Page 13

- Kathy Johnson Retiring

Page 14

- Student Life Staff

Page 15

- Cottage Life
- Motor Lab News

Page 16

- Letter from the Editor
- Bingo Night

VIEW Success

By Amy Tangen - Outreach

The first Visually Impaired Enrichment Weekend (VIEW) for 2022 was held January 28 and 29. MSDB typically has a fall and a spring VIEW for a school year. This year we were unable to host the usual fall event, so we opted for a winter event! Several students attended, but also several were unable to attend the virtual event. We missed them! The good news is that the Spring VIEW event is already being planned.

These annual events are always such a smashing success, whether in person or virtual. We have covered topics such as art, shopping, travel, technology, sports, and on and on in previous events. We always, though, play, laugh, listen, learn, and connect. The students, families, speakers, leaders, teachers, and friends enjoy this time together. At the end of each and every event, someone inevitably says, "This was the best VIEW yet!"

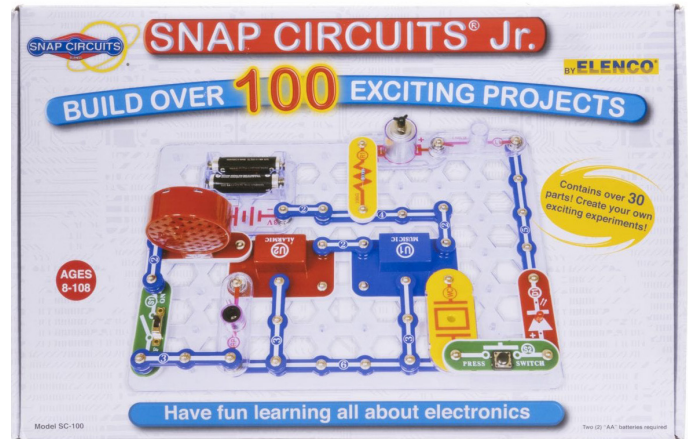


Our panelists Billy, Todd, and Robert.

This event was also a STEM event. We started Friday evening at 6:00 pm for a technology check and "get-to-know you" games. We enjoyed ourselves with a game of "What Is It?" followed by a game of "20 Questions." We ended with a wonderful Yoga-Flow hour with Stacey Gibbins with the Northwest Association For Blind Athletes. Everyone got to do some wonderful stretches and gentle relaxing movements. What a wonderful way to kick off Winter VIEW 2022!

Saturday we began our event at 9:30 am with introductions by selecting an animal with your personality characteristics. It was so fun and insightful to see how everyone sees themselves. We had different birds, puppies, and three cats!

Shortly after introductions, we jumped right into the Snap Circuit Kit from APH with Robert Jaquiss as our guest leader. We did project #40 of 100 projects in the kit and loved it! Because we used ZOOM, we could easily go into separate rooms if needed. A consultant and students went into other rooms to build theirs for a quieter environment. In the main room Robert guided us through the build of the circuit one step at a time. Kerri Norick, VI Outreach Consultant, followed up, ensuring each student gave a thumbs up for each and every step before moving on to the next. It was a wonderful and easy step-by-step circuit build with Robert teaching and Kerri keeping all on the correct step. It was an interesting event filled with rich language the students often hear in O&M lessons such as parallel, from-to, beside, and of course words such as switch, connect, attach, and so forth. Everyone was engaged and enjoying this auditory, visual, and tactile experience!



Snap Circuits Jr. box.

Robert then demonstrated a braille display from a pilot program for reading books from the Library of Congress. Robert demo's a Humanware NLS e-reader. This is a 32 braille display from the Utah Regional Library. There are possibly others there to check out for the pilot program. The reader has 32 braille display, enter key, space bar, up and down lines buttons, etc and is a case with a strap. Very interesting!

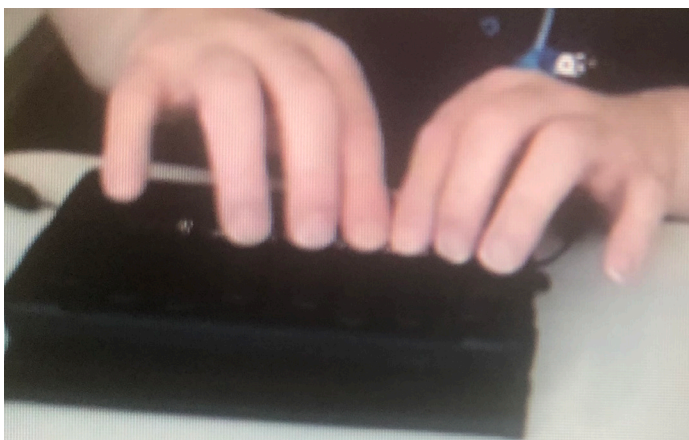
Robert ended with a discussion on the National Federation for the Blind's (NFB) NEWSLINE. This is a program to get braille newspapers through the braille e-readers, or audio files, etc. He taught us that this gets a person with a vision impairment access to newspapers all over the world. He uses a landline phone and dials a specific number, although there are many options. It is the NFB NEWSLINE. There is an App for this also – so just tell SIRI to open the NFB NEWSLINE. There are even kids magazines on this! Check it out! The phone number is 888-882-1629.

