



MONTANA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF & THE BLIND Express

lifting students beyond expectations

Volume XXXVIII Issue 1 Fall 2023



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From Our Superintendent



As we enter the second quarter of the 2023- 2024 school year, I find myself reflecting on the direction of MSDB. One may say that we have not improved the school for our students and staff. On the other hand, someone else views our progress as a much needed change and moving us in the right direction. No matter how someone looks at the progress “meter,” they are correct! I can often be heard saying that someone’s perception is their reality. What we can do as a school is listen to all stakeholders and try to understand their perception, their realities. Not that we need to agree with it but attempt to understand. Everyone has experiences that have shaped their perceptions into what they are today. If we listen carefully, we may just find common thinking between the various groups. That, my friends, is where real change can begin here at MSDB.

Oftentimes with improvement initiatives, a strategic plan is developed to guide the process. The plan usually indicates who is responsible for making sure the initiative meets the desired goal. Often, the goal will have a benchmark period for when the activities that lead to the success of the goal need to be completed. As we remember from Geometry class, the trajectory line is roughly a straight forty-five degree angle from left moving right. That is what is expected when we implement measures to improve our schools. That is the perception that everyone has when measuring the success of our school improvement efforts.

Anyone who has worked with organizations, such as schools, and has worked on school improvement knows that success is not the straight line. That is the farthest from the truth. As new ideas and initiatives are implemented it is hard to predict how the process will go. We can develop mental models of the way we would like for it to go but that often is not the case. This brings us to the theme for this school year, “Embrace the Squiggle!”. MSDB is referring to the squiggly line. This line indicates more accurately how initiative implementations are represented. Imagine sitting in that same Geometry class learning about the trajectory line and let’s say you get bored of the topic. You take your pencil and start drawing a line on your paper that goes all over and crosses itself several times but eventually moves in an upward direction. That is the squiggly line!!! That is what we are embracing this year at MSDB.

We are challenging everyone to fail! Failing is where the best education happens. When we fail, we expose the weaknesses of our initiatives. We then circle back around and try again after we adjust to what we feel will be correct. We have to do this until a majority of the stakeholders have the perception that we are on the right path with our trajectory line. This includes staff, students, parents, board members, community members!!! We are offering all our stakeholders a chance to fail, to “Embrace the Squiggle” with us this year. I believe with this mindset we can move deaf and blind education to the next level at MSDB, better yet, around the state. 🍌

Embracing the Squiggle,

Paul Furthmyre | Superintendent
pfurthmyre@msdb.k12.mt.us



Braille Symposium

By Barb Peterson and Jane Garrison - Outreach Consultants

On October 12-13th the Outreach Program for the Visually Impaired hosted their first ever **Braille Symposium**. The one day Symposium was designed as a reunion event to include as many as possible of our retired braillists (over the past 25 years), as well as current and new braillists in the state of Montana. It was a social event that offered us all a chance to remember what we did, look at what we are doing, and dream of what is to come. Guests attended from all areas of the state. Friday offered a full-day braille session with instructor Allison O'Day for those who were enrolled in the NFB Transcribers course.

On Thursday, during the Symposium we enjoyed guest speakers from MSDB, state, regional and national programs. Allison O'Day provided a keynote address along with Ben Christiaens from the Montana Prison Braille Program, sharing information about the braille transcribers program developed at the Crossroads Correctional Facility in Shelby. We also participated in technology demonstrations and training with the Northwest Center for Assistive Technology Training (CATT-NW). CATT-NW's mission provides assistive technology training to teachers of blind and low vision children, utilizing a "train the trainer" approach. In addition to training professionals, the CATT-NW training may also include training parents and caregivers of children who are blind or have low vision to include those with additional disabilities. We so loved connecting with our very own MSDB Braille Transcribers, Sue Stewart and Christy Haagenon; touring their office, sharing their material preparation demonstrations, and viewing their braille production technology located in the vision school on the MSDB campus.

Highlights of the Symposium included participants just plain enjoying and sharing with one another, touring the MSDB campus and museum, creating braille art and a special Q/A session with our school administration. ❧



Christy Haagenon demonstrating the Juliet Braille Embosser.



Sue Stewart showing how to use the Index Braille Everest-D V5 Embosser.

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Meet Our New Staff



Alex Sebik - Maintenance Supervisor

I make facilities better. I am the new Maintenance supervisor at MSDB. I did heavy construction for many years and have worked with facilities for the past 8 years. I have three boys and a dog.



Alice Anderson - Outreach Consultant

I was born and raised in Helena. I attended Montana State University (GO CATS!). I then went to Lewis and Clark College in Portland, OR for my MEd in Deaf Education. One fun fact is that when I did my student teaching, I did it at MSDB! I then taught the Deaf and Hard of Hearing children in Yakima, Washington for 38 years. Nine years ago, I went back to school to Gallaudet and completed the Infant, Toddler, and Family Certificate Program. I then resigned my position as TOD after 31 years and went to work for 7 years as an Early Intervention Educator of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing for Children's Village in Yakima, WA. I am thrilled to be back in Montana and doing what I am passionate about! What's that? Investing in children and families to increase language development and empower our Deaf and Hard of Hearing children to become whatever they strive to reach for!



