



The Learning Disabilities Association of Maine



Toll Free: 1-877-208-4029 or 207-465-7700 Fax 207-465-4844

E-MAIL: info@ldame.org Web: www.ldame.org

Dear Friend of LDA-ME,

Here is our E-NEWS for July, which we hope you will find both informative and useful. We update our web site weekly with new information and resources to serve you, our customer. Check often for the latest educational news and especially resources special education issues and learning and attention disabilities.

If you have an item of interest that you believe may be helpful to our customers, please let us know.

Thank you!

DISCLAIMER: Any information or list provided by us is non inclusive and does not imply an endorsement or recommendation of LDA-ME; we encourage readers to research all information for themselves.

LIST SERVE: Please advise us at anytime if you wish to be removed from our "Friends of LDA-ME" list serve.

Make sure to check out the [EVENTS](#) page of our website for upcoming workshops and conferences. The page is updated regularly.

Save the Dates:

- LDA of Maine 2009 Annual Conference, **TRANSITIONING to the POST-SECONDARY WORLD: LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL** with Arlyn Roffman, Ph.D. (April 3, 2009).
- Fall Family Conference with Rick Lavoie (September 13, 2008).
- What Families and Youth Want Conference (September 26-27, 2008).

For more information on these and other great events, please go to our website at www.ldame.org/events.html.

E-NEWS from LDA of Maine for July 2008

Table of Contents:

- [Kids to Receive Declining Share of Federal Spending](#)
- [LDA of Maine Event's Webpage Updated Weekly!](#)
- [Elinor Goldberg to Receive National Child Advocacy Award](#)
- [Schools Need Consolidation Carrot, Not Stick](#)
- [MAINE VOICES State budget requires long-term vision](#)
- [Children's Alliance Seeks New Focus For School Consolidation Plans](#)
- [Cooperation In Question](#)
- [HANCOCK COUNTY CHILDREN'S COUNCIL Receives GRANT to Prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome](#)
- [No Place Like Home - Column by Senator Susan Collins](#)
- [Congress Restores Medicaid Program, Avoids Major Cuts](#)
- [2008 Maine Children's Alliance KIDS COUNT Data Book User Survey Is Now Online](#)
- [Better Baby Policy and Care at Zero to Three](#)
- [HANCOCK COUNTY CHILDREN'S COUNCIL seeking Relatives as Parents for NEW SUPPORT Program](#)
- [MEAs Show Continued Improvement](#)
- [Interagency Committee on Disability Research](#)
- [New Report Shows National Teacher Certification Improves Student Achievement](#)
- [Commissioner Approves Reorganization Plan](#)
- [MACS NEWSLETTER -- JULY 2008](#)
- [News on Capitol Hill This Week \(From Maine Federations of Families, The G.E.A.R. Network\)](#)
- [MDDC Parent Workgroup Meetings](#)
- [Request for information from National Federation of Family members and friends](#)
- [University of Texas Health Science Center Sleep Study Survey](#)

**THE URBAN INSTITUTE
NEWS RELEASE**

CONTACT:

Stu Kantor, (202) 261-5283
skantor@urban.org
 Elinor Goldberg, (207) 215-5911
egoldberg@mekids.org

KIDS TO RECEIVE DECLINING SHARE OF FEDERAL SPENDING

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 24, 2008-Children are a diminishing priority in the federal budget, a study from the Urban Institute and New America Foundation shows. If current spending and revenue policies continue, the children's share of domestic federal spending-which excludes defense, non-defense homeland

security, and international affairs-will be 13.8 percent in 2018, down from 16.2 percent in 2007 and 20.2 percent in 1960.

While domestic spending is projected to grow by \$771 billion-largely because of escalating health care costs-between now and 2018, children will reap only 7.1 percent, or \$55 billion, of this increase under current law. The second annual "Kids' Share" report estimates that the children's slice of gross domestic product will decline from 2.6 percent in fiscal 2007 to 2.2 percent in fiscal 2018, while Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid will rise from 7.9 to 9.6 percent.

"Kids' Share 2008: How Children Fare in the Federal Budget," by Adam Carasso, Eugene Steuerle, Gillian Reynolds, Tracy Vericker, and Jennifer Macomber, classifies more than 100 federal programs that spend money on children in eight categories: income security, nutrition, housing, tax credits and exemptions, health, social services, education, and training. The report defines children as those under age 19 who are not in postsecondary education.

Findings: Changes from Fiscal Year 2006 to 2007

- The children's budget inched up 0.7 percent (1.6 percentage points slower than GDP) while the non-child portions of the three major entitlements (Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid) rose 5.2 percent. The rest of domestic programs declined by 8.6 percent.
- Of the major children's spending categories, only health, which grew 4.5 percent in real terms, gained ground relative to the economy. Education, which fell 2.1 percent in real terms, lost the most ground.

Findings: Fiscal Years 1960-2007

- Between 1960 and 2007, spending on children rose from 1.9 to 2.6 percent of GDP. By comparison, spending on the non-child portions of Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid nearly quadrupled from 2.0 to 7.9 percent of GDP.
- Spending on a number of individual children's programs tended to fall behind economic growth and, often, inflation. The children's budget maintained its share of GDP mainly through the introduction of new programs. By contrast, the sums spent on entitlement programs, mainly for the elderly, tended to outpace growth in the economy and prices.
- Real federal spending per child grew from \$819 in 1960 to \$4,680 in 2005. Spending on Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid rose from \$3,057 per senior to \$20,530.
- Spending has increasingly been directed toward low-income children through means-tested programs, rising from 11 percent in 1960 to 59 percent by 2007.

"The squeeze between growing entitlements and existing taxes-a squeeze

affecting children's programs and many traditional government functions-is not waiting for some future date; it is taking place now," says Steuerle. "By action and inaction, both political parties bear responsibility for choosing this path and for allowing other priorities to take precedence."

The research for "Kids' Share 2008" was sponsored by First Focus and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The study is available at [here](#).

[Back to Top](#)

PRESS RELEASE

Contact:
Dean Crocker
Phone: 207.623.1868 x
212
Cell: 207.215.9591
E-mail:
dcrocker@mekids.org

Elinor Goldberg to Receive National Child Advocacy Award

AUGUSTA - Elinor Goldberg, president of the Maine Children's Alliance, will receive the Florette Angel Memorial Award on June 20 in Washington, D.C., at the annual forum of Voices for America's Children, a network of state child advocacy organizations.

This national award is named for a legendary child advocate from West Virginia, and has been granted annually since 1996.

In presenting the Florette Angel award, Bill Bentley, president and CEO of Voices for America's Children, said, "Ellie Goldberg's impact has been felt far beyond the boundaries of Maine. She has built a national reputation for her exceptional organization and energetic advocacy on behalf of children." He added, "This award is made in recognition of her dynamic leadership and the remarkable contribution she has made toward improving children's lives."

Goldberg has led the Maine Children's Alliance since its inception in 1994, and has been influential in establishing numerous programs for children over the past 14 years. She organized the "Start ME Right" coalition that reserved a significant portion of tobacco settlement funds for early childhood programs and child care assistance. She also helped establish the Child Welfare Ombudsman

program that has prompted major reforms in state child protective policies. Her leadership in the State Children's Health Insurance (SCHIP) initiative that was launched by the federal government in 1997 helped Maine launch one of the most successful of all the state programs, cutting Maine's number of uninsured children by half.

MCA publishes its own Maine Kids Count data book each year, complementing a similar national report. It has become one of the most trusted and reliable guides for evidenced-based policymaking to benefit the state's children and families.

Gov. John Baldacci praised Goldberg's work, saying she has been "my go-to expert on issues regarding children's welfare during my time in the U.S. Congress and the Governor's Office," and that she has "continually provided sound data and impassioned advocacy that helps build strong families and healthy youth."