Our next event was Stacey Gibbons with Northwest Association for Blind Athletes (NWABA) leading us in movement. Stacey verbally and visually guided us through a warm up and a circuit. The movement felt great! When we finished our circuit – we discussed the Home Run Course and the free described workouts on their YouTube channel. She told us there are many many videos there for all of our students to use. The address of this channel is www.YouTube.com/nwaba1

At noon – yes, it is only noon, and we have already had a full day!! At noon, Todd Fahlstrom joined us along with his dog guide, Riter, to teach us about having a dog guide. He got Riter

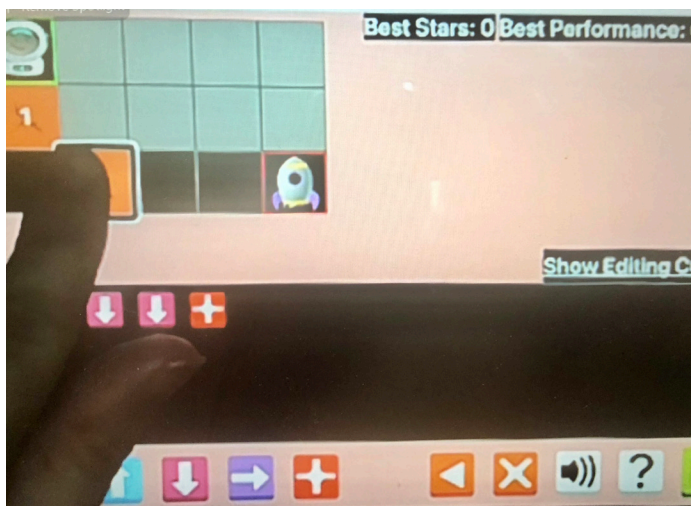


Braille e-reader.



Robert using the new e-reader.

from Guide Dogs for the Blind. He explained that Riter was raised in Boulder, Colorado. Riter has seen 122 movies while living there, as his trainer took him to movies. After this, he went to dog guide college. He had eight tests to get through when he was finished with college. We were all free to ask questions and a student asked how old a student needs to be to get a guide dog, and Todd said 18 years old. There is a Montana dog guide users group with support systems in all of the larger towns. It was asked of Todd: How long does training take? Todd taught us that: Puppy raising stage is a year. Training is about 3-7 months. Usually they are about 18-20 months when they are passed off to the blind individual.



Leslie demonstrating Code Quest from APH.

The next question was: What is the person responsible for? Todd taught us feeding, bathing, grooming, scooping, and taking to the vet. Financially it is about \$80-\$100 per month. Having a dog guide is a tremendous responsibility!! Todd emphasized that you must be strong in your orientation and mobility skills to have a dog guide. He gave several examples as to why – such as a dog can not tell when the light turns green. You must have these skills in place. Everyone had such good questions for Todd and some students even said they want a dog guide some day! Todd taught us that there is a book called “Forward Together” that would have the information you would need when looking at one of the 12 schools for dog guides. There is also a movie called “Pick of the Litter” that gives great information. Finally, Montana Dog Guide Group has a Facebook page, and an Instagram page and webpage <https://montanadogguidegroup.com>. These are private, but you can join these groups on social media. The Instagram name is wearemdgg. The Facebook group is called Montana Dog Guide Group.

We did take a brief break for lunch...brief meaning literally less than 10 minutes! We were all so eager to get back to it.

We met again at 1:00 for a demonstration from the American Printing House for the Blind's _____ Leslie. Leslie taught us how to use the program Code Quest. This is available as an app – but not yet available for a phone. We learned how to code to play the game. Some students already knew how to use this, so they chimed in to help Leslie teach us. Leslie stated this really is all about problem solving and critical thinking. We have to make a guess at what can happen, try it, and learn from it, and try again. This was so much fun! She also spoke about another kit called Code and Go Mouse – it is not a phone related game, it is actually a robot mouse that you do the exact same thing by using physical pieces and you code and program in the mouse to run through the maze. They are looking for people to participate in a coding symposium in May – students can get involved! Such fun and smart tools! We had to stop learning and playing to move on at 1:30 to our final event of our VIEW event!

At 1:30 we gathered a panel of three adults, each with a different vision impairment. VI Outreach Consultant Barb Peterson moderated and panelists were Robert Jaquiss, Billy Henry, and Todd Fahlstrom. Outreach posed one question at a time, giving each two minutes to answer, then students were given a chance to each ask follow up questions of the panel. The questions and answers were so informative for us all. The questions posed to the panelists are:

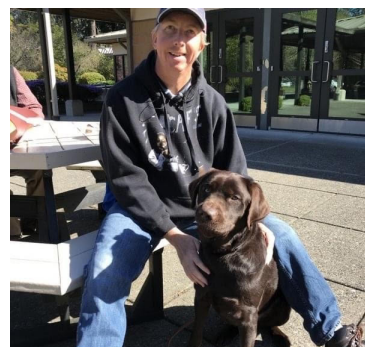
1. What is your vision condition and how do you see?
When did you lose your vision? Share your story.
2. What medium/tools do you use for literacy?
3. What orientation and mobility tools do you use for independent travel?
4. Words of wisdom, accomplishments, and best moments.

Students interacted, applying the panelist answers to themselves and relating with even more questions. Such good interaction for and with the students. This was such an amazing hour together and passed far too quickly.

We appreciate every speaker/presenter that attended our Winter 2022 VIEW and are already busy planning the Spring VIEW. This Friday/Saturday a great time was once again had by all!

Meet our speakers

Todd Fahlstrom, 48, and married, has 4 kids and 4 grandchildren. He is president of MAB, leader within the Montana Dog guide group, and works as a virtual recruiter for a company in Colorado. Todd lost his sight to *RP and transitioned from a white cane to a dog guide almost 3 years ago. Todd does like the outdoors and is often found snowshoeing, cross country skiing, camping, hiking trails, or just enjoying a good cup of coffee while socializing with others on the phone. Todd likes challenging others to get involved and trying something new. Todd spoke to us on being a guide dog user.



Todd Fahlstrom

**RP: Retinitis pigmentosa is a rare, inherited degenerative eye disease that causes severe vision impairment in which the back wall of the eye (retina) is damaged.*

Continued on page 6



Stacey Gibbins

Stacey Gibbins is the Sr. Director of Programs & Services at Northwest Association for Blind Athletes (NWABA). NWABA's mission is to provide life-changing opportunities through physical activity and sport for individuals who are blind and visually impaired. Over the past 15 years, NWABA has served thousands of

athletes throughout MT, ID, WA & OR, enriching lives and providing opportunities. We believe that sport and physical activity are catalysts for a greater quality of life. Stacey led us through movement and gave us the links to the online free movement videos.

