



Summer Edition 2023

School Talk

A Newsletter of RSW 54/MSAD 54

E.O.E.



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Mill Stream's First Annual Science Fair



Mill Stream Elementary (MSES) teachers Ms. Leonard and Mrs. McBrairy applied for and received a grant from Jobs for Maine Graduates (JMG) to enhance their science program at MSES.

Using the grant funds, Mrs. McBrairy and Ms. Leonard created the First Annual Science Fair at MSES. The goal of the fair was to use science exploration to deepen content knowledge and develop collaborative skills.

In March, 5th- and 6th-grade students worked diligently to demonstrate proficiency with Next Gen Science standards, which also included reading, writing, technology, and listening and speaking standards.

Students demonstrated proficiency by using the scientific method, conducting an experiment or creating a model of understanding, building a slide show with Google Slides, making a tri-fold presentation board, and—lastly—preparing a small speech to present their findings and learnings.

On the day of the science fair, students presented their learnings to younger students. Pre-K to 4th-grade students also had a hands-on learning experience themselves, exploring the difference between mixtures and solutions as well as practicing how to make observations with a microscope.

That evening, students welcomed parents, guardians, and community members to see their work and celebrate their accomplishments; refreshments were supplied by Mill Stream's Parent Teacher Group.

Mrs. McBrairy said, "The amount of learning that took place not only met the curriculum standards but inspired students to ask questions and want to learn more about science," and Ms. Leonard added, "I have never been more proud. The work students created was incredible."

Hands-on Science Learning at MCSS



Students at Margaret Chase Smith School were busy this spring learning about science.

Fifth-grade students visited the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) where they learned to use a microscope and collect/graph data. They then analyzed findings of their research about Black Sea Bass to determine whether these fish are affecting the lobster harvest in Maine.

Students in Ms. Dutterer's, Mrs. Herrick's, and Mrs. Greenlaw's classrooms learned about and actually raised wild Atlantic salmon this spring. Lessons included animal adaptations, the salmon life cycle, care of the environment, tank observations, and reading a thermometer.

On Friday, May 26, these students took a field trip to the Sandy River in Norridgewock to release almost 400 salmon at the fry stage of development. The students then enjoyed a picnic at Oosoola Park where they played games pretending to be salmon.

Passamaquoddy Teacher Visits Mill Stream

Lynn Mitchell, Passamaquoddy Culture and Language Teacher at Calais High School, came to teach the 5th-graders at Mill Stream Elementary School about the Passamaquoddy in Maine.



She spent the day with Mrs. Lightbody's and Mrs. McBreairty's classes drumming, dancing, and sharing her language. She brought in many personal items including baskets, beadwork, carvings, and instruments to illustrate the many aspects of her culture.

She told students, "The most important thing for you to learn is 'Koselomol,' that I love you. Love is the most important thing, for you to love yourselves, love each other and be kind to everyone."

Students gained an understanding that the land is sacred and that it is our job to take care of it and each other. It was truly a wonderful experience that students will remember for years to come.

North Elementary Students Collaborate and Get Active



Kindergarten students at North Elementary School were interviewed by Margaret Chase Smith students to find out their favorite animals; then, 4th-graders used 3-D printers to design and create bubble wands for the K students. On May 16, the 4th-grade and K students used their wands to celebrate the collaboration.

Also in May, NOEL partnered with Move More Kids for a walk around the block and exercise.

An Amazing School Year at Canaan Elementary



The students and staff at Canaan have had an amazing year full of learning and fun. Some highlights included learning about multicultural holidays, using rockets to measure distance in math class, exploring coding with Lego STEM kits, building with Home Depot kits, leprechaun traps, Grandparents' Day, Chewonki presentations, and so much more. In addition, our PTG sponsored Trunk-or-Treat, Breakfast with Santa, Mad Science, and Family Bingo Night.

Recently, our 4th-, 5th-, and 6th-grade students participated in a school tradition, the Seldon W. Fitzgerald Prize Speaking Competition. While we don't know the exact date the competition began, based on our records we can estimate the beginning to be 70 years ago. Students worked for a little over a month preparing their pieces in hopes of making it to the final, which was held on June 6. All finalists are pictured above; this year's winners were Reese Paine, Moriah Morin and Charlotte Carter.

The staff would like to extend best wishes to the students and community for a safe and relaxing summer.

Bloomfield 3rd-Graders Visit Maine Botanical Gardens

Bloomfield teacher Miss Clement and the Aspire River Hawks initiative partnered to bring third-grade students to the Maine Botanical Gardens in Boothbay Harbor.

The students had the opportunity to explore the web of life in our forest ecosystem through the lens of author, marine biologist, conservationist, and seasonal Maine resident, Rachel Carson. After the guided walk, students explored the gardens and played in the children's center.



They returned to school with a book written by Rachel Carson that was used during science and literacy lessons. This trip also sparked conversations about possible careers in the Maine outdoors and our forestry system.

