

The MSDB Student Life Newsletter

Message from the Director

By Jim Kelly II

Students are travelling home today! It is hard to believe the year is going by so quickly – as they say “time flies when you are having fun”. Our hope is that reading this newsletter will provide you with a glimpse of the great stuff we have happening in our Student Life program. I am really excited with all of the different afterschool opportunities that are provided to our students. As always, don’t hesitate to contact me if you have questions, suggestions or concerns for your child!

LEAP REPORT

We are pleased to announce that the 2024-2025 program year applications are open! Many of you know what LEAP is, but let us take the time to reintroduce ourselves to those who may not know.

The LEAP Program is a post-secondary transition program for graduated 18 to 21-year-olds with hearing and/or vision loss. LEAP stands for (independent) Living, Employment, Academic, and (life) Planning. These are the areas in which we provide training and assistance. The program is highly individualized, meaning each participant sets goals, and we work to support them. Instead of an IEP, participants have an IPP - an Individualized Participant Plan. This IPP is 100% participant-driven.

Participants live on campus in Glacier Cottage, where they practice paying rent, utilities, and wifi bills. After completing the program, participants will receive back 80% of their paid bills.

On Friday's, participants engage in training sessions that could range from cooking lessons to tours of various places around town. We believe in three key aspects of life: work, volunteerism, and social enjoyment. Therefore, we provide opportunities to engage in all areas. On one Friday, we may have a resume writing lesson, then volunteer locally and finish the day with a walk in the park. However, only some training days will have all three components built in. It all depends on what we can schedule and what needs to be worked on; we have found that each Friday is different!

All participants are expected to work in some capacity through work experiences, an employer-paid job, or college. If an individual would like to build their work skills and experience a variety of jobs, we will work with them to find work experiences. However, if they have work experience and are ready to settle into a long-term job, we can work with them to find an employer-paid job. All work experiences are based on participant interests and goals. With having a job or attending college, participants need to be able to get themselves to and from home and work. LEAP works with each individual on independent travel. They may use the public transportation system, paratransit, or drive themselves.

If you have any other questions about the LEAP program, please feel free to contact us at leap@msdb.k12.mt.us or check out our [Handbook](#) and [Application](#) on our [website](#)!

STAFF BUZZ: Embracing the Squiggle!

For this year's Staff Buzz, we will be hearing from different staff about how they see success reflected in our students' efforts, mistakes and failures and not just in what goes "right" or "correctly". Success is not a straight line, but rather moves forwards and backwards and may take a winding path to our own, individual successes!



It would be so nice if every time we gave our children/students an expectation, they would immediately comply with respect and no complaints. Who are we kidding?! It doesn't happen like that right away for most of our children/students. Like the "Embrace the Squiggle" concept, our students are not learning those skills in a straight line, either. They are learning in a variety of ways and from a variety of people and in the midst of that learning is INDEPENDENCE! That is where the "squiggle" comes in. They are finding their way, testing the waters, the limits and our patience! But it is through our responses, modeling, conversations and teaching that they will, literally, straighten out and become citizens of the world that we all hope they will become.

As you may be aware, MSDB has recently started the process of defining a Portrait of a Graduate. Through this process, we will be developing competencies for all of MSDB's learners both on-campus and those served by our Outreach program across the state. By having this vision for our students throughout their academic journey, we hope to see the squiggle be more curvy than a knot. If you are interested in be a part of this process, please notify Paul Furthnmyre.

By Erin Faulkner

4-H Project Day Sparks Learning and Fun

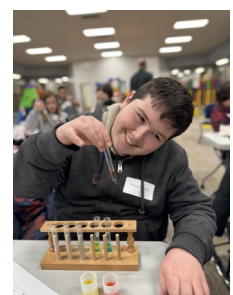
with Cheri Luongo

Nine of our talented MSDB residential students participated in the monthly 4-H Project Day on February 11th. They got to dive into hands-on learning experiences of their choice from an exciting array of options.