Robert Jaquiss was blinded due to *ROP. Robert learned to read and write braille, and he attributes his success to being braille literate. Robert is involved in an NSF sponsored project to display graphical information on a multiline braille display. Robert is one of the NFB-NEWSLINE coordinators for the NFB



Robert Jaquiss

of Montana. Robert's interests include hands-on educational experiences, archeology, history, the history of the blind, and the concept of sustainable rehabilitation of the blind in developing nations. Robert is active in his local church, Lions club and NFB affiliate. Robert led us through the APH Snap Circuit kid and one project. We had 100% success!

**ROP: Retinopathy of prematurity (also called ROP) is an eye disease that affects many premature babies. ROP is one of the most common causes of vision loss in children. It can lead to lifelong vision problems and blindness. ROP doesn't have any signs or symptoms when it first develops in a baby.*

Leslie Weilbacher is the Outreach Specialist for the Northwest region with American Printing House for the Blind (APH). She was a TVI/O&M for the last six years and now supports the field by training in assistive technology. She loves to travel the region with her guide dog Neil, a German Shepard. Leslie guided us through learning about Code Quest, an app from the APH.



Leslie and her guide dog.

Life Skills Training at MSDB

By Kelly Olson - Teacher

At MSDB, students learn and practice skills that will help them gain a greater level of independence in their adult lives. Life Skills classes have goals and objectives created to scaffold skills, giving students repetitive exposures to the subjects, while increasing the expectation level each year.

Using the MSDB Life Skills curriculum and the Transition 2 Life - Daily Living Skills resources, students study a wide variety of subjects in the areas of adult living, employment, and social skills. Topics include information on nutrition, making meals, grocery shopping, kitchen basics, and cleaning house. Students practice preparing a variety of meals using the microwave, oven,



Students practice using the stove and oven.



and stove. The class also studies topics related to staying healthy, including strategies for managing stress, building self-esteem, and communicating. In addition, students learn about earning a paycheck, paying bills, transportation options, and seeking employment.

By training basic life skills, our goal is happy, healthy adults, empowered by this information, ready to take on life's many challenges. ■■

Beamz Away

By Sue Davis - Outreach

eamz Away is an incredible interactive musical system that gives students a way to interact despite physical limitations. It has so many great benefits from improving one's eye-hand coordination, fine and gross motor skills, cognitive level, sensory and social/emotional skills, along with an array of other therapeutic benefits.

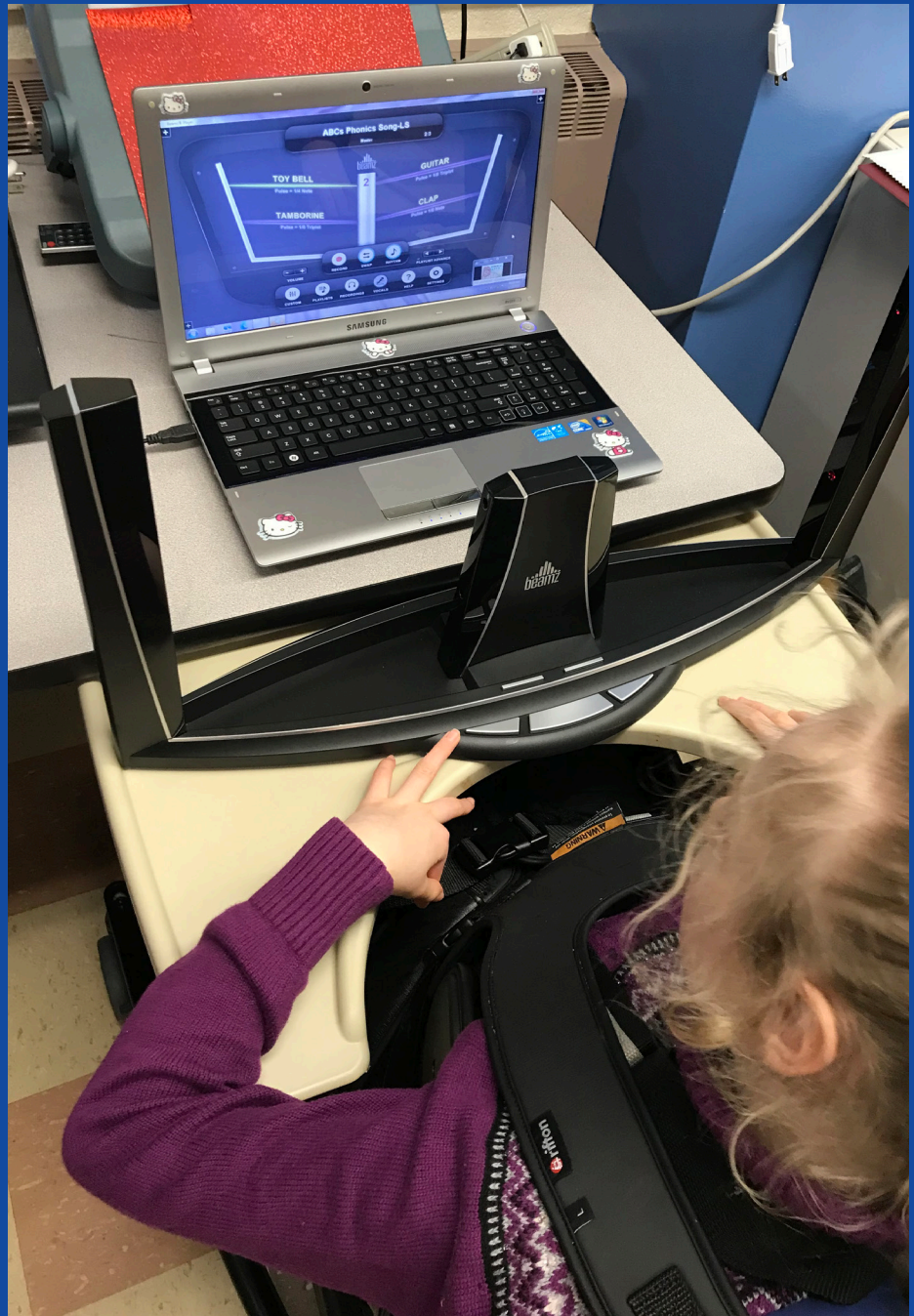
What is the Beamz? The Beamz controller, when connected to a PC, Mac, or iOS device, allows one to make great-sounding music within minutes regardless of musical background and become immersed in this unique music-making and learning experience.