Amanda Best - Paraeducator

I am a new paraeducator at MSDB. I have lived in Montana for 33 years, but I am pretty new to Great Falls. I love to hike, go camping, and swim. When it is chilly outside I love to do all sorts of crafts and play board games. I love animals of all kinds and have recently become obsessed with house plants.



Aubry Williams - Paraeducator

I am 19, and I was born in Great Falls. I moved to Sheridan, WY, at age 3 but just recently moved back to Great Falls. I love the color green, the outdoors, and reading. I am now a paraeducator at MSDB.



Bonnie Joslyn - ASL Interpreter

I am an ASL interpreter at MSDB. I have 6 grown children and one grandchild. I believe MSDB must be a magnet school because every time I move away it draws me back in!



Brandy Johnson - DHH Outreach Consultant

I would like to take a moment to introduce myself. I am a mom to four kids, one of whom has severe hearing loss. That diagnosis changed the entire trajectory of my career. I went back to school and earned a degree in Human Services to the Deaf. I continued on to receive a master's degree in Human Resources-Administration.

It is my passion to serve the deaf and hard of hearing community. I am brand new to Montana, my position is brand new, and I am committed to making this transition as smooth as possible!

Meet Our New Staff



Carmen Turnbow - Administrative Assistant

I am the new administrative assistant in the business office and also for the MSDB Foundation. These are two separate positions I work part-time. I am originally from North Dakota but have lived in Virginia and Montana, all for equal amounts of time. My hobbies are archery and welding. My daughter graduated from the Visually Impaired (VI) department at MSDB in 2009.



Donovan Williams - Maintenance

I am a new member of the maintenance staff at MSDB. I like music and usually keep to myself.



Geri Darko - Orientation and Mobility Specialist

I worked at MSDB for 20 years. Then I took a short two-year break to teach special education at Centerville School where my kids attended school. I have missed having Orientation and Mobility lessons every day. When I heard the O&M position was open I applied and I am so excited to be back with the Visually Impaired (VI) department and teaching O&M again!



Jesse Aguon - Academic Planning (LEAP) Advisor

I am the new Living, Employment, Academic Planning (LEAP) advisor stationed in the Glacier Building. I help newly graduated MSDB students who are young adults taking their first steps towards independence. If a student or staff member needs a good listener, I am available. Most of my family has worked at MSDB at one time or another, so I guess you could say it is our family trade. I am 33 years old.



Miranda Briggs - Outreach Consultant for the Visually Impaired

I was born and raised in Southeast Idaho. After high school graduation I attended Idaho State University and earned a Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Special Education. I then worked with the State of Idaho, Infant and Toddler Program (Part C), before taking a job with the Pocatello School District teaching Preschoolers with Special Needs. While on a mini weekend vacation I met a gentleman in West Yellowstone, and it's history from there. I moved to Montana and taught Preschoolers with Special Needs in Belgrade and Helena for several years. I earned a Masters of Special Education from MSU-Billings and later went to Texas Tech University to become a Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments. I live in Helena with my husband (Jimmy), dog (Maya) and three boys: Sawyer (14), Fisher (11) and Cooper (7). Outside of work you will find me chasing my boys to various activities all around the state; ice hockey, baseball, football, mountain biking, hiking, camping, etc.



Rich Aguon - Kitchen Staff

I was born and raised in Great Falls, and I have three cats. I like to play the bass guitar and play video games. I also like to read books like older fantasy, mystery, and horror books. I even know some Japanese, and I just started learning sign language! I am a new member of the kitchen staff on campus so come and ask me!

Meet Our New Staff



Samantha Zimmerman - Paraeducator

I am a paraeducator at MSDB. I am 22 and married. I started at MSDB part way through last year and work with both departments. I really enjoy the kids here!



Shaelea Hansen - Paraeducator

Hi! I am deaf, and this is my first year as a paraeducator at MSDB. I am excited to work with the wonderful staff and students. I was born in Ronan, MT, and raised nearby in the small town of St. Ignatius. I went to school in Missoula, as they have a deaf program that provided for my educational needs. I traveled there every day from kindergarten to senior high school. I graduated from Hellgate High School and went to college at the University of Montana. I moved to Great Falls 10 years ago to be with the love of my life. We got married 6 years ago. My husband and I have two children, ages 11 and 5. We also have two dogs. I am looking forward to a great year!



Sheri Devlin - Transition Coordinator

I have been working indirectly with MSDB the past 10 years as a Vocational Rehabilitation counselor for Blind/Low Vision. I am excited to join the team directly, helping students find their career path. I enjoy hiking, walking on River's Edge trail, going to the gym, and attending concerts with friends and my daughters. I am learning cross country skiing and yoga. I grew up in Absarokee, MT, and graduated from MSU with a Bachelor's degree. I got my Master's degree from the University of Kentucky with Rehabilitation Counseling. I am now a certified rehabilitation counselor and social security benefit worker. I have three adult children; one boy and two girls, as well as a new grandson, who I enjoy every minute.