New Aspire Program in MSAD 54



Aspire River Hawks hit the ground running this year as a brand-new grant initiative. A partnership among MSAD 54, JMG, and the MELMAC Education Foundation, Aspire's goal is to raise aspirations for students of all ages as they plan for their future.

This year was a planning year for Aspire: focus was on staff and community outreach, creating and refining processes for implementation, and baseline data collection. Even though the focus was on planning, project requests came pouring in after Aspire held workshops during MSAD 54's March Professional Development Day.

Aspire also facilitated seven field trips, several presentations, a grade-wide career workshop event, and more. We are looking forward to partnering with more staff of all grade levels next year to continue advancing aspirations for all MSAD 54 students.

Families Can Help Students Avoid the “Summer Slide”



The mission of Title One teachers throughout MSAD 54’s elementary schools is to accelerate the growth of students who exhibit learning needs in math, reading, or writing.

The growth students exhibit is often profound and brings many teachers a misty eye when they reach June and realize just how much the children have learned. To achieve this progress, it takes a team of classroom teachers, Title One staff, and, most importantly, families. Families are also the key to helping students maintain skills over the weeks of summer vacation.

Although summer is the best time for play and adventure, it is equally important in summer to set aside time for learning. Students who do not practice reading or math often suffer from what we call the “summer slide,” losing upwards of 2-3 months of growth that will then take 6-12 weeks of instruction in the fall to regain.

Ways to support your child and avoid the summer slide are:

1. Bring books and math materials to places you visit.
2. Set goals with your child to practice learning each week.

3. Celebrate with your child when they practice and reach their weekly learning goal. Keep celebrations simple such as taking a walk, eating an ice cream, or playing a game.
4. Invite a friend or family member to read or practice math with your child.
5. Turn the learning into a game, such as how fast can we read our sight words or solve our multiplication facts?
6. Reread books for fluency and have students entertain family members with their reading.
7. Make learning practice a priority before using electronic devices.

Please know that consistency matters. The more often you can practice with your child, the stronger they will return to school in the fall. Please check out their backpack to see what learning tools and books have been brought home for summer and visit your local library to find more books to share.

YOU can really make a difference in your child’s life during the months of July and August. The staff of MSAD 54 thank you for all you will do to make sure that the “summer slide” doesn’t happen to your child. All the best as you enjoy summer!

“STEAM” Education Expanded in Afterschool Program

This year, the REACH Afterschool Program at Margaret Chase Smith School has expanded their STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) programming through a partnership with the Maine Afterschool Network.

Amanda Sandford, a REACH STEAM instructor, took part in a professional learning community (PLC) this past year that focused on STEAM education. Sponsored by the Maine Afterschool Network and Educate Maine, the PLC aims to expand STEAM programming and to spark interest in STEM related careers.

This year, Amanda offered many new project-based STEAM activities, such as studying catalysts through the foam explosion in the “elephant toothpaste” reaction. The students also learned about buoyancy by observing how many pennies a tin foil boat can hold. In addition, they used everyday tools to build wind powered cars, circuit boards, and robots.



Activities like these also help students learn how to work in teams and solve problems collaboratively.

Both Amanda and her colleague, Jackie Wallace, who is the site coordinator for MCSS, said that their students are engaged and excited every time they have STEAM club. They have seen students grow in their ability to challenge themselves to try new and often difficult projects.

REACH welcomes community support and volunteers. To learn more about how you can get involved with the REACH After School Program as a volunteer or sponsor, please email program director, Dawn Fickett, at dfickett@msad54.org.

“Denim Day” Observed at SAMS

In 1992 an 18-year-old Italian girl was sexually assaulted by her driving instructor. The Italian Supreme Court overturned the perpetrator’s rape conviction, saying that since the victim wore tight jeans, she must have helped remove them, which made the act consensual. In the wake of this verdict,

Denim Day was officially established in 1999. On this day participants wear denim to combat victim blaming and to educate others about sexual violence.

One in five women will experience some form of sexual assault/violence in their lifetime, and men are the victim of one in every ten rapes. This means that many students and staff in our district will be victims of sexual violence at some point in their lives, and many of our students and staff are already survivors.



SAMS observed Denim Day to raise awareness about this important issue and to remind everyone that the victim is never to blame. Teacher Angel Bellavance, who organized the event, says that she appreciates the administration’s support of Denim Day and she hopes it will be observed district wide next year.

For more information, visit: <https://denimday.org/why-denim>

Nutrition Program Places Second in “Cook-Off”

The MSAD 54 School Nutrition Program competed in the Farm to School Cook-Off again this year. Our team, named “Sunday,” consisting of Gina Bailey and her son Caleb Pratt, earned second place. This was the seventh and final year that Sunday will compete.

At the event, Caleb was presented with a scrapbook containing pictures and memorabilia from all the competitions. The scrapbook captured the many changes over the years, during which time Sunday became great chefs.