How does it work? When connected to a Windows-based PC, the student chooses what activity he/she wants to do. There is an array of activities to choose from, including a broad range of early learning, math, music education, and interactive storybook songs, and playing realistic virtual musical instruments. Students can have fun playing musical instruments, regardless of musical experience or ability, or they can add sounds to songs being played by simply touching light beams with their hands.

For instance, while playing the early learning song "ABC Phonics," the student can add in the letter sound, play the object's sound representing the letter in the music, or add musical instrument sounds to the song depending on which light beam he/she touches. Such fun! Who knew a zebra sounds more like a hyena than a horse?

Students who are more advanced can create their own songs either by adding to a song that is playing or by playing virtual instruments while engaging with the light beams to create an original song. It provides great social interaction. A group of students could each be responsible for interacting with one of the four light beams, and I think one could also interact directly on the computer simultaneously as the light beams. Oh, the creativity! And, did I mention it can all be recorded?!

The Beamz comes with 100+ interactive songs and includes lesson plans and therapy guides for schools and therapists. I haven't had a chance to experiment. Still, the website claims "the Beamz is accessible,



Student uses the Beamz controller.

meaning it's compatible if your family member requires the use of a switch, adapted keyboard, touch surface, an eye gaze or other access method," which is fantastic for some of the students I serve.

If interested, go to their website to apply for a Beamz <http://share-your-blessings.org/programs/>. Click on "Apply for Donation" under Project Maestro. They are happy to provide Beamz units to qualifying families, schools, therapists, and organizations that assist individuals with special needs, but there is a limited number so apply ASAP!. ☐☐



Montana School *for the* Deaf

LIFTING STUDENTS

Two Students Reflect on Their First Year of LEAP Program

By MSDB Foundation

Like all 19 year olds, Kaelyn has dreams. One day she wants her own apartment and to one day become a dog trainer. After graduating from MSDB through the Visually Impaired (VI) program, she realized she needed a little more support in order to achieve those goals. Like other young adults in this stage of life, she is building skills to live on her own. With LEAP, she is gaining them quickly!

Fortunately, the Living Employment Academic Planning (LEAP) program came along so Kaelyn could experience more independence with a structured system of support for this transition. She enrolled in the program in August 2022, and since then she has learned about paying bills and managing her time. The MCIS program has also helped her on her path to more independence. The freedom is what Kaelyn enjoys most, but she knows the structure within the program is only available for a year. After that she may move in with a roommate or get her own place.

Work is an essential aspect of LEAP. Kaelyn is working locally at a veterinary hospital now, and she wants to stick with it. According to her, Big Sky Animal Medical Center is the best place to work. Since her goals include a future in dog training, this is an ideal fit for her.

If LEAP didn't exist, Kaelyn says she would be living with her parents in Great Falls instead of the small apartment on campus. With the support of LEAP staff, she is able to make a transition to independence with more skills and confidence.

Wesley is at the same stage of life as Kaelyn. He is in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) program at MSDB, and after graduating from MSDB he also needed more skills before moving on to the next stage in his life. He also started the program in August 2022, and he says, "Plans are to live independently and enjoy my job."

There were other programs involved in shaping Wesley's vocational pursuits. He completed a college introductory program called Connections 101 at Great Falls College MSU (GFCMSU). The program helps with MCIS, which helps explore different job options that are important for entering the world of work. Wesley says, "Now we are planning to set up job experiences, working with the LEAP coordinators and vocational rehab to find job experiences tailored to my interests." Right

now, he is working as a sandwich artist at Subway, a job he got himself.

Bainville is Wesley's hometown, so Great Falls is certainly a long distance from home. Bainville is a town in Roosevelt County. The population was 271 at the 2020 census. It is named for Charles M. Bain, an early resident and the town's first postmaster. The town is located in Eastern Montana, between Culbertson and Williston, North Dakota.

Wesley says, "I like that it is more independent focused, rather than group focused like school has been for me. I was always moving around a lot when I was growing up, so it was never really independent. Needs here are focused solely on the individual and what they need. The program managers are great at doing that because they set their own schedule to match with yours to make time to do what is required in the program."

Challenges are not anything new for Wesley, and he realizes, "It is more of my own challenges with trying to get started with things like jobs and stuff like that, but the coordinators have been great with motivation to enforce what I need to do. That is where I am at right now. I am still working on them but getting close to overcoming my challenges."

After one year in LEAP, Wesley plans on applying to become a Resident Advisor (RA) so he could move into one of the apartments on campus. In exchange for volunteer hours of sitting at the desk. The best part is he would be able to do his college work during his down time, whatever that may be, to exchange volunteer hours for paying rent on campus.

Beyond the RA position, Wesley says, "I do not have a plan, but I want to write one up with the coordinators to make that happen. As far as college, I am not focused on that, I am more focused on finding something I enjoy, a job that I can enjoy. Focusing on learning new skills on living independently, because that is just a big one for me."