Sonya Van Hee - ASL Interpreter

I am a new ASL interpreter for MSDB. I am married to my husband, Trevvor, and we have two children; Sophie is 2½ and Emet is 1. We also have two crazy cats; Reggie who will bite your face and Archie will lick it.

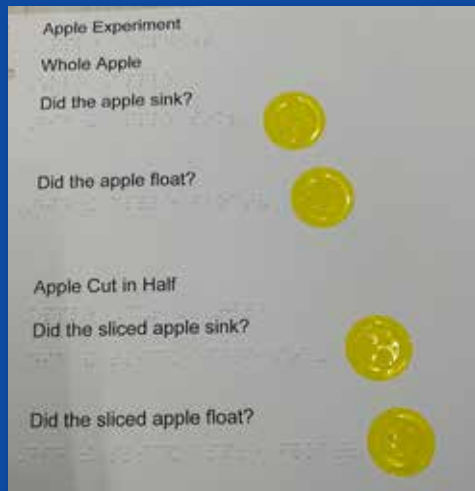
I have been an interpreter since 2014. This year I started a blog that is very much a work in progress about food and my beginner gardening journey.



Tara Strauch - Nurse

I was born and raised in Montana, growing up on a ranch in the central part of the state. I have been a nurse for four years. I recently got married. My husband and I have a yellow lab that we love to take on adventures. In my free time I like to garden, go kayaking, fish and do some baking.

Preschool Corner



Here is a picture of their data sheet for the Apple Experiment. The happy faces represent a yes and the sad faces represent a no.



KayLynn and Kirin are conducting an experiment to determine whether an apple will float or sink in water.



Oliver's awesome building.



Morgen is reaching for his racecar to knock it out of the race.



Oliver.



Charlie investigating the "Kabin".



Charlie playing in the rice.



Montana School for the Deaf and Blind

LIFTING STUDENTS

Investing in the Future: How Donations Transform Young Lives

By MSDB Foundation



MONTANA SCHOOL
for the DEAF & the BLIND
FOUNDATION

is transforming lives and creating a brighter future for children with disabilities.

The MSDB Foundation is dedicated to providing free and appropriate educational and social-emotional growth opportunities to children from newborns to age 21 who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired and deafblind throughout Montana.

By offering specialized services and support, they ensure that these children have the tools they need to succeed. One of the key factors in the success of the school is the support of generous donors. Donations play a crucial role in funding various projects that directly impact the lives of students. For example, assistive equipment for the statewide Lending Library enable students to access educational materials in a way that suits their individual needs. Audiology testing equipment ensures that students receive accurate assessments and appropriate interventions. Smartboards in classrooms enhance the learning experience and facilitate

communication. Upgrades to facilities such as the Mustang Gym, create a safe and inclusive environment for physical activities.

The impact of these donations go way beyond the tangible resources. By investing in the MSDB Foundation, donors are investing in the future of our children. They are providing them with opportunities to develop their skills, pursue their passions and achieve their full potential. The school's dedication to early intervention ensures that children receive the support they need from a young age, setting them on a path for towards success.

The growth of school in recent years is a testament critical need being fulfilled. Serving 54% more students than it was five years ago, we are reaching more families and changing more lives. By serving as the central referral source for families from almost every county, we are able to provide comprehensive support and resources to those in need.

However, the work is far from over. There are still many children in Montana who require services and support of the school. By continuing to donate, individuals and organizations can make a lasting different in the lives of these children. Every contribution, no matter how big or small, helps to create a more inclusive and equitable society.

In conclusion, MSDB is a vital educational institution that relies on the generosity of donors to transform the lives of children with hearing or visual impairments. Through their donations, individuals and organizations are investing in the future and ensuring that these children have the opportunities they deserve. Together, we can create a world where every child has the chance to thrive, regardless of their disabilities. ■■

Tammy Lacey • New Board Member



Tammy Lacey

Tammy Lacey retired in 2019 as the superintendent of Great Falls Public Schools (GFPS) after serving as a public educator for 34 years. She not only served as the superintendent of GFPS, but she was also the Human Resource Director, an elementary principal, a Teacher on Special Assignment, and a first and third grade teacher.

By working with great staff members, educators and community members over the years, she was recognized as Montana's Superintendent of the Year, Montana's Principal of the Year, and the G.V. Erickson Award which is the highest award given to school administrators. She was also presented the YWCA's Lifetime Achievement Award for her work around equity

and educational opportunities for all. She served a 7-year term on the Montana Board of Public Education which she chaired in 2022.