Pictured is the meal they prepared for the competition: grilled chicken over carrot puree, broccoli, cucumber Asian salad, rice, an oatmeal carrot cookie, and fresh fruit with yogurt dip. The two required ingredients for the dish were local carrots and oats.

Service Learning at SAHS

On May 26, freshman students at SAHS participated in a multi-town Community Service Day. Students ventured to Norridgewock, Mercer, Smithfield, and Skowhegan.

Jobs varied from raking lawns, hauling brush, cleaning roadways and trails, and painting dugouts. Student efforts were much appreciated by the towns and homeowners who requested help.

The day ended with a barbecue sponsored by Waste Management of Norridgewock and coordinated by Norridgewock Town Manager Richard Labelle.

Chris Wills, a math teacher at SAHS and coordinator of this project, says that she and the



other high school staff hope to have more citizens and organizations come forward with needs and tasks for the students. Look for more information regarding next year's service day in the fall of 2023.

SAHS Celebrates Graduation



The Skowhegan Area High School Class of 2023 graduation ceremony was held in the Donald Finley Gymnasium on Sunday, June 4, 2023.

Student speakers delivered messages focusing on the importance of being agents of change, standing up for what is right, overcoming obstacles, continuing to move forward, and never forgetting about the school and community that the students have come from.

From all of us here at Skowhegan Area High School, we wish the class of 2023 the best of luck in all future endeavors. We are proud of our graduates and are confident they will go on to make a positive impact.

SCTC Holds Annual Awards Ceremony



On Thursday, May 25, Somerset Career and Technical Center held its annual Awards Ceremony, which began with a beautiful rendition of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” performed by Digital Graphics student, Evelyn Lacroix. Then, 2023 SCTC Student of the Year, Riley Enright, from the Outdoor Leadership program, spoke to the crowd about aspirations and lessons learned from SCTC.

After awarding scholarships from local families, organizations, and businesses — which totaled over \$26,000 — cords and pins were presented to 177 students for completing one of the tech center’s 13 programs. One student, Isaac Ouellette, was also recognized for earning his welding certificate at Kennebec Valley Community College.

A big congratulations to all SCTC graduates as they begin their next chapter.

MSLC Students Build Career Skills and Serve Community



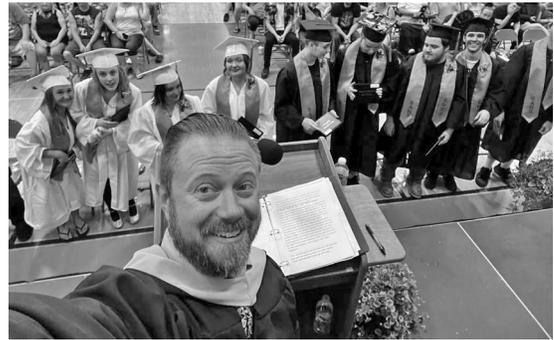
This spring, students at Marti Stevens Learning Center have been very busy becoming active, educated members of society. Collaborating with JMG, several students began earning their Maine Career Badge. We had students complete job shadows at several locations, including Tessier’s Farm, Pine

and Willow Hair Salon, KVCAP Early Head Start Program, and Canaan/SAMS art classrooms, among others.

In addition, students attended several job fairs and had the opportunity to explore mental health careers through a presentation from Maine Behavioral Health; and, with the help of the ASPIRE program, 14 students completed CPR/First Aid certifications.

As always, we continue to build connections with our local community. Students volunteered with the Skowhegan Conservation Commission and the Skowhegan Rotary Club to plant several trees and shrubs at the Dudley Corner School House and along Court Street in Skowhegan.

MSLC Celebrates Graduation



The Marti Stevens Learning Center held its annual graduation ceremony on Friday, June 2, in the SAHS gymnasium in front of a packed house.

The MSAD 54 Alternative Education program was proud to graduate 13 students in this class of 2023, with staff members giving individualized speeches for each graduate.

MSLC Director Dylan Engler said that the students’ achievement testifies to the truth of a quote from the television show, *Ted Lasso*: “I believe in hope. I believe in believe.”



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MSAD 54 Adult Education Graduation

During the 2022-2023 academic year, 31 students earned a high school diploma through MSAD 54 Adult & Community Education. On Wednesday, June 7, 13 graduates and their guests attended a ceremony held in the SAHS gym.

Superintendent Jonathan Moody spoke about the power of perseverance, and the Skowhegan Community Band played two numbers.

Pictured are Sadie Warger, Alexa Byler, and Casey Reid, each of whom received a \$250 Alice Haiss Scholarship to support their pursuit of further education.



MSAD 54 INFORMATION

**Stay Updated on the
New Elementary Building Project**



www.msad54.org/building-project

Important Dates:

Aug. 30 -First Day of School for
Grades K-9 Students Only
Aug. 31-First Day of School for
Grades 10-12 Students
Sept. 4 - Labor Day - No School