Some students learned about the texture of rabbits and chickens during an animal science session. Others created homemade goat milk soap from scratch. Air Force StarBase personnel led engaging physics and chemistry activities. Our sewing enthusiast worked on Valentine's Day themed projects and showed off their creations.

Our youngest members, the Cloverbuds, whipped up and decorated tasty snacks and then enjoyed eating their culinary creations. Throughout the day, students got to collaborate, create, and engage with community members through these diverse 4-H projects.

Events like these provide memorable learning opportunities outside of the traditional classroom. The students return energized and excited to apply their new knowledge and skills. We're proud of our residential 4-H students for embracing these community experiences that spark curiosity and growth. Let's keep the learning and fun going!



The School That Changed My Life

By Emery Newman

When I first got to MSDB, I was nervous. It was a far away place that separated me from everything I loved, but the staff and students accepted me for who I was. I still miss home, but this is the best time of my life. I get to be myself around people here that I have not known my entire life. I would never think I would get the perfect cross between homeschool and public school. I have friends, great teachers, great food, and amazing opportunities.

The staff is so great with how they do their best to give us what we need, and the way they stop to help me at the point I am at in a project. They are always there to help in the moment. The staff is a perfect mix of nice with some discipline. If I do something wrong they tell me, and they always have the right word for any situation, bad or good.

The food is so good, it is as if it was from a restaurant. It is so diverse; you never get tired of it. I feel like all the cooks were once professional chefs. Every day it is something different to eat. They have QR codes that lead to a form so you can review the food. Then the chefs take the reviews to make changes towards the perfect dish.

Ever since I got to MSDB, I have had so many opportunities to learn and grow, and I am so glad to be here. Thank you staff for working night and day to give kids like me a bright future. Thanks to MSDB, I can be safe on the streets, and be ready for the real world. I am so proud to be at the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind.

MSDB 4-H Students Shine at Local Contests

We're excited to highlight the accomplishments of two of our talented 4-H residential students, Emery and Lucia, at recent local 4-H contests.

Emery participated in the impromptu speech category at the Cascade County 4-H Communications contest. When he arrived, he randomly selected the topic "If I had a million dollars to give away..." He had just 3 minutes to prepare a 5-7 minute speech. Emery impressed the judges with his fantastic impromptu speech, earning high praise and a blue ribbon - the top award given. He scored high enough to qualify for the state 4-H congress and competition this summer in Bozeman! This 4-day leadership camp will provide opportunities for Emery to build skills, make new friends, and represent MSDB.



Lucia also earned a blue ribbon for her informative 4-H demonstration on basic American Sign Language. She prepared handouts and materials to teach the judges how to sign the alphabet, their names, and more. The judges were very impressed with Lucia's presentation and the hard work she put into it.

In addition, Marissa is learning archery for the first time this year. She has been diligently practicing weekly and recently competed at her first archery tournament in Helena. Marissa earned an impressive second place medal in her age division!

All three students represented MSDB and our 4-H club extremely well. Their dedication and talents were on full display. We are all extremely proud of these three! Let's keep the 4-H momentum going strong.



ACCESSIBILITY AND AWARENESS FORUM

Guest Contributor: Jennifer St. Pierre and Diane Moog

Many times there are questions about when to use sign language and when not to use sign language. How do we provide access to our Deaf staff and students? Following are some guidelines to use:

1. If you are with another hearing person and a Deaf person is in the area, please use sign language and include them and provide access.
2. If you are with another hearing person and a Deaf person is not near and involved in their own conversation, you can use your voice and continue your conversation.
3. Many times we have people new to signing and it is important to support their efforts. This may involve including them in conversations and teaching them when to use sign language in their daily interactions.

Hopefully, these suggestions will help facilitate communication and clarify more when to use sign language. As we have conversations on campus we strive to meet the needs of those involved.

What a Super Bowl Sunday!



The residential students at MSDB had a blast watching the big game between the San Francisco 49ers and Kansas City Chiefs this year. We decked out the dorm common areas with banners, balloons, and other decorations in the teams' colors.