In retirement, she is spending her time supporting public education as a mentor for new principals and superintendents across the state. Besides serving on the MSDB Foundation Board and chairing the Board's PR Committee, she is also the President of the Fairfield Education and Community Association. Tammy also makes time for traveling, golfing, skiing, spending time with family to include three grandchildren, and enjoying her morning cups of coffee on the farm and ranch near Fairfield. ■■

the Deaf & Blind Foundation

ITS BEYOND EXPECTATIONS



MSDB Needs a New Stage!

Be part of something amazing! This year you can **DOUBLE** your impact with a generous donor matching up to \$20k!

Our current stage served us well for over 40 years. A new one will allow students like Gracie (pictured in the wheelchair) to access the stage with her friends!

The Express is available online!

Sign up to receive electronically by sending an email to foundation@msdb.k12.mt.us

If you are of the age that you have to take a required minimum distribution (RMD) from your IRA, did you know that you can transfer up to \$100,000 each year directly to a qualified charity like the MSDB Foundation?

By rolling over your IRA distribution directly to a qualified charity, it qualifies as your RMD and you avoid having to include the distribution as taxable income.



MSDB & the
MSDB Foundation

“Individually, we are one drop. Together we are an ocean.” – Ryunosuke Satoro
MSDB Foundation Board of Directors

Mark Willmarth • Chair
Vision West, Inc.

Cathy Copeland
ASL Interpreter
Bonnie DeNoma
Retired MSDB Foundation

Kevin Eckhardt
First Interstate Commercial
Loan Officer

Dee Dee Franzen-Wallen
Parent of Former VI Student

Paul Furthmyre
MSDB Superintendent

Todd Carmichael • Vice President
Schnider Funeral Home

Jim Kelly
MSDB Student
Life Director

Tammy Lacey
Retired Great Falls Public
School Superintendent

Doug Little
Retired Teacher & Parent
of MSDB students

Gary McManus
Retired MSDB Teacher/Coach

Laura Walker • Secretary/Treasurer
Attorney at Law

Shyla Patera
North Central Independent Living
Former MSDB Student

Travis Stevenson
MSDB parent

Rick Thompson
Hi-Line Home Programs

Shawn Tulloch
Immediate Past President
DPHHS Vocational Rehabilitation and
Blind/ Low Vision Services

How You Can Help

With your help, the MSDB Foundation has been able to provide funds for services and equipment not covered by state funding. 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:

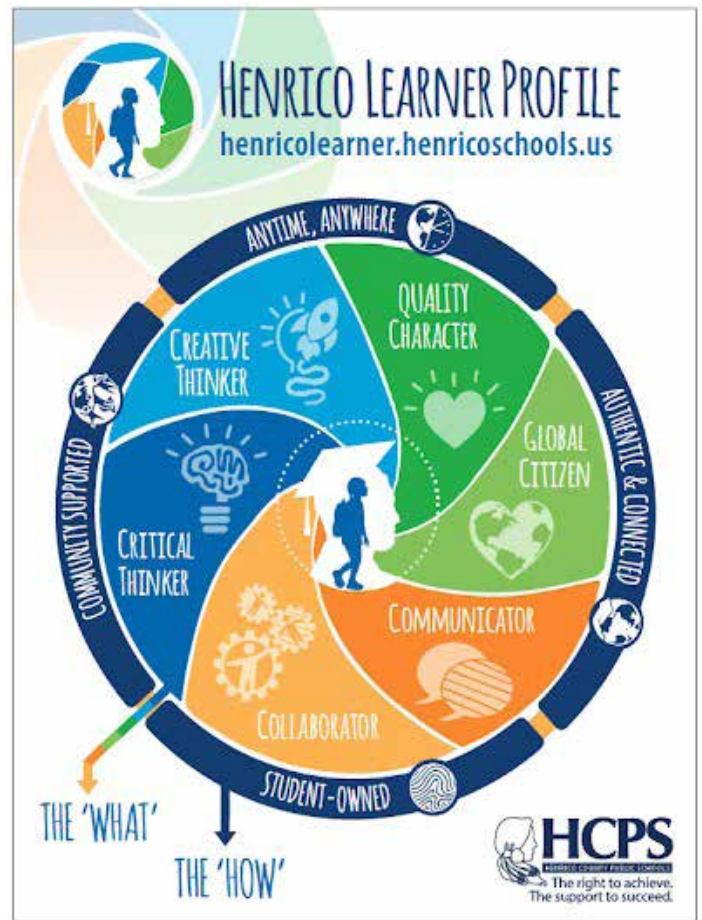
MSDB Foundation • P.O. Box 6576 • Great Falls, MT 59406
For more information, please call 406-771-6040

MSDB Begins the Journey of a Portrait of a Graduate

By Jessteene Clifford - Curriculum Specialist/Teacher

What does it mean to be a successful graduate from high school? What does that look like for a student that graduates/exits services from MSDB? What skills and competencies are employers looking for in the ever-changing career fields of the 21st century? What can the teachers and staff at MSDB do to help students meet these demands?