If LEAP didn't exist, Wesley says, "I would be super disadvantaged, living with my mom with no room to myself, working at a full-time job that I probably would not enjoy. So being here has been very beneficial, as my next chapter or next step in life after graduating high school. I am so very grateful to be here." ■■

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

US BEYOND EXPECTATIONS

DONATIONS FROM: July 2020 – June 2021

Donations \$5,000 to \$50,000

Joe & Anna Schmitz and Pat & Anna
Burke Trust
The Sample Foundation

Donations of \$500 to \$4,999

Cobb Foundation
Delta Gamma Foundation / PI Chapter
Hill County School District/ Havre
Public Schools
Liuna Local 1686
Network for Good (Facebook)
Steve & Amy Fugate
Bill Tacke & Barbara Teberg
Royal & Norma Johnson
Charitable Foundation
E.M. Brown
Elaine Casey (Deaf Mentorship)
Clementine Mehrens
Ruby E. Cull Trust
Fidelity Charitable Grant in Honor
of Freda & Jerry Toner

Donations of \$100 to \$499

Fuddruckers Fundraiser
Frontstream
Kroger/Smith's Grocery
MacKenzie River Pizza Fundraiser
Virgil Proctor Trust (Christmas Party)
Francis Gryglewicz
Gary & Linda Hollinger
Sue Swartz
Daniel & Rebecca Brandborg
Doris Wise
John Casbara
Mary P. Meese
Nancy Coopersmith

Debra Redburn
Betty Van Tighem
Carolee Hinckley
John & Sue Musgrove
Charles & Rosanne Davis (EOS)

Donations less than \$100

Box Tops for Education (General Mills)
CAF America
American Online Giving
Friendship Lodge #37 AF & AM
Lifetouch Photography
United Fund for Employees/
Shareholders of Church Harris,
Johnson & Williams
Russell & Judy Riesenberg
George Besette
Carol Lawen
Carole & Corrine Wolf
Daniel Sturdevant
Daniel & Marlene Krum
George Besette
Katheryn M. Sloan
Kristan Hopkins
Lena Whitson
Mary Meissner
Robert & Martha Janes
Ronald & Makiko Level
Tonya England
Sheila M. Rice
Thomas M. Facey
Beverly Lemieux
Gloria Duback
Mary Meissner
Marlene Bauer
Karmen Lee
Carla Howard c/o Howard Living Trust

In-Kind Donations

Carol Heath
Brenda Kelly
Diane Long
Rob Patterson
Lee Wraith
Remko & Dena Wouters
Dennis Zander

Shep Fund

Flathead Pomona Grange #2
Smith Valley Grange No. 130
Melvin & Phyllis Carr

Statewide Lending Library

Missoula County Public Schools
Lions PC12 (Polson)
Nashua Lions Club

Visual Enhancement Project - Smartboards for MSDB Classrooms

Anonymous Foundation
Anonymous Private Donation
MDU Resources Foundation
Benefis Health Systems
Rita & Gary Campbell
Lorraine Deming

MEMORIAL GIFTS

In Memory of Bob Catron
Robert & Glenda Oldenburg

In Memory of Darlene Lamping
Nelly Cabbage
Michael Amdahl
Rich and Ginny Tabatt
Laura & Michael Clark
Dan & Donna Lamping

Sheila LeBrun
Sharon Goreham
Shelly Fallihee

In Memory of Roy & Madonna Furthmyre

Richard & Darlene Forson
Jim & Tami Kelly

In Memory of Derald Guilbert
Alice Guilbert

**In Memory of William Lillian &
Harvey Maas**
Verlie Turville

In Memory of Carol Mowry
Bill & Rosanne Davis

**In Memory of Eleanore
Kittelson-Aldred**
Tamara Kittelson-Aldred

HONOR GIFTS

In honor of Patrick Mathern c/o
Waylon Mathern

*We also recognize the dedication
and effort of all current MSDB
Foundation Board Members, and
we thank all past members for
their service.*

*We have made every effort to confirm
this record. If we have failed to record
a gift or record a gift incorrectly we
apologize. Kindly drop us a note at
foundation@msdb.k12.mt.us so we
may correct our records. ■■*

**YELLOWSTONE
VALLEY GIVES** by



MISSOULA GIVES by



Missoula
Community
Foundation

**GIVE
Great Falls**
MONTANA



“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

Red Ribbon Week

By Tearra Donovan - DHH Teacher

This year at MSDB, staff and students participated in Red Ribbon Week in October. Lace Lesofski and myself were co-chairpersons for the Red Ribbon Week activities. We planned fun activities such as Spirit Week with a guest speaker. Every day students and staff dressed up to show their school spirit. They participated by showing off crazy hair, wearing halloween colors, supporting their favorite sports team, sporting the color red against drugs, and one the last day finally wore MSDB colors and apparel. It was so fun to see everyone participating and having a good time.

Lace and I wanted to take this advantage of Red Ribbon Week to educate the students about drugs and how to stay safe. We were able to invite a School Resource Officer (SRO) from Great Falls Public School to come and present to our students about how to stay safe from the drugs and also to educate about consequences with the drugs. In the world we have today, there is so much unknown and constantly changing, however something that we believe needs to be constant is educating students on the dangers of drug use and the consequences that come from use. We hope to continue this tradition again next year, making it even more fun and interactive for students and staff. ■■

Preschool Corner



Aquilla



Golf



Wesley blowing ball.



Wesley and Aquilla



Each week in VI preschool we learn about a new instrument during Music Time. In recent music lessons, KayLynn learned about the bongo drums and the tambourine. She explored and learned how to produce sounds with each instrument.



Not only is eating fun, but it's also a great time to learn. Kirin is concentrating on independently peeling a banana during lunch at MSDB.

Early Intervention

By Kitty Griffin - DHH Outreach Consultant

Remember the good old three R's for education: "Reading wRiting and 'Rithmetic"?

MSDB added a few more very important R's during the time of COVID.

R - RESILIENCE

R - RESPECT

R - READY TO LEARN

2020 is a year that we will never forget. I never uttered the word "PANDEMIC" nor gave a single thought about wearing a mask other than to a costume party. And how deep the impact on education would be for our children in MT and every state in the US and world wide.

It brought about a tidal wave of technology. I had been using the video platform ZOOM for the past sixyears, but on a very limited basis. Video platforms were about to become the lifeline to providing services to families and students both on campus and in the Outreach Program. As tidal waves are known to do, it engulfed us all.

MSDB was RESILIENT by providing information and supplies to staff on practical issues such as mask recommendations, personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitation protocols. In addition, various ongoing trainings on Google Classroom, using Google docs to work collaboratively on sign classes being offered and references for communication, language, listening and spoken language, milestone charts and more.

