



# School Talk

A Newsletter of RSL 54/MSAD 54

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## The Legacy of Steve Swindells: Half a Century in Education



Canaan Principal Steve Swindells is retiring after 50 years in education. Throughout his career, he has impacted thousands of students, their families, and the surrounding communities, leaving lasting memories and impressions upon those who have had the privilege to experience Steve as a teacher, coach, or principal.

Born on April 30, 1950, in Lewiston, Maine, Mr. Swindells attended area schools and graduated from Edward Little High School in 1968. From there, he majored in Physical Education and Social Studies at the University of Maine, where he played football for four years and wrestled for two years.

Upon graduating in 1972, he took a job as an 8th grade history teacher in Gardiner, Maine, where he also coached football, wrestling and track. Steve taught in Gardiner for 26 years.

During those years, Swindells also furthered his own education, earning a Master's degree in Adult and Community Education (1980) from the University of Southern Maine and a CAS in Administration (1995) from the University of Maine.

In 1999, Mr. Swindells took a job as Assistant Principal of Sabattus Elementary School. The following year, he became Principal of that same school. In 2001, Steve joined MSAD 54 as Principal of Canaan Elementary School, where he has served ever since.

To put the length of Mr. Swindells' service in context, his very first group of students will turn 64 years old sometime this year! Those who have learned from him, and those who have worked for and with him, are all the better for it. The community, staff, students and friends of Canaan Elementary wish Steve Swindells the very best in his future adventures and will have a difficult time filling the void that his retirement is leaving in the community and at Canaan Elementary.

# Bloomfield “Bunches” and Field Day



## Bunches

A new initiative called “Bloomfield Bunches” grew out of the work of the Bloomfield Elementary Trauma Informed Learning Committee (TLC). The TLC has been meeting for several years; one mission of TLC is to help students build long-lasting connections and to help foster a sense of belonging.

Each Bloomfield Bunch is a mixture of first, second, and third grade students led by a staff member. Group leaders include classroom teachers, itinerants, Title I staff, educational technicians, and office staff. Each Bunch meeting begins with a brief video from staff introducing the topic of the meeting, followed by a whole group greeting. Next, students have the opportunity to participate in a mindfulness activity. Then, students do a check-in about how they are feeling that they can share with their group if they are comfortable.

The most important part of the meeting comes next, which is the “work.” During the work component, groups are engaged in an activity that focuses on social-emotional learning. This may be a game, craft, or a story followed by discussions. Once the work component is completed, the meeting ends with a moment of appreciation for each other. Bunch meetings last a total of 40 minutes.

All the activities that occur during Bunches are planned and prepared ahead of time by the developing

staff so that group leaders can focus exclusively on the engagement of their Bunch.

During the inaugural meeting in April, students and staff members got to meet their groups and learn about the purpose of Bloomfield Bunches. After collecting feedback from students and staff, another Bunch meeting was held in May. This was the last meeting of the 2021-2022 school year, but we are looking forward to continuing the work next school year.

## Field Day



Bloomfield students and staff celebrated the end of the school year with an annual field day on June 7, 2022. As the pictures show, a good time was had by all!

## Game On at MCSS!



Beginning in mid-March, Margaret Chase Smith School students were eligible to earn links in a paper chain if they were “caught” showing MCSS’s Good Character Expectations, which include respect, positive words, and kindness.

Because they earned the target of 2,075 links by the week of June 6, students were rewarded with a game morning on last day of school. They enjoyed popsicles while participating in corn hole tournaments, board games and more!

# Mill Stream Elementary Celebrates a Successful Year



During the 2021-2022 school year at Mill Stream Elementary School, students made remarkable progress academically, socially, and developmentally. It was a priority for our school and district to provide educational experiences to our learners that paralleled the years prior to the pandemic. To celebrate our successes, Mill Stream Elementary School students, staff and families engaged in several activities during the month of June.

## Bikes for Books

During the month of May, students were asked to read as many books as they could; for each book, they were able to enter a ticket into a drawing for a bicycle. At a whole school assembly on June 7, the Masonic Lodge of Norridgewock awarded brand-new bicycles, helmets, and t-shirts to 28 very fortunate MSES students.



## 6th Grade Promotion Night

On June 8, MSES recognized and celebrated 45 students that will be exiting MSES and beginning their new journey at Skowhegan Area Middle School. Staff also acknowledged students in each of the classrooms for a Citizenship Award and Most Improved Award. After the ceremony, students, staff, and families enjoyed refreshments and photo opportunities in the cafeteria.



## 6th Grade Field Trip

On June 9, our 6th grade classes traveled to T&B's Event Center in Skowhegan for a day of games, bowling, video games, and pizza. A majority of this event was sponsored by T&B's Event Center. Students had a wonderful time spending one of their last days together as students of Mill Stream Elementary School.

## Field Day

On June 10, the entire school enjoyed a field day sponsored by the MSES Parent Teacher Group. Students participated in various activities, including relay races, Hungry Hippo, Angry Birds, and others. Thirty parent volunteers donated their time to help implement the 10 activities developed by the PTG. The weather was perfect and the students had an absolutely amazing time. The event was even highlighted on the local television news!