In order to tackle these challenging questions, MSDB has embarked on a journey - a **Portrait of a Graduate** journey. A **Portrait of a Graduate** is a collective vision that will articulate our MSDB community's aspirations for all our students. Portrait of Graduate can be titled **Profile of a Graduate**, Portrait of a Learner, Vision for a Graduate, or something that defines our unique community's outlook. MSDB will be working to develop a title that makes the best sense for our community. Creating the **Portrait of a Graduate** is the first step in defining this new vision for MSDB and solidifying the outcomes for all our students. One exciting part of beginning this journey is an initial step - bringing together all the stakeholders: parents, community members, students, teachers, staff, sensory-specific organizations, and anyone else who has a vested interest in the success of the students that MSDB has the privilege to support. These participants will collaborate and develop up to 7 competencies that they believe are essential for a successful graduate of MSDB. These competencies can include communication, critical thinking, resourcefulness, adaptability, self-advocacy, or other skills that the team determines students



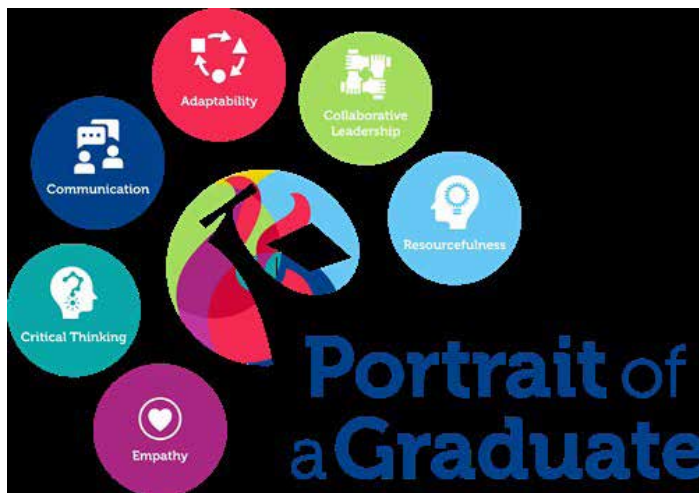
Julie Dee Alt, Denise Rutledge, Jessteene Clifford.

require. Once these competencies are decided then they will be compiled into our MSDB **Portrait of a Graduate** as an infographic detailing the specific skills within each competency. These competencies will then serve as our anchor, helping us focus our efforts and driving everything we do at MSDB.

But we are not doing it alone...

In order to initiate this journey MSDB has partnered with Battelle for Kids, a national non-profit organization that collaborates with school systems to develop their own personalized **Portrait of a Graduate**. MSDB staff was fortunate enough to attend the Battelle for Kids Annual Event in St. Louis, Missouri this year. The conference was attended by over 500 educators from around the country who are in various places along this journey; from those who have had their **Portrait of a Graduate** 10+ years and are in the refinement stages to those who, like MSDB, are just beginning. It was a privilege to be able to network and learn from all these amazing educators, and to see how the **Portrait of a Graduate** has transformed their priorities and programming for the betterment of the students that they serve. All the dynamic presenters had relevant and inspiring advice and lessons to share with us. It

is also fortunate that another school for the Deaf and the Blind has partnered with Battelle for Kids, and we look forward to connecting with them to discuss the uniqueness of our specific sensory populations and how this translates into the **Portrait of a Graduate** work. After this spectacular conference we can't wait to dig in and get to work spreading the word about how



the **Portrait of a Graduate** will transform how we serve the students with sensory needs of Montana!

Please stay tuned for updates of the MSDB **Portrait of a Graduate** Journey - we are so excited to share them with you!

If you can't wait and need more information now, please visit - www.battelleforkids.org or Google "Portrait of a Graduate." 📌

Amber: A Life of Resiliency

By Kitty Griffin - Outreach Consultant



Amber Samuels

Amber Samuels is a 2023 graduate of Whitefish High School. She is a ray of sunshine, always with a smile on her face.

Her ability to overcome obstacles in her life is inspiring. Her sheer determination got her through an important transition. She went from taking in sound through her hearing aids to taking in sound through her cochlear implants, as her hearing progressed to a level the hearing aids were no longer a benefit.

She learned when to access her interpreter when more challenging information was being presented or clarification was needed. During the pandemic, she had to overcome the barriers of facemasks, online learning and the disappointment of events being canceled at a critical time in life. Through this time, she also became an incredible self-advocate letting her teachers know what she needed to be able to access their lessons and participate in class successfully. Through her high school years, Amber challenged herself by taking advanced classes in biotech, chemistry and medical classes. She participated in drama, managed the track team and joined the choir her senior year.

She and her family were faithful attendees of MSDB's annual Family Learning Weekend (FLW). In Amber's younger years, she absolutely loved carrying the flag for her group at FLW! She often attended the Deaf Enrichment Weekend on campus also.