MSDB was RESPECTFUL to our students and staff, providing words of encouragement when frustrations occurred with "connectivity" including email, Zoom links, and microphone and video settings. "You are muted....muted....?" Never once did I push my computer nor iPad off to the floor. Although, there were close shaves in that department. There were supportive emails,

text messages and phone calls between friends/colleagues. The undercurrent of caring touched us all.

MSDB was READY TO Learn:

- ASLtech seminar to learn how to access new apps and features to generate custom sign and written language materials for families and students
- Seminar on new guidelines for Educational Interpreting standards
- Google Docs to share with our colleagues (still working on that one)
- I learned how to use a CHAT BOX during meetings.... BIG WOW, when I finally got it!

Personally, I grew a lot (for a girl of my vintage):

- I learned how to send a ZOOM link to more than one person
- I attended the Montana Speech Language and Hearing Association conference (MSHA) virtually for three days of classes and colleague support
- I learned how to screen share pictures and videos during a meeting
- I learned that my dog, Steffi, will cut out my mic when she starts barking (MUTE! Steffi, MUTE!)
- I learned that leaning forward to a screen all day can put a crick in your neck and back
- I learned how to Google DUO with my Dad on his smartphone (way to go, Dad!)

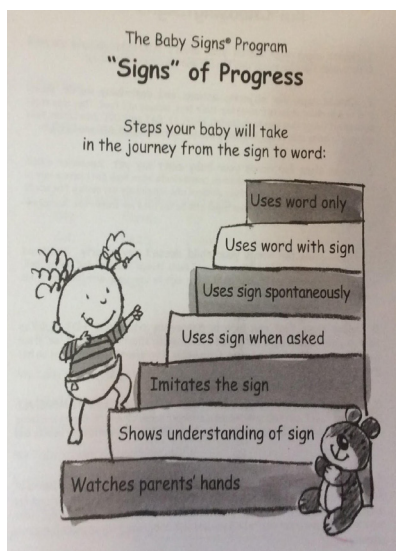
MSDB is recognized as the leader in providing resources and education for children with visual impairment and/or hearing loss in Montana. We are still here: and ready to learn, to teach and to care. ❖



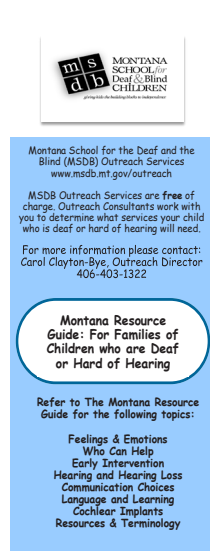
Musical Instruments



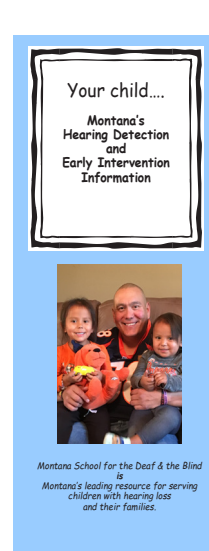
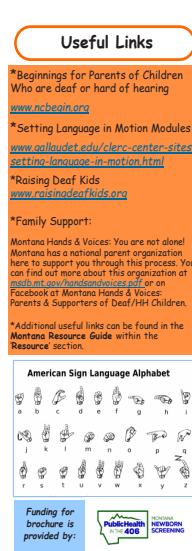
Laughing



Baby steps.



MT Birth to 3 Guidelines.



Meet Our New Staff



Joel Auers - PE Teacher

I was born in Minnesota, but our family soon after moved to Wisconsin until I was in 3rd grade. We then moved back to Pine City, Minnesota, until my 9th grade year when we moved to Billings, Montana. I graduated from Skyview High School in 1991, and went to Dickinson State University on a wrestling scholarship.

After college my first teaching job was in a little town called Buhl, ID. I taught and coached in Buhl for three years and then headed to Graduate School at Northern State University in Aberdeen, SD. After three years in Aberdeen I was hired at C.M. Russell High School for PE and as the Head Wrestling Coach. I coached at CMR for six seasons then moved over to East Middle School for seven years as a PE teacher and Athletic Director. I served in Administration at North Middle School and East Middle School for the next 5 years before receiving the Principal position at Glacier High School in Kalispell, MT.

I married my lovely wife on New Years Eve 2015. My wife was still working in Great Falls as a Physical Therapist for Benefis Hospital while I was a Principal at Glacier. During this time my wife became pregnant with our first baby girl Ziyah. We decided that being near family was a good option for us raising a family, and I moved back to Great Falls and received the PE position here at MSDB in July. Ziyah was born on November 2, 2021, and we are enjoying our wonderful family this New Year together.



Jake Metzenroth - LEAP Program

I'm originally from Largo, Florida. I moved here at the beginning of the school year to work as the overnight Resident Advisor in the LEAP program. I was so excited for the change in weather and location. I'm very much enjoying the colder weather and all the snow. It's better than sweating in Florida! I have two dogs, and I enjoy taking them on hikes and generally being outdoors. I am excited for summer so I can hike and explore the great outdoors more.



Chris Siller - Teacher

Chris Siller was born and raised in Great Falls. He attended MSDB early on and later graduated from Great Falls High School. Chris earned his bachelor's degree in social work from the University of Montana, his masters in Education and orientation and mobility from Salus University. Chris has over 15 years of experience working with a wide range of individuals with visual impairments, teaching assistive technology, orientation and mobility, and activities of daily living. He has also coached youth goalball in Missoula, even taking the team to regional tournaments. Chris is passionate about working with students with visual impairments and uses his professional, personal and academic experience to help empower them to be as independent as possible.



Sarah Trimble - Interpreter

I'm from St. Petersburg, Florida, also known as the "sunshine city". I recently moved here to Great Falls at the start of the school year, and oh boy, was I in for a change. The weather is very different from Florida but overall I'm enjoying it.

Working at the school has been the best experience I've had in my professional career. I'm really enjoying learning and working with all the new people. I'm very excited to see where this journey takes me in the future.