First Lady Karen Baldacci, who chairs the Children's Cabinet, said that Goldberg "provides a voice to Maine's children at the policy level in our state Legislature and our nation's Capitol," and added, "Ellie has a gift of working with all parties to come together to help solve the problems facing our youth." Goldberg, she said, "is a national leader and a state treasure."

Goldberg's nomination was also supported by House Speaker Glenn Cummings, who cited her work in the recent state budget debate, saying she "was integral in convincing legislators to preserve funding for vital programs." Without her advocacy, he said, "The cuts could have been disastrous to the health and safety of Maine's children."

Senate Majority Leader Elizabeth Mitchell said that Goldberg "is the face and the force behind the Maine Children's Alliance. Ellie's energy commitment and dogged determination hold us all accountable to improving the outcomes for Maine's children."

Health and Human Services Commissioner Brenda Harvey, who has worked closely with Goldberg throughout her tenure at HHS, called her "a driving force, a vocal contributor and a constant presence at the State House. She has continued her advocacy for children with passion, dignity, and most importantly, respect."

Goldberg has had a long and varied career in public service, and worked for more than a decade as a Maine child protective worker before joining MCA. She

served as executive director of the Mid-Coast Council on Alcoholism, and was a video producer and director for the University of Maine and the Waldo County Committee for Social Action. She began her career as a welfare case manager in Harlem for the New York City Department of Social Services.

A graduate of the University of Connecticut with a BA in psychology, Goldberg was also chosen for the Kennedy School of Government's program for Senior Executives in State and Local Government at Harvard University.

[Back to Top](#)

Schools need consolidation carrot, not stick-- *The following editorial appeared in the Kennebec Journal on Friday, June 6th*

You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar, the Maine Children's Alliance reminds us in its report, "A Case for Cooperation II, How School Reform Can Work for Maine Students." The report sums up the progress -- or lack thereof -- toward school-district consolidation in Maine, and the alliance concludes that the current system of punishing districts for not consolidating is far less effective than it would be to provide incentives to consolidate.

In other words, the state needs to sweeten the deal.

As one former school superintendent told the alliance, "There are penalties for not acting, but no rewards for forming a new district."

In 2007, the Legislature approved a sweeping reorganization of Maine's school administration. The reorganization, contained in the state budget bill, was instigated by Gov. John Baldacci, who proposed drastic consolidation of the state's 290 separate school districts as a way to cut the cost of education. Education was then, and is now, the largest expenditure of property-tax revenue for municipalities and the cost of maintaining those 290 districts was a major part of that cost.

But, as the Maine Children's Alliance notes, there's been powerful resistance to the consolidation mandate. There are a variety of reasons, including Maine's strong tradition of local control. That tradition, and the history and way of thinking that lie behind it, will take a long time to change.

What could be changed more immediately, says the alliance, is the way the state goes about promoting consolidation.

The process, says the report, "was supposed to be quick and relatively painless ... (but) these expectations have not been realized." That's in large part because

the savings have not easily emerged, with some districts claiming consolidation will increase their costs.

In district after district, significant cost savings have failed to appear when different partners are considered, at least over the short term.

Such has been the case in Waterville's attempt to forge partnerships with neighboring districts. After hundreds of hours of meetings over the last year, Waterville still finds itself without a suitable partner.

Why? Because, the alliance writes: "In reorganization of public institutions or private companies, there is little evidence that substantial savings can be realized immediately."

And in the end, when so much time is being spent crunching numbers that just don't want to be crunched, something equally important is lost: A focus on the educational benefits that could come from consolidation. Those benefits, for example, include the ability for a larger district to have highly skilled (and thus highly paid) teachers of specialized subjects ride circuit among district schools, with the cost shared by multiple schools.

The alliance has performed a public service with this in-depth and reasoned analysis of the status of efforts to transform Maine's school system. The alliance has an agenda -- appropriate in a children's advocacy group -- which it announced in its previous study of school reform. Its view is that school consolidation is a good thing for Maine because it can improve educational outcomes and also be more efficient and thus less expensive.

So it says the state should, as it did in the last round of school reform half a century ago, offer concrete rewards for consolidation. Those rewards could be financial incentives for districts that pull off consolidation, for example, funded by penalties for districts that don't. And the alliance recommends that the state press districts to focus on the educational opportunities available through consolidation, while diminishing their exclusive focus on the potential cost savings.

Getting to a successful consolidation of Maine's school districts will be a long slog. The initial legislation that mandated consolidation, passed as it was under budget pressures and without enough review, already has been modified once to help make consolidation easier.

As the alliance suggests, there are more modifications that could be made to the consolidation law to further increase its possibilities for success. And if consolidation succeeds, that's another way of saying Maine's children and taxpayers will better chance for schools that educate kids well -- and they'll use taxpayers' money wisely, too.

[Back to Top](#)

MAINE VOICES State budget requires long-term vision by Jack Nicholas

To improve state revenues and children's services, personal income has to be helped to increase.

Balancing the state budget is a grueling process, and this year was more difficult than most. That challenge became even more difficult as a result of federal rule changes in the Medicaid program that will reduce services for poor and vulnerable children.

Analysis by the Maine Children's Alliance shows cuts of concern for children, especially since child poverty is on the rise in Maine. The greatest concern, however, regards future cuts affecting children and their families to satisfy those who want immediate reductions in state spending and taxes.

Another dynamic of the budget was the decision not to access the Budget Stabilization Fund. That "rainy day" fund was created to stabilize the general fund during economic downturns.

So, why wasn't it used to offset at least some of the second downward General Fund revenue projection for fiscal year 2008? The Budget Stabilization Fund also is used to support General Fund cash flow, which may have been another reason why it was not used.

Perhaps pervasive anxiety about the tax burden is the overriding reality, even though the state's broad-based taxes have remained essentially the same for three decades until tax relief occurred between 1998 and 2000.

The sales tax was reduced from 6 percent to its former level of 5 percent, the snack tax was repealed and the personal income tax was indexed against inflation.

According to the Federation of Tax Administrators, Maine is only one of 16 states that automatically adjust income tax brackets, personal exemption or standard deduction to the rate of inflation.

Alarm about the tax burden thus has lacked perspective.

According to the Tax Foundation, Maine's business tax climate index is lower than many states, a diverse list including California, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio, New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Vermont.

According to the Maine Economic Growth Council, Maine's cost of doing business index is improving and is better than all other New England states (Milken Index).

That's better than New Hampshire, and the index includes tax burden. And many state programs -- economic development, business tax breaks and education not least among them -- directly benefit those who are so vocal about taxes.

The big change in Maine's fortunes is that personal income in Maine has not kept pace with income growth in other states. Tax burden can be improved by increasing personal income.

That should be a strong public policy goal, especially since the Maine Economic Growth Council noted that, "Increasing personal income is fundamental to a high quality of life for Maine citizens and is a reflection of economic growth and prosperity." Such an effort would surely turn around the increase in child poverty.

A comprehensive approach to the state budget is needed in the long term. Over-reliance on the Budget Stabilization Fund as a source of cash flow for the General Fund should be avoided.

We should make a more concerted effort at tax reform, including broadening the sales tax and reducing the top income tax rates.

We should commission the Bureau of the Budget, the State Planning Office, and the Legislature's Office of Fiscal and Program Review to measure the real economic impact of public investment -- and disinvestment -- in state programs.

Our state budget process must support a longer-term vision for Maine in which tough budget choices in the future are balanced against a firm desire to improve the prosperity of all Maine citizens, which incidentally benefits children.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jack Nicholas of Winthrop was state budget officer for Govs. John McKernan and Angus King and former commissioner of the Department of Health and Human Services. He is a board member and treasurer of the Maine Children's Alliance.