There were tasty snacks like sub sandwiches, chips, a veggie tray, and more to fuel the excitement. We also set up some fun activities like a football poll and Super Bowl trivia. Of course, there was plenty of cheering and celebrating as the game went on. Even students who weren't huge football fans got into the fun atmosphere. The highlight for many was watching the ASL interpreters perform the halftime show.

Kansas City Chiefs ended up winning a close one, but the real reward was spending quality bonding time together as a residential community. Moments like this are what make the MSDB residential experience so special. Thanks to all the students and staff who made this year's Super Bowl Sunday one for the books!



Outings/Activities

Look what we did!

- Workshop: Paystubs (1/4)
- Griz Champ Game (1/7)
- Minute to Win It (1/12)
- Workshop: Emotions (1/25)
- Bison Dance C
- Workshop: Restaurants (2/1)
- PYBFF Clinic (2/3)
- 4-H Project Day (2/10)
- Super Bowl Party (2/11)
- Valentine's Party (2/14)

Coming Soon-

- Travel Return (2/19)
- Gaming Club Tournament (2/23)
- MSDB Ski Day (3/7)
- Travel Home (3/8)
- Travel Return (3/11)

MSDB SAFETY: Parking Lot Safety

By AJ Kauffman

Hi again, everyone, I'll be talking about parking lot safety because it's critical that we pay attention to our surroundings when we enter and exit school. We have school buses, state vans, and even vans that are converted into school buses in our parking lot at MSDB, as you can all see. When we head across the parking lot to our cars after school or after work, we all need to exercise extreme caution and awareness.

You should constantly be aware of your surroundings when leaving or entering campus in order to prevent injury. This includes keeping your eyes open and avoiding being distracted by your phone. While driving around the corner of the parking lot, drivers will not see you walking because—though you may not even be aware of this yourself. Walking on the sidewalk is safer. Always check to your left and right before moving forward when walking towards your car.

In particular, if you're strolling with family, friends, coworkers, or even students, you can be ready to pull them out of harm's way by keeping your phone in your pockets and using your eyes to be vigilant and prepared for any danger if you at least expect it. Always scan both left and right for vehicles to be safe when approaching a crosswalk if there aren't any cars, trucks, or other vehicles present. Always be mindful of your safety, and report anything you notice that is unsafe or inappropriate for the MSDB campus as soon as you can. Our goal is the safety of MSDB employees and students! Regards!

Announcing the Cottage Student of the Quarter

Ayvia Kosine!

The Cottage Counselors and Lead Resident Advisors are thrilled to announce Ayvia Kosine as our second Student of the Quarter!

Nominations are made by the Resident Advisors and voted on by Counselors and Lead Residential Advisors. The winning student receives a \$15 gift card and gets their picture displayed in the Yellowstone Lobby. The Shoshone staff and students will also enjoy a celebratory dinner supporting Ayvia's growth.

We look for students who have shown development in areas like self-care, managing chores, interacting with others, being responsible, and improving behavior.

Ayvia received multiple nominations that highlighted her responsibility in cleaning and chores, outgoing and friendly personality, kindness, and helpfulness. She has also been utilizing a calendar to stay organized with her busy schedule of activities and clubs.

Please join us in congratulating Ayvia on this well-deserved recognition! Ayvia exemplifies the qualities of a model residential student at MSDB.

Keep up the great work, Ayvia! We're proud of you and appreciate your contributions to making the MSDB residential experience rewarding for all students.



Student Council

Student Council raises money each year for a primary purpose: the annual "fun day" at the end of the year.

As part of teaching our students citizenship and encouraging healthy habits and responsibility, Student Council will be using the money raised for other activities and purchases to benefit our students.

In February, we have don't two things.

1. February Fitness Challenge—Similar to the staff program, Student Council is rewarding one student each week with a Walmart gift card. Each time a student makes an effort to get some exercise, their name is entered in the drawing. Brooke L. won for the first week!
2. Valentine's Party—a small party celebrating friendships was held on Valentine's Day.