Kathy Johnson Retiring After 42 Years of Dedicated Service to MSDB Families and Students

By Leann Goss - Outreach Consultant



L to R: Sarah Eyer, Kathy Johnson, Pam Stuckey, Emily LaSalle, and Heather Lamb were the team of volunteers (and MSDB staff at the time) that Kathy brought together that year to help man the Healthy Hearing booth at the Special Olympics Semi-Annual Health Screening Event.

Kathy Johnson started working as the audiologist at the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind (MSDB) in 1980. It was a time when cutting edge listening technology for children meant that they wore large, boxy FM receivers on harnesses on their chest with cords that connected up to ear level microphones like the child is wearing in the picture. As you look at the picture you may wonder why the equipment had to be so big and how in the world did we get from that to where we are now with nearly invisible tiny blue-tooth earbuds?! Well, Kathy will tell you that the equipment had to be that big then in order to accommodate the batteries it needed. As the size of batteries got smaller, so did the technology! Of course there's a lot more than batteries that go into the technology; but that is an explanation that makes it all make sense. That's Kathy's superpower: she breaks down complicated information and makes it understandable and meaningful.

Parents of children needing their hearing tested go to Kathy, perhaps a little worried or somewhat confused about what other doctors have speculated and they just want to know what they can do to best support their child. In education it is common to hear teachers talk about their students' "light bulb moment" when they know their student understands a new concept. I have witnessed this same "light bulb moment" for parents when Kathy has taken time to explain to them all that she sees going on with their child and for many parents their eyes fill with tears and they say, "I KNEW I wasn't crazy! I KNEW something was going on! Thank you for explaining that to me, it all makes sense now! What should I do next?". Most parents leave with an understanding of what is going on with their child's hearing and a step by step plan of action. Parents know Kathy is on their side and willing to walk this new path right alongside their family the entire time. In Kathy's own words, "The practice of audiology has really changed as there have been developments in technology and hearing aids along with medical advancements. These changes

have given families so many more choices than ever before. We know so much more now about language development and brain development. When I started there just were not many good options for providing deaf children with auditory information. Back then we had several children who were deafblind due to Rubella or Mumps, but now with the vaccinations these are rare occurrences. The most fascinating aspect of my job has been to constantly keep up with new things that most often can make a child's life easier. My job is always interesting with lots of opportunities to meet lots of different families and children. I get joy from meeting kids where they are and working, no matter how long it takes, to get a reliable result. Sometimes it means I see the family multiple times over the course of several months, and I really do not mind; because knowing if a child can hear or not is just that important."

Kathy has been an invaluable resource for her coworkers, her local and state-wide community, her professional peers, and most of all to schools and early intervention programs across the state of Montana over the past four decades as well. Before coming to MSDB, Kathy was an audiologist for the Great Falls Public Schools. She has been involved in Special Olympics' biannual health screenings, several Child Find screenings around the state, a member of the Cleft-Palate Team of Montana, and just a phone call away for school staff all over the state who seek her guidance and expertise in best practices for children of all ages who are deaf or hard of hearing. Kathy has presented at several local and national conventions such as the one for Early Hearing Detection and Intervention, the Montana Council of Exceptional Children, US Indian Health Audiology, and local organizations such as the Montana Speech and Hearing Association, the Montana Pediatricians, Montana Head Start programs, several Montana Early Intervention programs, and the Montana Board of Public Education just to name a few!

Kathy, your work has had profoundly positive effects on the futures for so many children and families of Montana and will continue to do so for generations into the future! We wish you only the best; you will be missed! ❖



Body worn Phonic Ear from the 1980's.

Teacher Alyssa Kline models the microphone of the 80's while wearing today's Mini Mic around her neck to show just how much smaller the equipment has gotten over the years. Morris and Elijah explore the body-worn FM receivers of the past.

Student Life Staff – Experience Galore!

By Jim Kelly - Director of Student Life



Gift giving in the boy's cottage.

This article is an effort to dispel the myth that our staff in the Student Life Program are just babysitters because they certainly are not. Students spend approximately 35-hours per week of the waking hours in school. When students return to the cottages, home away from home, they spend approximately 74-hours a week interacting with their peers and staff and participating in various activities.

Our direct care staff (Cottage Life Attendants), now called Residential Advisors with more than one year of experience are all initially certified Residential Child and Youth and Care Professionals (RCYCP). They receive in excess of 12-hours of training per year to maintain certification. This program is offered at several other state schools across the nation. Almost fifty percent of our Student Life Staff have college degrees, nursing training and several are currently taking classes at the post-secondary level! In addition to the RCYCP training, the Student Life staff conduct bi-weekly department meetings and often will invite teachers and support personnel to attend those



Morris and a Reindeer.

We have 30 individuals who work primarily in our Student Life program and 30% of these staff are individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or have low vision. These mentors provide our students with real life examples (because they have been there) and work hard to guide our students to be successful. We are fortunate that each department has at least two of these individuals. In addition, our Student Life staff brings over 400 years of experience at MSDB. Many of these staff have worked hard to maintain many of our traditions that have been established throughout the years. This includes such things as the “Thankful Leaves” at Thanksgiving time, formal dinners, holiday parties, Super Bowl parties, cleaning day, travel home/return days, game nights, Labor Day and Memorial Day weekend activities, Student Council, and the list could go on and on. Student Life Staff are proud of the work that they do with these students and are a valued piece of the professional team here at MSDB who work together for the success of our students. This year, we have implemented the MSDB Cottage Bulletin as a way to share monthly events and information about the Cottage Program. These newsletters are available on the Residential Student Life Program website.

<https://sites.google.com/msdb.k12.mt.us/msdbresidencelife/home>
If you would like to learn more about the Residential Student Life Program, please contact Jim Kelly II, Director of Student Life at 406-771-6120 or jkelly@msdb.k12.mt.us



Dice gift exchange - Obsidian.



Troy and JD.