[Back to Top](#)

Children's Alliance Seeks New Focus For School Consolidation Plans

A new report by the Maine Children's Alliance finds that the state's school reform effort is flagging, but can be revived through a new focus on incentives for regionalization.

A Case for Cooperation II, to be published later this month, is being released Tuesday in electronic form on the MCA website.

The report provides the first detailed analysis of the school consolidation law enacted in 2007 as part of the state budget. It charts developments during the recent legislative session that saw numerous attempts to drastically modify or even repeal the law. And it also looks forward to the 2009 session, when the Legislature will again consider school reform measures.

Most school districts in Maine are supposed to attempt consolidation, reducing the number of districts statewide from 290 to 80. So far, though, only a few plans have been completed and only a handful of communities will vote in June, the report finds. To move the process forward, *A Case for Cooperation II* recommends changes in the law and renewed emphasis on educational improvements as opposed to the current exclusive focus on budgets.

"Based on Maine's experience with the Sinclair Act, we believe that incentives will be more effective in bringing schools together than the penalties in the current law," said Jack Rosser, chairman of the MCA and Education Project Advisory boards. Rosser said the emphasis on immediate cost savings has been unproductive, delaying the work of many local reorganization planning committees. "Savings take time to achieve, and to engage community support, there must also be a primary focus on what schools provide for students," he said.

Elinor Goldberg, MCA President, said that demands for better educational performance cannot be met without changes in the way Maine and its local districts provide services. "With public school enrollments declining across the state, we have to find better ways to work together," she said. She noted that many school boards are already cutting back programs while still seeing a significant rise in per-pupil costs.

The new report also says that to support school district reorganization the state must revive its school construction program, and make changes to encourage regional solutions. "Maine has to replace many aging schools and inadequate classrooms, but we have to plan carefully to make sure new schools are both educationally effective and cost-efficient," said Rosser.

A Case for Cooperation II follows the original report, published in 2006, which was cited by legislators and state officials in crafting reform proposals. The new study evaluates work done over the last two years, and prospects for eventual success. "We've made a start," said Rosser, "but we clearly have a long way to go."

The report examines the work of the reorganization planning committee (RPCs) and the obstacles they need to overcome. In a series of case studies, it shows how the Bath area came together to form the first new regional district in four decades, concluding that the promise of better schools was vital in convincing the voters. Other case studies focus on RPCs still at work in Falmouth, Cumberland and North Yarmouth, and in Saco, Old Orchard Beach and Dayton. A final study focuses on the role of superintendents in Union 96 on the Schoodic Peninsula, school districts also featured in the first *Case for Cooperation*.

The report includes chapters on the statewide RPC process, how the state's school construction program has led to voluntary consolidation, and why

statewide curriculum standards have not yet been implemented. It includes six recommendations balanced between improving school organization and enhancing educational quality.

The new report, like its predecessor, was researched and written by Douglas Rooks, a veteran writer and editor who specializes in state policy issues.

Read or download the report online: [A Case for Cooperation II](#) or read the original report: [A Case for Cooperation](#)

To receive a copy by mail or email, call 623-1868 ext. 202 or e-mail adminasst@mekids.org

[Back to Top](#)

Cooperation In Question

The legislative session just past was not kind for the principles of cooperation to create educational benefits for children that MCA has been advocating for the last two years.

There have been some important milestones, nonetheless. Last November, five Bath-area communities voted overwhelmingly to form the Lower Kennebec Regional School District, also known as Regional School Unit (RSU) 1. It is the first new regional district to be formed in Maine since the Sinclair Act era half a century ago. MCA facilitated this effort and helped persuade the Legislature to enact the necessary private and special legislation, which permitted these districts to merge outside the process prescribed for all other school units. In February, a seven-member school board from multi-town districts was elected, and is now preparing its first budget, to take effect July 1 when the Lower Kennebec district begins operations.

In Augusta, things were far more difficult. The debate over the consolidation law enacted in June 2007 as part of the state budget began in December, when the Education Committee voted in favor of some important changes that would otherwise have penalized districts that were attempting to consolidate, including Lower Kennebec.

There were three main features to the original bill. The first authorized sharing costs locally as municipal members of the new district saw fit. This was necessary to prevent cost-shifting that would otherwise have taken place between existing districts, and which emerged as a frequent complaint about the law as soon as the Reorganization Planning Committees (RPCs) began meeting last summer. The second change was to avoid eliminating state subsidies for "minimum receiver" districts -- now paid only for their special education costs --

when they became part of a new RSU. The third change repealed a requirement that all towns in an RSU pay a minimum of \$2 per thousand toward the school budget.

The resulting bill, LD 1932, was never enacted in that form. Instead of a quick set of corrections to the existing law, the bill was held throughout the legislative session and occasioned a nearly unprecedented battle between legislative leadership and the governor. Instead of the approach contained in LD 1932, amended versions of the bill would have permitted existing school districts - 290 in all - to maintain their current boundaries and cooperate only in creating a central superintendent's office. Dubbed a "super union," the new structure would retain municipal school boards with budget and hiring authority, while providing several additional services, including transportation and special education.

School unions have been identified in numerous reports, including MCA's "A Case for Cooperation," as the least efficient and least effective form of current district organization. So passage of the amendment named for Sen. Dennis Damon would have essentially reversed the movement toward district consolidation as the state's primary method of promoting regional cooperation.

The bill with the Damon amendment included at times achieved nearly two-thirds support in both House and Senate. It was finally vetoed by Gov. Baldacci, who cited his concerns about the school union provisions, and the veto was sustained by the Senate.

In the session's final days, a new bill containing all the original elements of LD 1932 was enacted, now known as LD 2323. It includes other amendments to the previous law, including a provision that allows existing municipal school departments to retain ownership of schools when joining an RSU.

LD 2323 also allows the Education Commissioner to approve an "alternative organizational structure" that meets the overall requirements of the consolidation law, focusing specifically on cost savings. Advocates of the union structure believe it allows them to continue present arrangements, but it is unclear how many districts will be able to meet these requirements, which must include inter-local agreements among all the participating towns. Union 98 on Mount Desert Island, which operates a joint high school and has more centralized functions than most school unions, appears likely to employ an alternative plan to preserve existing local school boards, but it is unique in several respects and receives little state aid. In any case, any group of districts forming an RSU under these terms will be treated as a single entity by the state, including the calculation and payment of its state subsidy.

In all, the session was a disappointment for supporters of school cooperation. During the four and a half months during which the outcome was in doubt, work among the local RPCs slowed to a crawl, and in many cases ceased altogether.

Restarting these discussions will not be easy. Valuable time has been lost. Many RPCs had expected to bring their plans to the voters by June, but only a single plan, involving Hall-Dale, Dresden, Monmouth and Richmond, is likely to be voted on then. Other RPCs are looking toward November elections, and the amended law now permits votes as late as Jan. 30, 2009.

Not only have there been delays, but the original impetus toward consolidation has diminished. With significant turnover of superintendents and elected RPC members, it may in some cases amount to starting over. Despite the changes adopted by the Legislature, some lawmakers and school board members continue to favor repeal of the law, though any initiative to do so could not appear on the ballot until November 2009.

There are several reasons why the process has not gone more smoothly. The emphasis on penalties for non-compliance rather than incentives for cooperation is certainly one of them. Traditional concerns about local control and resistance to change are another factor, and one that must be addressed more effectively than the state has done so far.

A new report by MCA, "A Case for Cooperation II," will be published later this spring, and will detail the changes we believe are necessary to get cooperative efforts back on track. We will be working with like-minded legislators and local officials to see how the RPC process can be supported and nurtured. The emphasis must shift from the institutional and financial arrangements that have dominated the discussion so far to the educational improvements that are MCA's principal focus, and the reason it has been involved from the start.