High School Happenings

With Erin Faulkner

I am always saying that the Cottage is a learning place, just like the classroom. But instead of math and reading, we are learning functional, social and life skills. While one of the staffs' many responsibilities is to use "teachable moments" to help your student learn vital skills by discussion, modeling or even role playing, workshops are held most weeks in order to teach these important skills directly. Over the past month and a half, most of the Cottage high school students (and occasionally middle school students) have attended workshops on the following:

1. Identifying Emotions:

-We reviewed 27 emotions and matched them with different scenarios

2. Understanding Pay Stubs

-We went through a few pay stubs and identified the important parts and vocabulary

3. Ordering from a Restaurant.

-We practiced ordering from a server who does not sign, advocating for themselves, and calculated the tip and total to be paid.

In addition to these workshops, the ILSP Coordinator also joined forces with the Transition Coordinator and LEAP Coordinators to provide a 4 hour work-readiness training on a Saturday to high school students attending MSDB. The Putting Your Best Foot Forward program has 4 units.

1. Strengths and skills that employers want.
2. Selling your strengths and skills to an employer
3. Finding job vacancies
4. Preparing for a job interview
5. Conquering the job interview and next steps

We were able to complete the first unit with the 11 students who attended. The day consisted of lecture, group discussions, small group discussions, and individual work. The reward for the day? Pizza! We look forward to continuing this program with the students.



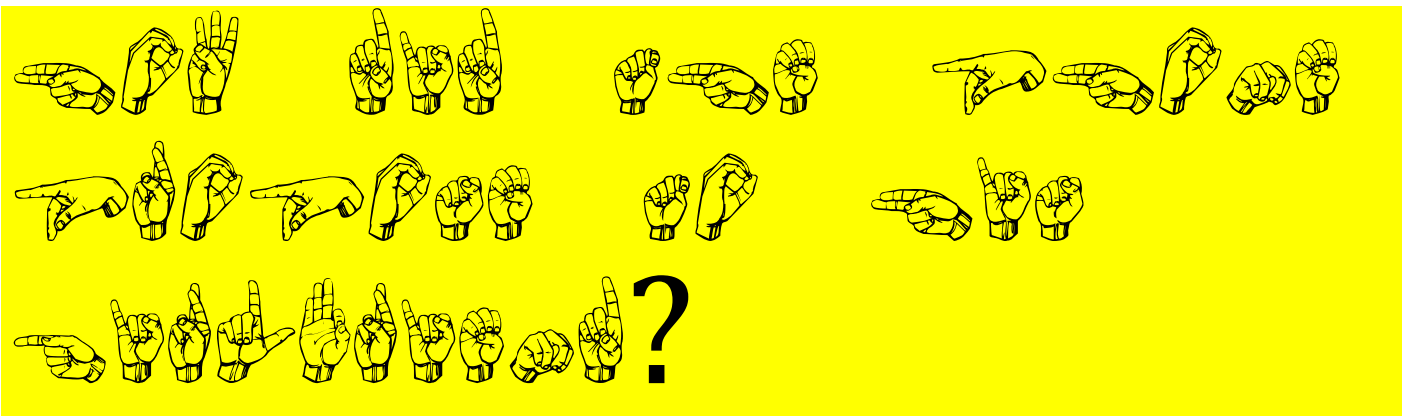
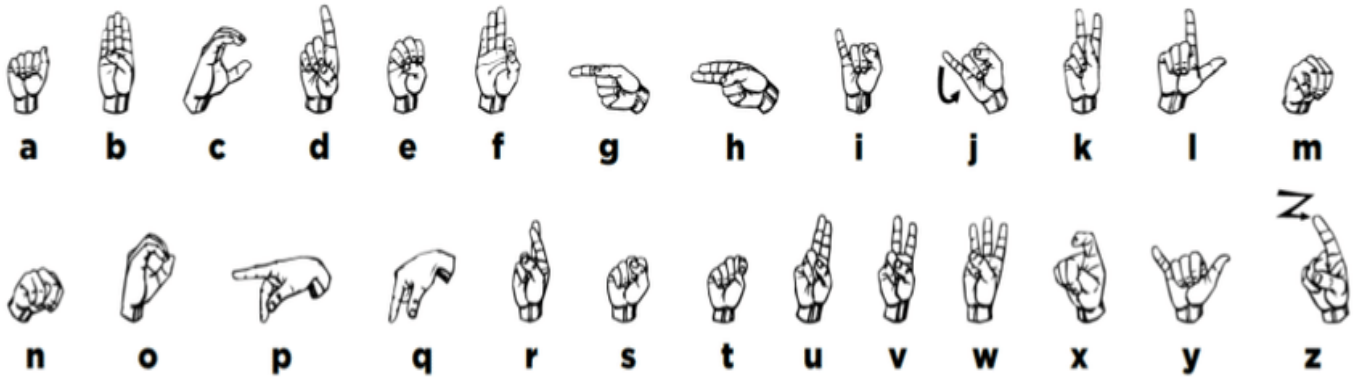
Weekly Student Life Activities