So what's next for Amber? She has always loved animals, but also went through times of wanting to be a police officer or possibly a firefighter. However, she kept coming back to her love of animals and ultimately decided to pursue a career as a Veterinarian Technician. She was planning to attend a program in Dillon but the program there closed. She and her family pursued other locations of the Pima Medical Institute and found one in Tucson, Arizona. After a visit to the campus, she was determined it was the place for her! In a recent conversation, Amber shared about life in Tucson, "things are going very well and I'm enjoying my classes!" 📌

September is Suicide Prevention Month

By Yvette Smail - Behavior Specialist



The current national campaign for Suicide Prevention is **#BeThe1To**. Here at MSDB we are actively participating in this campaign. **#BeThe1To** is the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline's message for National Suicide Prevention Month and beyond, which helps spread the word about actions we can all take to prevent suicide. The Lifeline

network and its partners are working to change the conversation from suicide to suicide prevention, to actions that can promote healing, help and give hope.

Below are guidelines to help support someone in crisis:

Ask

Research shows people who are having thoughts of suicide feel relief when someone asks after them in a caring way. Findings suggest acknowledging and talking about suicide may reduce rather than increase suicidal ideation.

Be There

Individuals are more likely to feel less depressed, less suicidal, less overwhelmed, and more hopeful by after speaking to someone who listens without judgment.

Keep Them Safe

A number of studies have indicated that when lethal means are made less available or less deadly, suicide rates by that method decline, and frequently suicide rates overall decline.

Help Them Stay Connected

Studies indicate that helping someone at risk create a network of resources and individuals for support and safety can help them take positive action and reduce feelings of hopelessness.

Follow Up

Studies have also shown that brief, low cost intervention and supportive, ongoing contact may be an important part of suicide prevention, especially for individuals after they have been discharged from hospitals or care services.

Learn More

Get message kits, resources, events and more at the official website. **Go to [BeThe1To.com](https://www.betheto.com)** 📄

Please contact me with any questions or for other resource materials.

Yvette R Smail
ysmail@msdb.k12.mt.us
406-771-6026

Building Social Competency

By Stephanie Annis - Occupational Therapist

Students are expected to use social information processing during all aspects of their school day. Most people might be quick to associate this skill with specific "social" times such as playing at recess or eating lunch with friends. However, any time we are with or near another person, social information processing is happening. This can be when passing a person in the hallway, when a teacher tells you to turn to your neighbor to share ideas, or when you are getting items out of your locker. Many people may be surprised to learn that social information processing is also called upon within academic subjects such as language arts, social studies, history, science labs, etc. Understanding a point of view, expressing oneself clearly, describing context, characters, traits, motivations, using feeling words, making inferences, thinking critically about relationships, collaborating or working as a team all have a foundation of thinking socially.

At MSDB, early elementary students are building important skills in order to think socially. Ten Core Social Thinking Vocabulary and concepts are taught through storybooks and lessons from the We Thinkers! Curriculum. Some of the concepts taught include The Group Plan, Body in the Group, Hidden Rules and Expected and Unexpected Behaviors, Flexible and Stuck Thinking, and Size of the Problem. These concepts are laying a foundation for students to be aware of what is happening around them, interpret that information, problem solve, and respond in a way that meets their goals. These concepts are just the starting point to build the social information processing all of our students will use for the rest of their lives. 📄

Peter Cook Inspires MSDB

By Alissa Kline - Teacher of the Deaf

Famous author, lecturer and story consultant Robert McKee said, "Storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world today." The Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) staff at MSDB had the fortune of learning from Peter Cook, a famous Deaf storyteller and poet in August.

Not only was Peter informative, but he had the staff in stitches with his stories and method of presenting information. He taught the staff about five main elements of ASL storytelling:

- **Facial Expression**
- **Body Language**
- **Gestures**
- **Classifiers** (signs that use handshapes that are associated with specific categories (classes) of size, shape, or usage)
- **Sign Production** (clarity of fingerspelling, numbers, sign parameters, size of signing space and pacing/pausing)

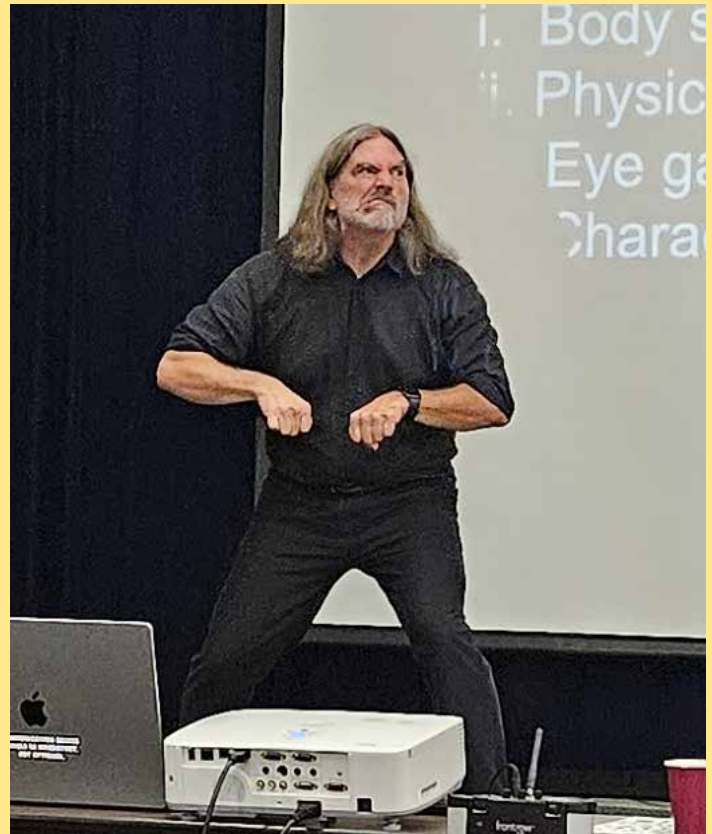
As he did so, he told entertaining stories to illustrate his points. The staff spent time practicing and honing their skills.