[Back to Top](#)

HANCOCK COUNTY CHILDREN'S COUNCIL Receives GRANT to Prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome

The Hancock County Children's Council, a program of Downeast Health Services Inc., has received continuation funding from the Maine Children's Trust (\$3,000) to expand a new Shaken Baby Syndrome prevention program in Downeast Maine. This program was developed in collaboration with the Maine Children's Trust and the Maine Community Foundation during the summer of 2007, with training offered to area schools and professionals since then.

Experts agree that awareness of Shaken Baby Syndrome is critical for everyone who cares for an infant, responds to family emergencies, or trains future parents, babysitters and child care providers. Shaking a baby in anger or frustration can lead to permanent disability and even death. This grant will provide supplemental materials to help participants learn to manage frustration in caring for an infant. Children under age 2 are most at risk, as their heads and necks are very weak. Shaking a baby just once could lead to: brain damage, blindness, seizures, behavior disorders, learning disabilities, paralysis, and even death.

The shaken baby simulator is designed with a transparent head that clearly defines the traumatic brain injuries caused by this underreported and often misdiagnosed form of child abuse. When the simulator is shaken, affected sections of the brain light up to illustrate where brain damage has occurred. The new Shaken Baby Syndrome Simulator™ enhances the Children's Council Baby Think It Over® program significantly. In addition to the new shaken baby prevention curriculum, we offer demonstration infants to address the conditions of fetal alcohol syndrome and drug-affected infants. Our science-based program featuring the RealCare® Baby infant simulator is used to teach proper infant care skills to middle-school and high-school students, as well as prospective parents. The realistic head support feature demonstrates the fragility of infants and the computerized infant provides detailed information about the care provided by the student or future parent.

The Maine Children's Trust grant will enable the Children's Council to offer our program directly to the community. We are eager to provide this educational opportunity to social service and civic organizations, medical professionals, and as special educational opportunity to those anticipating a new baby. During this past school year, 142 students in 9 area schools learned how to manage their frustration when dealing with a crying infant. All students were able to identify 3 activities to sooth an infant (after meeting babies basic needs); 3 safe places to place an infant who cannot be soothed by these measures, 3 things they can do for themselves to relax, 3 people to call when stressed, and 3 people they can call if the caregiver needs a break from caring for this crying baby. In addition, 20 professionals working with these students or young families have been trained to use this demonstration simulator. To reserve the Baby Think It Over® materials for your school or community group, please call Candy Eaton, 667-5304 ext. 261.

The mission of the Maine Children's Trust is to prevent the abuse and neglect of Maine's children. A non-profit agency, the Trust is appointed by the Governor to administer federal child abuse grant funds, and holds the State charter for Prevent Child Abuse Maine. The Maine Children's Trust is supported by the CBFRS portion of the federal CAPTA grant, Maine State Income Tax check-off designations and the generosity of corporate and private donations. Visit the Trust's website at www.mechildrenstrust.org or call 207-623-5120 for more information.

The Hancock County Children's Council collaborates with many local and statewide partners to reduce and prevent child abuse. The Council has an extensive collection of books and videotapes on subjects designed to help children and families live healthier lives. The Family Resource Center Library is available to all residents in Hancock County and is located at Downeast Health Services, 52 Christian Ridge Road, Ellsworth, ME. Please call 667-5304 ext. 261, email children@downeasthealth.org or visit our website at www.downeasthealth.org for additional information on parenting classes, child development and family resources available in Hancock County.

No Place Like Home Column by Senator Susan Collins

Nowhere is the human spirit of kindness and generosity shown more vividly than it is through adoption. When families open their hearts and their homes to foster children, they are giving them the love and stability that all children deserve, as well as a solid foundation on which to build a successful life.

Since Congress enacted the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, we have made progress in getting more children living in foster care into safe, permanent homes. In the past ten years, adoptions from foster care have risen from 31,000 in 1997 to 51,000 in 2006. Still, far too many children-129,000 nationally and 834 right here in Maine-remain in the foster care system, waiting to be adopted into a loving home. Many of these children have been victims of abuse or neglect, and are at risk for emotional and other problems. Others have special physical or developmental needs. As a consequence, they require extra special care and attention.

Unfortunately, the financial costs associated with caring for a child with special needs are often prohibitive for many foster families who might otherwise consider adoption. Older children or siblings needing to be placed as a group may also have a difficult time moving from foster care into a permanent, safe, and loving home. While federal subsidies are available to help families with the extra costs associated with special needs children, there are barriers in current law that prevent many potential adoptive families from qualifying for this assistance.

Currently, federal subsidies are available only to families who adopt special needs children whose biological family would have qualified for welfare benefits.

This law must change. The income of a child's biological family should have no bearing on the adoptive family's eligibility for these federal subsidies. After all, the legal rights of the biological parents to have custody of these children have been terminated, in many cases because of abuse or neglect. Subsidies are an important link in securing adoptive homes for special needs children who, without this support, might otherwise not be adopted.

I am a cosponsor of the bipartisan Adoption Equality Act introduced by Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) to correct this situation and ensure that no child adopted from foster care is denied federal support strictly on the basis of the birth family's income. Our bill will encourage more adoptions of special needs children, and it will also provide relief and assistance to families who have already opened their hearts and homes and adopted a child from foster care. The bill will also help to

improve our child welfare system by requiring states to reinvest the foster care dollars they save as a consequence of this legislation back into child abuse and neglect programs.

While adoption is the preferred option for children who cannot return to their birth families, it should not be the only choice. I am therefore also a cosponsor of the Improved Adoption Incentives and Relative Guardianship Support Act introduced by Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA), which will provide federal guardianship support to help children living with relatives leave foster care permanently when returning home and adoption are not viable options. Relative placements are safe, stable, and effective at keeping siblings from being separated, while also providing families with financial support to meet children's special needs.

This legislation will also increase the financial incentives for families to adopt older children. I recently had the good fortune to meet with Gail Neher and her daughter Alexandria who traveled to Washington, D.C. from Cary Plantation in Northern Maine to advocate for these improvements in our federal adoption assistance programs. Alexandria is celebrating two landmark events: graduation from high school and the finalization of her adoption into the Neher family. She told me how important it is for teenagers in foster care to find a safe, loving and permanent home. Alexandria is starting college in the fall, and she told me how important it is for her to know that she has a mother and father who care about her and will help her. Since she finally has a place to call home, she is not going far. The University of Maine at Presque Isle suits her just fine.

[Back to Top](#)

Congress Restores Medicaid Program, Avoids Major Cuts

After months of trying, Congress was finally successful in placing a moratorium on six new Medicaid regulations adopted by the Bush administration. If implemented, they would have resulted in serious reductions in children's programs nationwide. Maine would have been disproportionately affected, with potentially \$200 million in reductions for core services.

After failing to include the moratorium in several other pieces of legislation, the Medicaid rule freeze was attached to a "must sign" supplemental spending measure that includes \$162 billion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through April 1, 2009. The Medicaid moratorium provisions are expected to cost the federal government about \$10 billion annually.

The House of Representatives passed the spending bill by voice vote, the Senate enacted it by a vote of 92-6 on June 26, and the president signed it into law on June 30.

Child advocates were in the forefront in ensuring that congressional negotiators didn't waver on the rule changes. They received strong support from the nation's

governors, health care providers, and many others.

It is difficult to overestimate the harmful effects the Medicaid rules would have had in Maine had Congress failed to act. We owe thanks to the entire delegation for its support of the moratorium, and for the leadership provided in their committees by Senators Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins, and by Representative Tom Allen.

The rules that were placed on hold include support for targeted case management, rehabilitation services, school-based services for low-income children, and support for public hospitals. Maine has made extensive use of these services in recent years, and thus was particularly vulnerable to the proposed cutbacks.