## Pre-Kindergarten Promotion

On June 13, 26 students in our Pre-Kindergarten classrooms were recognized for their hard work and effort over the past school year. During the event students provided a performance for their family and friends. After receiving their awards, families joined the graduates in watching a slide show that captured some of the year's highlights.

## North Elementary Students Enjoy Special Picnic



North Elementary students earned a picnic luncheon by following the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), a matrix staff created earlier in the year that encourages children to be safe, kind, respectful, and responsible.

By demonstrating these qualities, students accrued “points for a picnic.” Points could be awarded for positive behaviors in our school and on our buses. Between May 2 and June 3, NEL students earned more than the required 1000 points!

The children enjoyed a bagged lunch, ice cream sundaes, face painting and playground time! All students also received the Mo Willems’ book, *Are You Ready to Play Outside?*

## REACH Celebrates Family Literacy Month

The REACH After School Program celebrated May as Family Literacy Month at all three program sites.

Each Thursday evening, families from our MCSS, BES, and SAMS program came together to join REACH and Mr. David Richards, the director of the Margaret Chase Smith Library, to participate in family reading time and group discussions about the books they had been provided the week before.

The Miller’s Table at Maine Grains provided a delicious dinner each week for all participants, and the Maine Humanities Council provided all books free of charge.

Our theme for the month was “Community,” with families reading *Roxaboxen*, *The Seedfolk*, *Letting Swift River Go*, *The Friendship*, *Somebody Loves You Mr. Hatch*, *The Man Who Lived Alone*, *Two Old Women* and *A Symphony of Whales*.

Families came together to take turns reading these beautiful stories aloud. Some of our students who do not usually feel comfortable reading in a group setting bravely took their turn. REACH was also able to provide all 148 participants with two grade-level-appropriate books to take home for summer reading.

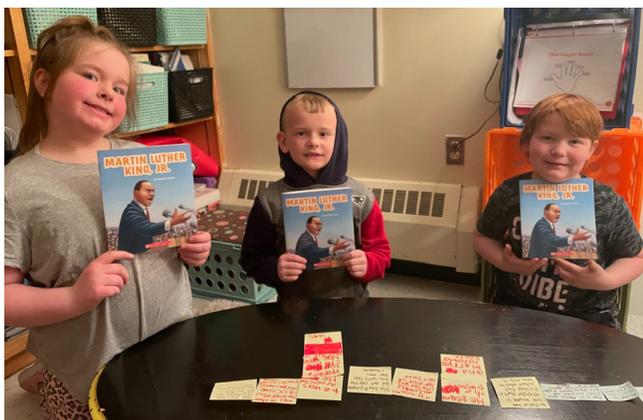
In addition, our Skowhegan Area Middle School students performed *Stone Soup*. Under the direction of longtime staff member Petra Prokopova, our Theater Club students collaborated on this hit show! Thanks to a generous donation from The Miller’s Table, our Cooking Club even made a delicious stone soup to accompany the production. Parents, staff and our afterschool program students from Bloomfield were all there to support our actors in their debut!



We also had a special guest visit from Josh Sparks founder of Sparks Ark, a rescue center for wild animals here in Maine. Our students were so excited to meet and learn about all of the remarkable rescue animals that make up the Ark.

The REACH After School Program would love to continue these programs in our 22-23 school year. Local community and business sponsorships for student programming and clubs are always needed and welcomed. If your local business or organization would like to learn how to become involved, please contact the program director, Dawn Fickett, at [dfickett@msad54.org](mailto:dfickett@msad54.org).

## 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 to find joy outside playing, visiting family and friends and adventuring, it is equally as important in summer to take the time to practice 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:

- Bring books and math materials to places you visit.
- Set goals with your child to practice learning each week.
- 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.
- Invite a friend or family member to read or practice math with your child.
- Turn the learning into a game, such as how fast can we read our sight words? Or solve

our multiplication facts?

- Reread books for fluency and have students entertain family members with their reading.
- 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!

## Memorable Spring Track Event for Students



MSAD 54’s annual Spring Track Event for the special education population was a resounding success.

One parent said that her child was in tears “when he walked onto the track...[and] saw all of the students with the signs to cheer on the participants.”

She added, “Everybody in attendance was so loving and supportive. Shout out to the staff and faculty who put on this event and a big thank you to the student volunteers who were right at the participants side giving them encouragement and support.”

Students participated in softball throw, running long jump, standing long jump, and running events from the 25M to 400M. Students unable to run were able to participate in a race using gait trainers and harness devices. All students received ribbons for their efforts.

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After the activities, students, families and staff, enjoyed lunch, which was generously provided by the Lions Club.



The Skowhegan Area Middle School band played for the parade, with DJ Ralph Pillsbury providing additional music and announcing.

A special thanks to Christal Siren and Marjorie Batten for their planning and coordination and to all of the other student volunteers and staff, including OTs, PTs, Special Education Teachers and Educational Technicians.