Since the workshop, staff members have put his teachings into action. The ASL classes on campus have played the Gesture Game to practice this element of storytelling. The Flying Hooves, our after school drama club, used his slow motion activity to work on facial expressions. The elementary Deaf & Hard of Hearing (DHH) classes are using his teachings for storytelling with the visual support of literature books.

Here are some of the comments from staff members regarding his workshop:

Brenda LeMieux observed, "There were lots of giggles and laughs during his presentation."

Tearra Donovan stated, "I think his workshops were fantastic! Covered important techniques that our students will benefit from."



Peter Cook

Jessteene Clifford, one of the directors of Flying Hooves, said, "I used his activity of slow motion with the Flying Hooves kids and it worked really well! The kids really enjoyed it, and I got more expression from them."

Many staff members agreed, "This is the best workshop I have EVER taken!" We hope to invite Peter Cook back to MSDB for more learning in the future. ■■



Kelly, Lace, TJ, Brenda, Morgan, Alissa, Tearra, Peter, Jennifer, Andrea, Mary, Tayler, Joel, Jen, Mike, Brenda, Shaelea, Jessteene, Bruce, Staci.

An Individual's Inspiration Opens New Doors

By Emily LaSalle - Outreach Consultant

Colten is a junior at Browning High School (BHS) and a proud member of the Blackfeet Tribe. His Indian name is Bear Cub, "Kyi yo Pook-aa."

Colten started running cross country this year with the BHS Cross Country Team. Colten is pictured with his war bonnet that was transferred to him by his Grandpa Willy. The war bonnet will be officially transferred to Colten at a war bonnet transfer ceremony. The ceremony is public notice that Colten will have every right to own, wear and then transfer the rights to others if he chooses to in the future. This facet allows him to demonstrate and shows the community/tribe that he has been given the rights to wear and own such a cultural item.

The summer Colten ran in a memorial run along with his sisters. The memorial run was to bring awareness to the Native American Missing and Murdered Women and Children. The symbolic awareness campaign uses the red hand print across the mouth to symbolize the silencing of the victims, and the logo on the red shirts.

Colten ran and completed the Age 13+ Glacier Half Marathon this summer, and he came in at 204 out of about 1200 runners. He also participated and finished the Divide Trail Run six miles, a semi wilderness run amongst the wild landscape under Glacier National Park Mountains. Colten's ambition to run was first started when he joined local law enforcement to run alongside the Special Olympics torch and bring attention to special needs students. That meaningful act of bringing attention to the needs of others brought forth the inspiration of running. That's pretty amazing for a teenager who'd never ran publicly before that event.

Colten, along with your family, we are so very proud of your accomplishments. We look forward to watching you grow and follow the destiny that lays before you. ❖



Colten and his sisters.



Colten running in Glacier Half Marathon.

Understanding Motor Vehicle Law at MSDB

By Brenda LeMieux - DHH Teacher



This semester deaf/hard of hearing (DHH) students are taking a class that prepares them for driver's education.

They are learning all of the meanings of vocabulary, rules, safety, and signs. During the class, students do role play to help them understand the concepts. They discuss some possible situations and scenes they might see during driving. There are hands-on activities and visual aids to support their learning. Students show their interest by asking questions about the safety and rules of driving. The goal of this class is to support their basic knowledge about driver's education and prepare them to take an official driver's education class next semester.

They are using the Adapted Illustrated Montana Driver Manual. They are encouraged to read and study the questions to prepare themselves for the written test. The manual is easy to read because the terminology has been simplified. The illustrations and organization of the materials allow students easy access.