The Maine Children's Alliance has never been opposed to intelligent reforms in federal and state programs. The problem with the Bush administration Medicaid changes is that they were undertaken unilaterally, without the usual opportunity for comment and critiques by state Medicaid officials. They also targeted some services that have proven to be highly effective for improving early childhood development.

Federal courts recognized the irregular way the changes had been implemented by the administration. A District Court judge in California ruled in May that the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) change in hospital payments had been filed only after a previous moratorium took effect.

By postponing these Medicaid rule changes to next April 1, Congress has provided the next administration with an opportunity to evaluate the existing Medicaid program before making any adjustments.

While the Legislature did make some compensatory provisions in the supplemental budget passed in April, they would clearly have been inadequate if the full Medicaid cuts had gone ahead as scheduled.

The latest federal Medicaid proposals take place against a backdrop of steadily diminishing federal support for children's programs. An Urban Institute study called "Kids Share 2008" reveals that children's programs amount to a steadily smaller portion of federal domestic spending, a trend that will accelerate in future budgets unless spending priorities are changed. In Maine, as throughout the nation, there are thousands of children eligible for federal programs for whom no funding is available.

As we make our plans for next year, we can breathe a sigh of relief that we have managed to avert a federal budget catastrophe. But maintaining children's place at the table so they can benefit from vital public services will remain a major challenge.

[Back to Top](#)

2008 Maine Children's Alliance KIDS COUNT Data Book User Survey Is Now Online

The 2008 Maine KIDS COUNT Data Book User Survey has been updated to allow for easier access and submission. This year's survey can be found [here](#) on the 2008 Maine KIDS COUNT Data Book web page.

The survey is an easy to use document that can be filled in and submitted online by opening the document, filling in the interactive fields, and clicking the "Submit by E-mail" button.

Your comments on this brief survey help us ensure that our annual KIDS COUNT Data Book is as useful to you as we can possibly make it.

Thank you!

[Back to Top](#)

Better Baby Policy and Care at Zero to Three

"It's not TV, it's birth control" is how NBC promotes its new reality series "Baby Borrowers." The show was launched on national television on June 25th as an "intriguing new social experiment that asks five diverse teenage couples to fast-track to adulthood by setting up a home, getting a job and becoming caring parents." Unfortunately, the NBC series exploits very young children in the pursuit of entertainment.

The babies and toddlers participating in this series will be separated from their parents and caregivers for three days. Unfamiliar teenagers will take care of them during this time. This setup can be very harmful for the babies and toddlers involved. For the past 80 years, many studies have shown unequivocally that babies and toddlers suffer when they are exposed to this kind of prolonged separation from family and left with people that they do not know or love. As all parents know, babies and toddlers are very distressed by separation. They cry, cling, and search for their parents. The longer the separation, the more upset they become. Some children are unable to sleep and refuse to eat. The responses routinely last long past the child's reunion with the parent. Prolonged separations heighten young children's separation anxiety and damage their trust that their parents will be available to protect and care for them. Children can become angry and rejecting of their parents after being reunited with them, damaging the fabric of the child-parent relationship.

These findings have become the basis for a new science of early childhood. A robust body of early childhood development and brain research clearly confirms the critical nature of early development. It is a time when young children form attachments with parents and caregivers, develop security and a sense of self,

and learn what to expect from the world around them. Studies show that babies and toddlers need to feel safe and secure in order to form a positive sense of self, to form healthy relationships, and to feel confident to explore their world. This sense of security is dependent on the availability and stability of their trusted primary caregivers. Being separated for a three-day period from a parent or trusted, familiar adult, and being thrust into the care of a total stranger who has no experience with the child-how he or she is comforted, likes to be fed, held, etc.-and who has no experience caring for young children at all, can be very stressful for the child.

As a "safeguard," NBC has hired a nanny to be nearby in case there are concerns. However the nanny is no more familiar to that child than the two strangers who will be caring for him for three days. The nanny does not know him or what his signals mean-such as what he needs when he cries out in the middle of the night, or how he shows he is hungry, tired, or is overwhelmed and needs a break from play. Moreover, even though the parents of these young children are watching via closed-circuit television, the babies are not aware of that and have no way of knowing how long the parents will be gone.

Legitimate social experiments are not conducted on national television or on reality shows. "Baby Borrowers" may have a catchy theme, but it exploits young children with potential harmful consequences. This is no social experiment. It is an extremely misguided endeavor that puts at risk our most vulnerable citizens, young children who need our love and protection.

[Back to Top](#)

HANCOCK COUNTY CHILDREN'S COUNCIL seeking Relatives as Parents for NEW SUPPORT Program

The Hancock County Children's Council, a program of Downeast Health Services Inc., is developing a new partnership with *Maine Kids-Kin* to support families who are raising their relatives' children in Hancock County. Many families have recently undertaken the unexpected responsibility of caring for a relative's child or children.

We propose to establish a new "Relatives as Parents" facilitated support group conveniently located in Hancock County. Participants will learn how to work towards creating environments that help increase protective factors, such as developing community connections, improving access to resources, and reducing the social isolation by sharing common problems. If you might be interested in participating in this new group, please contact Candy Eaton at 667-5304 ext. 261. Locations, dates and times will be determined by the participants.

Raising children can be a wonderful, satisfying and enjoyable experience. However, raising children is not an easy experience under any circumstance. Usually when a child comes to live with a relative, it is because there has been some hardship within the family. What begins as a temporary stay often turns

into a permanent arrangement.

Nationally, more than 3,000,000 children live in the homes of relatives. In Maine, over 11,000 children with their grandparents, aunts, uncles, or with another relative who are not their parents. Even so, many relatives feel they are in this alone. These relatives' lives are complicated, yet they are experienced parents and bring history and past lessons to a new relationship with their relatives' children. Throughout Hancock County, there are others who share many similar experiences and feelings.

Maine Kids-Kin assists extended family members who are stepping in to care for a relative's child(ren). The family member may be a grandparent, aunt, uncle, sibling, cousin or good friend of the family. The children may be in the relative's care, or the relatives may be working towards that goal. Grandfamilies is a term for families headed by an extended family member: grandparent, aunt, uncle or other relative. Maine Kids-Kin is formerly known as Family Connections and is a program of Families And Children Together for Maine's Grandfamilies. FMI, see their website at www.kinshipconnections.org.

Save the Date: Maine Summit for Grandfamilies: The Law, Kinship and Children will be held on Friday, September 26, 2008, 8:30am-3:30pm at the University of Maine in Augusta. This 3rd Maine Summit for Grandfamilies focuses on relatives stepping into raise the children. Participants will learn about current legal options for grandfamilies, their experiences in Maine Courts, and ways to improve the process for Maine's children. The summit will also feature a keynote address by Gerard Wallace, Esq., director of the Grandparent Support Project of the Government Law Center at Albany Law School. Mr. Wallace has been speaking nationwide and educating grandfamilies, lawyers and others professionals about the lack of legal foundation for a family's right to care for their children and how this impacts changes in state policies and laws. Contact Noreen at 1-866-298-0896 (toll-free) for more information on this conference.

The Hancock County Children's Council collaborates with many local partners to strengthen Maine's families. We will be offering parent education classes this fall in collaboration with area Adult and Community Education programs. The Council has an extensive collection of books and videotapes on subjects designed to help children and families live healthier lives. The Family Resource Center Library is available to all residents in Hancock County and is located at Downeast Health Services, 52 Christian Ridge Road, Ellsworth, ME. Please call 667-5304 ext. 261, email children@downeasthealth.org or visit our website at www.downeasthealth.org for additional information on parenting classes, child development and family resources available in Hancock County.