A similar program involving snowshoe races will occur next March at the Community Center.

## Gone Fishin': SAMS Students Study Alewives

Something got a little fishy at Skowhegan Area Middle School this spring; in fact, a lot fishy! Over the course of four days, all the 7th- and 8th-grade students from SAMS took a field trip to observe an annual rite in the state of Maine: the return of the alewives to the Sebasticook River. Every spring millions of alewives and blueback herring ascend Maine's rivers and streams and return to their natal waters to lay their eggs and spawn another generation.

The run of the fish in the Sebasticook River, the Kennebec River's largest tributary, is the largest of

its kind in the world. The alewives and herring are a biological keystone species that feed everything from the largest concentration of bald eagles east of the Rockies to whales and bluefin tuna in the Gulf of Maine.



Teachers at SAMS provided background for the trip with lessons about removing the Edwards Dam in Augusta and restoring the fish species throughout the river system. They also focused in their science classes on the biological role of the fish as a plankton eater and forage base in both the freshwater and saltwater ecosystems. Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Biologist Nate Gray spoke to the SAMS student body back in April about what they would observe and experience on the river. He also explained Maine's role in shaping the ecosystem and restoring its health, both now and in the future.

The trip began with a journey to Benton Dam in Benton Falls, Maine. The dam is operated by Essex Hydro, and they maintain a state-of-the-art fish lift to move the millions of fish over the dam. There, the students cycled through a number of stations that were staffed by the biologists, fish lift operators, the science department teachers of the middle school (Beth Cormier, Tom Nadeau, Griffin Graves, and Tammie Veinotte), and history teacher Matt Keister.

While at the dam, students examined biosamples collected by Mr. Gray, observed the hydraulic fish lift and the movement of the fish into the raceway, and learned about the ecology of the region, as well as hydro energy and sustainability. One group of students even observed an endangered Atlantic salmon pass through the fishway. It was one of only six to have been documented passing upstream since 1847!

After a quick lunch at Fort Halifax — the oldest wooden defensive fortification in the country — students proceeded to the Webber Pond boat landing, where they were able to observe a volitional fish ladder and take part in a scale sampling operation for the state. All of the data collected by the student body was sent to the DMR where it will become part of the state's informational database on the health and growth rates of this very important species.

## MSAD 54 Adult Education Graduation



During the 2021-2022 academic year, 28 students earned a high school diploma through MSAD 54 Adult & Community Education. On Wednesday, June 8, 16 graduates and their guests attended a ceremony held in the SAHS gym. This year, we were also pleased to welcome back the Skowhegan Community Band. Pictured is graduate Holly Wood, who received a \$500 Alice Haiss Scholarship to support her pursuit of further education.

## SAHS Celebrates Class of 2022



The Skowhegan Area High School Class of 2022 Commencement was held on the high school football field on Sunday, June 5, 2022.

Student speakers focused on adapting to change and resilience, qualities the Class of 2022 had to develop as they navigated high school in the midst of a global pandemic.

We wish the Class of 2022 the best of luck in all future endeavors, and we look forward to seeing what mark they make on the world. We are confident they will do wonderful things.



## SCTC Final Awards Ceremony



The Somerset Career & Technical Center held their Final Awards Ceremony on May 26 in the Skowhegan Area High School gymnasium.

175 students received cords and pins for completing a program at SCTC. Several students received scholarships, while many others were recognized for being program leaders, having perfect attendance, and enlisting in the military.

## SCTC Teacher Honored by University of Maine



At the Somerset Career and Technical Center final awards assembly on May 26, Pre-Engineering teacher Kim McEwen was inducted into the Francis Crowe Society.

Dana Humphrey, the Dean of Engineering at the University of Maine, explained that the award is presented to a teacher whom multiple students identify as the person that inspired them to become engineers.

Francis Crowe, a UMaine graduate, was the Chief Engineer on the Hoover Dam project.

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## Adult Education Offers New Welding Class



Thanks to the generous support of SCTC and Madison Area Memorial High School (MHS), MSAD 54 Adult & Community Education was able to offer a welding class at the state-of-the-art facility located within MHS this spring.

In this five-week class, instructor Chris Beaman taught students how to use a stick welder, working through all positions. Students also learned about different welding processes and rod types, as well basics like positioning, rod speed/angle, and proper techniques.

Upon course completion, students had the option to schedule a date at EMCC to test for their certification.

The inaugural class was such a success that another session will be offered in the fall of 2022. Look for details in the Adult Education brochure, which will be delivered to all district postal customers in late August.



## Summer Meal Sites

July 5th – August 12th  
Monday through Friday

Bucky Quinn	10:50 a.m. -11:20 a.m.
Canaan Elementary	11:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
Margaret Chase Smith School	10:50 a.m.-11:20 a.m.
Mill Stream Elementary	11:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
North Elementary	11:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
Riverside Terrace Community	10:50 a.m.-11:20 a.m.
Skowhegan Area High School	11:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

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