- EOS (Mon/Wed)
- Swim Club and lessons (Mon)
- 4-H (alt. Mon)
- Student Ambassadors (Tues)
- Goal Ball (Tues)
- Moving Mustangs (Tues)
- Student Life Social Hour (Wed)
- Student Council (Wed)
- Snack Shack (Wed/Fri)
- Swimming (Wed/Sun)
- VIP ((Thurs)
- Flying Hooves (Thurs)
- Workshops (Thurs)

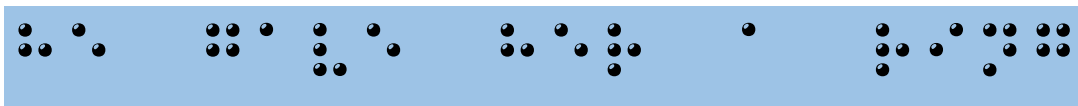
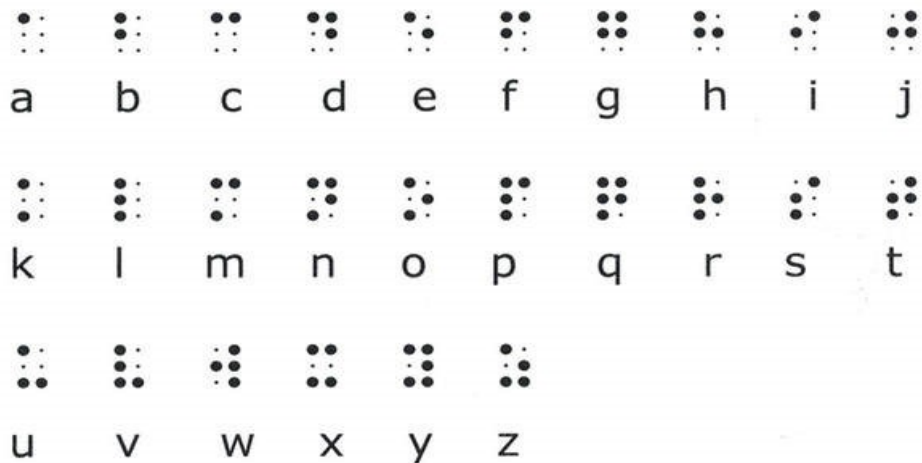
PUZZLE PAGE

Decode the phrases using ASL Fingerspelling and Braille!

Fingerspelling is the process of spelling out words by using hand shapes that correspond to the letters of the word. A set of hand shapes used to spell words is known as a "manual alphabet."



Braille is a system that enables blind and visually impaired people to read and write through touch. It was devised by Louis Braille in 1821 and consists of raised dots arranged in "cells." A cell is made up of six dots that fit under the fingertips, arranged in two columns of three dots each.



December Puzzler Answers:

Fingerspelling: What goes oh, oh, oh? Braille: Santa Walking backwards