[Back to Top](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - July 22, 2008

Contact:

David Connerty-Marin, 207-624-6880/831-3313
Susan Smith, 207-624-6775

MEAs Show Continued Improvement

Reading proficiency up 5 percent; math up 4 percent

AUGUSTA - Students in grades 3 through 8 are doing better in mathematics and reading than they were two years ago, according to the latest results of the Maine Educational Assessment, or MEA. In reading, 5 percent more students met or exceeded state standards in 2008 (65 percent) as compared to 2006 (60 percent). In mathematics, 56 percent of students met or exceeded the standards in 2008, compared to 52 percent in 2006, for a 4 percent increase.

"The results are very encouraging," said Education Commissioner Susan A. Gendron. "After several years of relatively flat achievement scores, we are beginning to see a positive trend."

Gendron said the data also provide vital information to schools, school systems, and the state Department of Education. While MEAs have been in use since the 1980s, a new "trend line" was established in 2006 because of a change from assessing grade-span performance expectations to assessing grade-level performance expectations at grades 3 through 8, as required by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. That meant comparisons to previous years were not possible.

"Schools now have three years of grade-level data for grades 3 through 8 to inform the development of their programs over time," Gendron said. She noted that the tests serve multiple purposes, providing important data to help inform school programs, as well as an additional measure to consider when assessing individual student's progress toward meeting the expectations of the Maine *Learning Results*.

Not all of the news was good. Although not required under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, Maine assesses writing statewide at grades 5 and 8. Grade 5 writing scores dropped significantly since 2006 - the number of students meeting or exceeding the standards dropped by 14 percent. The Department is reviewing the results from this writing prompt closely.

In addition, the Department was unable to use this year's grade 8 writing results, which also consisted of scores from only one writing prompt. The scores from the administration of the writing prompt were significantly different from scores obtained during a pilot test of the writing prompt. There are many possible reasons for the inconsistent scores, but none that can be confirmed decisively.

"The MEAs are not about trying to show how well we are doing," Gendron said. "They are a tool to help us assess *how* we are doing, for better or worse. We are working to assess why the results were inconsistent and how we can adjust the assessment in the future so that we can use it yearly to assess progress in writing."

The percentage of students meeting or exceeding science standards in grades 4 and 8, the two grades tested in Maine, has remained unchanged for the last three years. Next year science testing will be in grades 5 and 8 to align with the 2007 *Maine Learning Results* standards.

Across all grades, a greater percentage of females than males met or exceeded the standards in reading and in writing at grade 5. This is consistent with past performance and national trends. There continued to be no significant differences in achievement by gender in mathematics or in science and technology.

More than 99 percent of all publicly-funded students in Maine participated in the MEAs, well above the 95 percent federal requirement. The 99 percent includes both the general administration and the administration of alternate assessments for students with severe disabilities, as required by NCLB and other federal laws.

Originally passed in 1997, the *Maine Learning Results* standards are a set of indicators, or "expectations," of what students should know and be able to do at the end of a grade span or a particular grade level. To meet the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, which requires assessments at all grade levels from 3 through 8 and in high school, Maine first developed "grade level expectations" in reading and mathematics in 2006, based on the grade span performance expectations in the 1997 *Maine Learning Results*. Maine then began administering the MEA to grade levels 3 through 8 to measure these grade level expectations. Before 2006, MEAs were administered in grades 4, 8, and 11 only.

In 2007, the review of Maine's *Learning Results* standards was completed, and the Legislature adopted that portion of the *Learning Results* known as the accountability standards. These accountability standards are designated for standardized state-wide assessment for federal purposes and will be assessed on the MEA starting in 2009.

A summary of MEA results, including school-level scores, can be viewed at the Maine Department of Education website at:
<http://www.maine.gov/education/mea/edmea.htm>.

[Back to Top](#)

Interagency Committee on Disability Research

The Interagency Committee on Disability Research is asking for comments suggesting specific ways to improve future disability and rehabilitation research to benefit individuals with disabilities.

The hearings are on August 5 and August 13 in Arlington, VA. Participation is encouraged using the phone, your computer, or pen.

Here is the link to the public comment process:

<http://www.icdr.us/stakeholders/>

[Back to Top](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - June 26, 2008

Contact: Ellen Holmes, 207-660-5589

New Report Shows National Teacher Certification Improves Student Achievement

Gendron hails results confirming link

AUGUSTA - Maine Education Commissioner Susan A. Gendron hailed the results of a recent report showing the positive impact that National Board certified teachers have on student achievement.

According to the report released in early June by the National Research Council of the National Academies, National Board certification, as well as national teaching standards, have taken the culture of teaching to a higher level. The report recognizes the potential of national certification to bring benefits to more schools and concludes that the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards' work needs strong support and coordination by states, districts and schools as well as higher education and other non-governmental groups.

The report, *Assessing Accomplished Teaching: Advanced-Level Certification Programs*, was produced by the Council following a request by Congress to develop a framework for evaluating programs that offer advanced-level certification to teachers. The Council began work on the report in 2005 and spent the next 30 months gathering and evaluating information for the final document.

With 8,500 new nationally certified teachers last year, there are nearly 64,000 nationally certified teachers in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Maine has 119 nationally certified teachers, including 16 new ones last year. Maine ranked fifth highest in the nation for the percentage growth in new National Board certified teachers last year.

"National Board certification is an extremely rigorous application process that only the highest quality teachers can achieve," Commissioner Gendron said. "We have heard from teachers that the process - with its self-assessment, portfolio development and other intensive preparation - is itself a highly valuable

professional development experience. It is not surprising to me that the teachers who undergo this intensive work have a positive effect on student achievement.”

She added, “There is wide agreement among researchers that this certification is good for the climate of schools, good for promoting the profession, and that achievement on most measures is higher among students of these teachers.”

National Board certification is a voluntary assessment program designed to recognize and reward great teachers - and make them better. While state licensing systems set basic requirements to teach in each state, National Board certified teachers have successfully demonstrated advanced teaching knowledge, skills and practices. Certification is achieved through a rigorous, performance-based assessment that typically takes one to three years to complete.

As part of the process, teachers build a portfolio that includes student work samples, assignments, videotapes and a thorough analysis of their classroom teaching. In addition, teachers are assessed on their knowledge of the subjects they teach.

Regarded as some of the most accomplished teachers in the nation, they are routinely in the ranks of state teachers of the year, and four of the last eight National Teachers of the Year have been National Board certified. These accomplished teachers make up about two percent of the nation’s teaching force.

Ellen Holmes, a distinguished educator on loan to the Department from the Maine Education Association, said the Department provides a \$1,250 subsidy that covers half the candidate fee to many applicants. Some school districts provide part or all of the remainder; some candidates pay the difference. In 2006, Gov. John Baldacci signed into law a provision for an annual \$3,000 salary supplement for nationally certified teachers.

Holmes, herself a nationally certified teacher, helped develop the support program and is the candidate support administrator for the program in Maine.

The report found that students taught by nationally certified teachers make higher gains on achievement tests than those taught by teachers who have not applied and those who did not achieve certification. The findings are based on an analysis of the studies that the Council says meet standards of sound scientific research, including new analyses commissioned by the Council. According to the report, the “evidence is clear that National Board certification distinguishes more effective teachers from less effective teachers with respect to student achievement.” The Council acknowledged research showing that National Board Certification has a positive impact on teacher retention and, based on its analyses, noted that nationally certified teachers are likely to stay in teaching longer than other teachers.

"The NRC further affirms what we have long believed and seen to be true - National Board certified teachers raise student achievement and are committed to improving their schools," said Joseph A. Aguerrebere, NBPTS president and CEO. "The NRC acknowledges that National Board Certification, which was established to set high standards for teaching and measure teachers against those standards, is having a positive effect. This is news to celebrate."

For more information about the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and National Board Certification, visit the NBPTS Web site at www.nbpts.org.