There is a bit of history about why and how the Driver's Education program was initiated at the MSDB. In 1966 Vocational Rehabilitation contacted MSDB concerning deaf clients' needs for driver's education. This was done to help them commute to and from work or postsecondary school on their own. MSDB accepted the responsibility of setting up a driver education program for deaf students. Robert (Bob) LeMieux, a deaf teacher at MSDB, was asked to start a class. Later, Bob and another teacher were asked to take their first driver education class and defensive driving workshop. They did this during summer to get their certificate. The information from these classes benefited them tremendously. From then up to now, MSDB continues to offer and encourage our deaf/hard of hearing students to take driver's education. ■■

Adapted Illustrated Montana Driver Manual
<https://opi.mt.gov/Families-Students/Family-Student-Support/Driver-Education/Adapted-Illustrated-Montana-Driver-Manual>

Computer Science for Visual Impairments

By Erin Barr - Visually Impaired (VI) Teacher

Thanks to the generosity of Code.org and DonorsChoose, high school students in the Visually Impaired (VI) department have been exploring new laptops, curriculum, and other technologies.

Mrs. Rutledge was the first teacher to bring An Hour of Code and Code.Org Discoveries to MSDB's campus, but this is the first time that Code.Org Principles is being taught. Principles is a high school class that teaches students the basics of coding. It includes: learning binary and other coding languages, developing an original app, and creating a special project.

Students in Ms. Barr's class began the school year by discussing what some modern offices look like for young professionals. They are no longer just boring, uninspired cubicles, but may be vibrant open spaces with a variety of seating and work options. After instruction that begins at a traditional desk setting, students are encouraged to find a

workspace in the classroom that is comfortable and works for independent or collaborative work. This depends on the particular tasks for the day.

Fridays are a special day! Students are given a task that may or may not be from the Code.org playbook. One class consisted of students building the tallest tower possible out of index cards and the flat surface of the floor. Nothing else could be used, including adhesives or leaning the tower against an object. Jordan Gardipee was the winner and had a tower that was 49" tall! Another task asked for students to design a coffee mug. After finishing designs, staff helped students create their mug designs with the help of some die-cutting Cricut machines. Students are overcoming failure, while building camaraderie, stamina, design skills, verbal and nonverbal communication, and self-management. This creates contagious smiles of success on the faces of the students and staff! ■■



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Letter from the Editor

By Missie Williams - Editor for the Express



Well, this year started at full swing with new ideas and excited staff. The students arriving was the icing on the cake! It always makes me smile to see the kids return. They were ready for new things and willing to take chances. This year promises to be the best yet!

I do want to let you all know that the last issue was extremely late due to issues at the publisher and I am so sorry for that. Also, there was

a mistake on page 12. It was titled "DHH Preschool Corner" and should have been "Preschool Corner" as both departments were involved. Also there was no caption on the bottom right picture, which was of Miche' reading to Kirin and Morgen. My apologies for not catching it before it went to print.

We are planning on starting new things with the Express to improve accessibility and interest. If you see something that you really liked or something you think may help, feel free to email me at mwilliams@msdb.k12.mt.us. I love suggestions from our readers! They help make us better. Enjoy this issue and thank you for always taking the time to read the Express. ☐☐

Missie Williams, Editor • mwilliams@msdb.k12.mt.us
Special Education Coordinator | Indian Education Coordinator | Science Teacher



Take a Look at Our YouTube Channel

Check Us
Out On



Montana School for
the Deaf and the
Blind Foundation

Values in LEAP

By Carrie Dawes - Co-coordinator in LEAP

So you value cleanliness? Are your bed sheets washed weekly? Every two weeks? Only when the sheets crawl into the washing machine by themselves?

Is timeliness important to you? Do you value arriving at work on time and therefore get up early? Or do you get up at the last minute, rush around, and arrive late?

Personal values are generally thought of as our own standards of right and wrong. They cause us to behave or act in certain ways. Our values are formed by our experiences with our families, peers, and society.

The young men and women who participate in our LEAP (Living, Employment, Academic Planning) Program are ages 18-21 and have a vision or hearing loss. The two co-coordinators of the program, Mackenzie Merja and Carrie Dawes, welcome participants from all corners of Montana. The participants bring to the program their own sets of personal values which have been influenced by the towns they come from, the families they live with, the schools they went to, the friends with whom they spent their time, etc.

During their year in LEAP, our participants are exposed to a variety of values which belong to the many individuals who cross paths with our program. Relationships with the staff, fellow participants, work peers, paratransit drivers, and others; give our participants the opportunity to compare values. They learn people may respond and behave in ways which are very different from behaviors they are used to seeing. Interactions may be messy, hurtful, and confusing. During their time in LEAP, our young men and women are given a safe and nonjudgmental place to examine, affirm, strengthen, alter, and even possibly discard their existing values. In learning to coexist with peers whose values are different from their own, participants learn to find solutions rather than problems.

When LEAP participants arrive in our program, they are generally strangers to each other. Through the course of the year, they are given the opportunity to live, work, learn, and play together. Upon completion of our program, our young men and women generally possess a better understanding not only of their own values, but also an understanding of the importance of respecting the values of others. Hopefully, as they leave our program and begin their lives as young adults, our participants will continue to embrace the positive values which will help them to be successful and happy in their future lives. ☐☐