Cottage Life

By Andrew Kauffman- Residential Advisor (RA)

Hello, everyone. Last year, we had a busy cottage event. We enjoyed watching the Griz dominate the Cats, while we had a lot of food that was being made by the Cottage staff. Then, Thanksgiving break came and all the students went home to be with their families. Christmas was quickly approaching us, and the students enjoyed the Christmas cookie decorating and won prizes. The younger boys also got to go to the mall and see Santa and his reindeers.

Obsidian (Cottage E) had a Christmas party and a lot of games, presents from the staff, we started off with eating pizza from MacKenzie River Pizza & Co, the dice exchange game which was fun and enjoyed watching the boys have fun, then presents came. The boys were really thrilled, especially the younger boys. It was really fun to see smiles on their faces and watch them enjoy their presents from us staff. The older boys exchanged gifts which was really nice to see. Travel home quickly approached, and all the students went home to be with their families. 🍷

Motor Lab News

By Laurie McRae - Physical Thereapist

Elementary students in the MSDB motor lab have spent several years developing their motor and sensory processing skills. This spring they are exploring skills required for self-regulation in the school environment.

Self-regulation has been defined as a person's ability to adjust and control their energy level, emotions, behaviors and attention. It has been identified as a critical developmental task of childhood as well as a predictor of academic abilities. Appropriate self-regulation is demonstrated by one's ability to manage strong emotions, calm down following an exciting or upsetting event, focus on a task, control impulses and behave in ways that support positive social interactions and relationships with others.

Self-regulation has been divided into three areas: sensory regulation, emotional regulation and cognitive regulation. Those areas have been defined as follows:

- **Sensory Regulation:** Allows children to maintain an appropriate level of alertness in order to respond appropriately across environments to the sensory stimuli present.



The cross crawl exercise can be performed sitting, standing, on hands and knees or lying on the mat. It requires opposite sides of the body to work together to coordinate the right arm and left leg, then the left arm and right leg. It is a tool that can energize our body and calm our mind.



Students use a straw to pick up plastic discs and drop them in a cup. This activity helps students develop the breath control required for deep breathing exercises.

- **Emotional Regulation:** Allows children to respond to social rules with a range of emotions through initiating, inhibiting, or modulating their behavior in a given situation to ensure social acceptance.
- **Cognitive Regulation:** Allows children to use cognitive (mental) processes necessary for problem solving and related abilities in order to demonstrate attention and persistence to tasks.

MSDB motor lab routines and activities focus on early self-regulation skills. When students arrive at the motor lab they check-in by identifying how they are feeling, noticing how others are feeling and thinking about how our bodies feel when we experience different emotions. The next step in the sensory regulation process would be for a student to decide if they need to use a tool to self-regulate. Motor lab activities allow students the opportunity to explore sensory-motor tools that support their ability to maintain an appropriate level of alertness, focus and calm. The goal of these exploration activities is to help students build a self-regulation tool kit that meets their individual needs and can be used across school environments. 🍷



The flower-candle exercise encourages the student to breathe deeply to sniff the flower and exhale completely to blow out the candle. This tool can help us relax and re-focus.



MONTANA SCHOOL
FOR THE DEAF & THE BLIND

3911 Central Avenue | Great Falls, MT 59405

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 128
Great Falls, MT

Letter from the Editor

By Missie Hill - Editor for the Express



Spring is always my favorite time of the school year. We have so many activities to not only showcase our student's talents, but also activities that will envelop them in culture.

In February we have our National Braille Challenge. At this time we have 8 students from MSDB to compete.

We have been incorporating STEAM into our science classroom, which is science, technology, engineering, art, and math. Students are coming to understand that science is not just beakers and vocabulary. They are taking that knowledge and sharing it at the 2nd Annual Curious Minds Science Fair on March 17,

2022. We will be doing this on campus and are planning to share on our school facebook page. The students are so excited!

We also will hopefully have an art show this year, where our art students will show off all their beautiful creations!

We also have not just one but two Native American colleges sharing lessons and activities with us. This is happening in May and will be done virtually. The students always look forward to this.

My hope is to have pictures and stories of all of these things and more to go into the summer edition of the Express.

Even with all the crazy things happening lately with COVID and other things, our school keeps pushing forward to not only give our students wonderful opportunities on campus, but also to allow them to show off how wonderful and talented they are.

To learn more visit <https://brailleinstitute.org/braille-challenge>. ❖

Missie Hill, Editor

Mhill@msdb.k12.mt.us

Special Education Coordinator
Indian Education Coordinator
Science Teacher

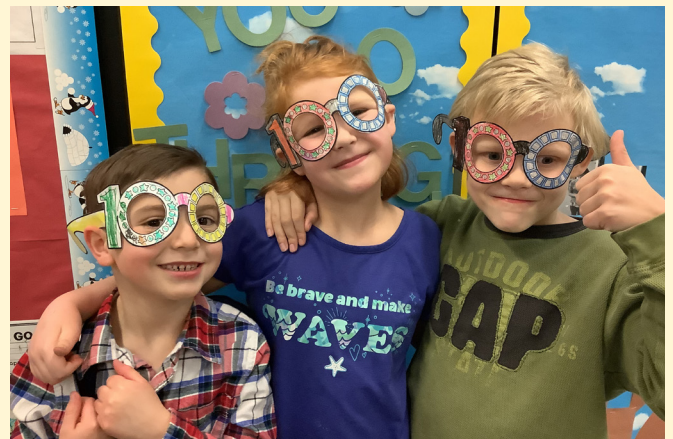


Bingo Night

By Erin Falkner - Cottage Counselor



We had a very fun and successful Bingo night! I have attached a few pictures of our night. I have also attached the agenda for the night, so you can see the different activities that we had. The students did an excellent job as Bingo callers (Doug and Daemien) and storytellers (Blair and Angelina). I'm very proud of all of the students and past students who participated and helped before, during and after this event. ❖



Elijah, Myra, and Morris say Happy 100th Day of School.

Happy Spring!

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.msdbmustangs.org. To be removed from this mailing list, please contact Paula Mix at pmix@msdb.k12.mt.us