[Back to Top](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - July 11, 2008

Contact: David Connerty-Marin, 207-624-6880/207-831-3313

Commissioner Approves Reorganization Plan

Belfast and Searsport area schools to combine

AUGUSTA - The Belfast and Searsport area schools are the latest to receive state approval to reorganize their school districts into one. Education Commissioner Susan A. Gendron sent notice to SAD 34 (Belfast) and SAD 56 (Searsport) this week that she had approved the plan. The school districts are expected to ask voters to approve the plan at referendum on Nov. 4.

"Many people put in many hours to come up with a plan that will best meet the needs of students in the two school systems," Gendron said. "I commend them for their excellent work."

Superintendent Bruce Mailloux of SAD 34 said the two districts found each had strengths to share with each other. And he praised the approach taken by the two school districts.

"I was impressed by the cooperation and the compromising and the willingness to work together," Mailloux said. "We had a very good working group." He said the groups started by asking "is there really a benefit" and "what's in the best interest of the kids in the area."

The combined units will have approximately 2,600 students.

The two districts were assisted in the process by Ray Freve, a facilitator provided by the Department of Education, who was asked to serve as chair of the reorganization planning committee for the districts. Freve was recently hired by SAD 56 to serve as part-time interim superintendent for the coming year until June 30, 2009. If approved by the voters, the new regional school unit will become operational on July 1, 2009.

The reorganization plan is the sixth one approved by Commissioner Gendron, in addition to the 32 alternative plans also approved. The School Administrative Reorganization Law passed in 2007 and amended in 2008 calls for reducing the number of school units in Maine from 290 to no more than 80. Department officials say they believe the state is still on target to make that number.

A listing of all reorganization and alternative plans approved by the Commissioner, as well as extensive information about the reorganization law and implementation, can be found online at: www.maine.gov/education/reorg.

[Back to Top](#)

MACS NEWSLETTER -- JULY 2008

1. Education Law Conference, July 30, Public Charter School sessions:

The EdLaw conference takes place at USM in Portland. On Wednesday, July 30, there will be two discussions on public charter schools. At 10:45 am, Joshua Mayes of Georgia will give an UPDATE on charter schools nationally, and MACS will host a LUNCHEON ROUNDTABLE on public charter schools from 12:15 to 1:15 pm. To attend the luncheon, please reserve a place with MACS, macs@mainecharterschools.org. To attend the conference for one or more days, please see the details and register at www.edlaw.org. Scholarships for Maine educators and parents are available; see information at edlaw.org.

2. Traditional School Choice Programs in Maine under Threat

School district consolidation planning teams are working to reduce or eliminate Maine's traditional school choice programs in several districts. Former State Representative Steve Bowen, now education policy analyst with the Maine Heritage Policy Center, will make a presentation on these issues on Thursday, July 31st, 12 - 1:30 pm, at the Cumberland Club, 116 High St, Portland. To reserve a place, please call 321-2550 or email hnoyes@mainepolicy.org by July 28. Two new websites focus on school choice issues in Maine: <http://schoolchoice.gather.com> and <http://maineschoolchoice.ning.com>. Please see the MACS website for several articles on the importance of public school choice for improving education in Maine.

3. National Charter School Conference

A record 3,200 public charter school teachers, administrators, policymakers and other supporters of the movement gathered in New Orleans in June under the conference theme, "Still We Rise: Achieving Academic Excellence at Scale." Along with addresses from Geoffrey Canada, Governor Bobby Jindal, Senator Mary Landrieu, Paul Pastorek and many others, the conference featured over

100 breakout sessions, and 50 peer-to-peer roundtable discussions. The Ninth Annual National Charter Schools Conference will be held in Washington DC June 20-23, 2009. FMI, see www.publiccharters.org.

4. Expanding Public School Choice in Maine

On June 22, MACS held a workshop to consider the challenges of expanding public school choice and passing enabling legislation for public charter schools in Maine. We discussed the importance of creating bi-partisan support, and the positive aspects of public chartered schools that should appeal to a broad spectrum of parents and educators in Maine.

There are Democratic candidates willing to champion legislation for public charter schools next term, along with new Republican supporters. Presidential candidate Barack Obama has recently reiterated his support for public charter schools, and this should encourage progressive Democrats to join a movement that provides education options for families of all income levels and for children at-risk of education failure.

This year's campaign is benefitting from new and continuing supporters. In addition to classic grassroots organizing, we need individuals to be liaisons to groups interested in programs with specific themes, such as arts, technology, agriculture, environmental studies, foreign languages, vocational and career approaches, alternative education, etc. Please let us know if you belong to such a group and might be willing to provide information to other members. We are also looking for people to help devise a public information strategy that focuses on parents and educators. If you can help, please contact Roger Brainerd, macs@mainecharterschools.org.

[Back to Top](#)

This information is being shared with you by Maine's Federation of Families, The G.E.A.R. Parent Network

Please share with others

News on Capitol Hill This Week

A Package Bill

On Monday July 21st, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) introduced the Advancing America's Priorities Act (S. 3294), a package of bills that had strong bipartisan support in the House but have not moved in the Senate because a few Republicans, led by Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK), have been blocking them. By choosing bills that emphasize protecting children, the disabled, and law enforcement, and reintroducing them as a package, Reid hopes it will be more

difficult for Republicans, including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY), to continue supporting Coburn.

Included in the package are: the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Reauthorization and Improvement Act (S. 2304/HR 3992), the Runaway and Homeless Youth Protection Act (S. 2982/HR 5524), and the Drug Endangered Kids Children (HR 1199/S. 1210). A summary of these bills is below. Debate on the package bill could happen as early as this Friday, July 25th.

Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Reauthorization and Improvement Act: Sponsored by Sen. Pete Domenici (R-NM), this bill recognizes the reality that a disproportionate number of people with mental illness are incarcerated-16% of the prison and jail population, and most of them have a serious mental illness. This is compared to the general population, where only 6% of Americans suffer from a serious mental illness. One of the provisions of the bill gives grant priority to programs that not only fund treatment services for adults and juveniles during their time in jail/prison, but also during transition and reentry into society. The bill also provides for training programs for law enforcement personnel to identify and respond appropriately to the unique needs of people with mental illness.

Runaway and Homeless Youth Protection Act: Sponsored by Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT), This bill amends the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA). A federally-funded evaluation found that RHYA programs reduced drop-out rates, doubled school-attendance, increased college attendance, increased employment rates, reduced parental physical abuse, and improved family relationships. However, due to lack of resources, in 2003 the Basic Center Program had to turn away 4,000 youth, and the Transitional Living Program had to turn away 40% of youth who went into the program. The amendments to this act include increasing funding for the Basic Center Program, and extending the number of days a youth may stay in the Transitional Living Program from 540 days to 635.

Drug Endangered Kids Act: Sponsored by Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), this bill extends the federal grant program for Drug Endangered Children (DEC), which are programs aimed at protecting children whose parents are involved in the production of illegal substances. The Drug Enforcement Administration reported that between 2000 and 2004, 15,000 children were found at methamphetamine labs. To protect these children, DEC programs coordinate efforts among law enforcement, medical services, and child welfare workers, and aid in their transition to safe residential environments.

Juvenile Justice

Set to be introduced this Friday by Rep. Hilda Solis (D-32nd/CA) is the Reinstatement of Enrollment for Medicaid Eligibility for Disadvantaged Youth (REMEDY) Act, which would ensure that Medicaid and SCHIP benefits were

continued for youth transitioning from the juvenile justice system. Under current policy, when youth enter the juvenile justice system, their Medicaid and SCHIP coverage is terminated, despite recommendations from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid to suspend coverage instead. Each year approximately 100,000 youth leave the juvenile justice system, and those under publically funded health coverage must re-enroll for their insurance. This process can last weeks or months, and in the mean time, youth cannot get the mental health services that are so critical when they are released from the system.

Education

To address the severe shortage of mental health professionals in schools, Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) will soon introduce the Increased Student Achievement through Increased Student Support Act (ISAISS). It builds on the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program (ESSCP), the only federal program that provides grants for schools to hire psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors, and social workers. While ESSCP prioritizes schools with the greatest need, ISAISS goes a step further by funding initiatives to connect graduate students in mental health fields with low-income communities. These partnerships between universities and school districts will not only funnel more mental health professionals into these under-served schools, but also improve school conditions to retain more teachers.

[Back to Top](#)

DO YOU HAVE A CHILD RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES?

THE MAINE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL WANTS YOUR INPUT ABOUT ACCESS TO INFORMATION, TRAINING AND ADVOCACY SERVICES RELATED TO SPECIAL EDUCATION.

The Maine State Legislature wants to know if information, training and advocacy resources are readily available to families, what is working well and what gaps may exist.

MDDC has made the commitment to collect as much information as possible from families around the state about their experiences accessing these services. All comments and recommendations received will be included in a report to the Legislature in January, 2009.

**THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU TO PROVIDE INPUT TO THE
LEGISLATURE ABOUT WHAT IS WORKING AND WHAT CHANGES ARE
NEEDED IN
INFORMATION, TRAINING AND ADVOCACY SERVICES IN MAINE!**

WE'LL PROVIDE THE COOKIES & BROWNIES!

PLEASE COME and PROVIDE US WITH YOUR INPUT.

Sponsored by the Maine Developmental Disabilities Council
An independent, federally-funded agency that engages in advocacy, capacity building, and systemic change activities

note: all meetings will be 5 pm to 7 pm.

Meeting Dates and Locations:

DATE	LOCATION
THURSDAY, JULY 31ST	<u>FARMINGTON</u> : Franklin Memorial Hospital 1 Hospital Drive, Chisholm Room
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6th	<u>RUMFORD</u> : Tri-County Mental Health 242 Penobscot St
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25th	<u>BANGOR</u> : WINGS Office 900 Hammond St.
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30th	<u>SANFORD</u> : Southern ME Parent Awareness 886 Maine St, Suite 303
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 2nd	<u>LEWISTON</u> : THRIVE Office 124 Canal St
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14th	<u>PRESQUE ISLE</u> : Career Center 66 Spruce St
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16th	<u>SOUTH PORTLAND</u> : Youth Alternatives 50 Lydia Lane
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21th	<u>MACHIAS</u> : Sunrise Opportunities 66 Hadley Lake Rd, Kay Parker Building,
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23rd	<u>AUGUSTA</u> : Maine Developmental Disabilities Council 225 Western Ave
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30th	<u>DOVER/FOXCROFT</u> : Mayo Regional Hospital 897 West Maine St.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 5th	<u>ROCKLAND:</u> Sweetser 17 Walnut St.
----------------------------	--

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! IF YOU CANNOT ATTEND ONE OF THESE MEETINGS BUT WOULD STILL LIKE TO PROVIDE COMMENTS, YOU MAY DO SO ON OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.MAINEDDC.ORG OR YOU CAN MAIL YOUR COMMENTS TO: MDDC, 139 STATE HOUSE STATION, AUGUSTA, ME, 04333.

For More Information, Contact KATHLEEN YOUNG, MDDC Public Information Specialist, at 1-800-244-3990 or (207) 287-4216, or via email at Kyoung@maineddc.org

VISIT THE MDDC WEBSITE AT WWW.MAINEDDC.ORG

[Back to Top](#)

Request for information from National Federation of Family members and friends

Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA)

BACKGROUND: The United States Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) is federal legislation passed to address the problem of "foster care drift," when children enter foster care and live in a state of uncertainty, neither returned to their families or given another stable, long-term home. Two main purposes are to:

- Make safety the top concern when making service and placement decisions;
- Achieve permanency in a timely manner through adoption or reunification of children with their birth parents.

ASFA sets a timeline to achieve permanency (either return children to their birth parents, or release them for adoption) within 12 months of entering foster care. ASFA also identifies circumstances when states are not required to make "reasonable efforts" (provide services and supports to parents) to keep children with their parents. These circumstances include abandonment, torture, chronic abuse, murder or manslaughter of another child of the parent, along with other negative circumstances. ASFA allows states to define other "aggravated circumstances" where reasonable efforts are not required. Some states have identified the mental illness of a parent as grounds for termination of parental rights more quickly than 12 months, and to do so without providing services and supports to parents.

REQUEST: Barbara Friesen of the Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children's Mental Health is working with an expert writing team to

prepare a paper on the implementation of ASFA, focusing on families where a parent has a mental illness. So far we have heard about progress (e.g., Idaho has passed legislation that mandates services and supports for parents with disabilities). We have also learned about instances where mothers with a mental illness lost custody of their newborn babies ONLY because of their diagnoses.

We are inviting responses from parents with mental illness whose children have been placed in foster care. We want to hear about positive experiences, as well as problems. We also want to hear from local and statewide family organizations that have information about ASFA-related issues.

Please send e-mail or mail:

Barbara J. Friesen (friesenb@pdx.edu)
RTC/RRI
Portland State University
P.O. Box 751
Portland, OR 97207-0751
[503-725-4166]

[Back to Top](#)

University of Texas Health Science Center Sleep Study Survey

We would like to invite all caregivers in this group to take a survey about their child's sleep behavior. This survey is a part of a research study about the sleep habits of children, and is conducted at and approved by the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston.

Although articles about the importance of sleep are appearing all over the media, surprisingly, little is known about the typical sleep habits of children since parents are usually not questioned about their child's sleep when there is a problem. This survey will help us better understand typical sleep behavior in children. This information will be invaluable in helping us diagnose sleep disorders in children and guide parents in regards to normal childhood sleep behavior.

The survey consists of questions pertaining to your child's sleep habits and previous medical history. It takes 20 to 30 minutes to take the online survey. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary.

To reach the survey, click on the link below:

<http://www.surveymethods.com/EndUser.aspx?B195F9E1B2F3EDE3>

(If clicking on the link does not work, copy and paste the whole link text into your web browser.)

If you would rather not do an online survey, we can also send a printable version, which can be filled out by hand and mailed back to us.

All information that you give in the survey will be kept confidential and used only for research purposes. No responses that can be used to identify you or your child will be collected. Because the survey is online, we have taken extra precautions to ensure that nothing from the survey can be traced back to you or to your computer.

If you have any questions about the research protocol or you would like to request a copy of the paper questionnaire, please feel free to contact us.

Thank you,

Laura deSouza

Research Assistant
UTHSC-H
p. 713-500-3236
e. laura.desouza@uth.tmc.edu

Purpose

Recent research has demonstrated that sleep disturbance in childhood is associated with behavioral disturbances, including symptoms of poor attention, school performance and conduct. Both sleep disturbance and symptoms of poor attention, concentration, school performance and conduct are not uncommonly seen in children presenting to pediatric neurology clinics. Disturbances in sleep are known to exacerbate many neurological and developmental disorders, especially seizures, headaches and autism.

About 11% of children visiting a primary pediatric clinic have been found to have sleep disordered breathing [1]. When children with neurological complaints were examined, the incidence rose to 29%. If other sleep disorders, such as restless leg syndrome, had also been included, the incidence of sleep disruption in these children would likely have been even higher. It has become increasingly recognized that disturbances in sleep are associated with behavioral and emotional regulation problems [2,3]. Evidence also suggests that executive function is disrupted in children with sleep disturbance [1]. Given that regulation of behavior requires executive control, executive dysfunction may be the common culprit that is at the root cause of the aforementioned behavioral symptoms.

Behaviors found to be associated with sleep disturbance, such as poor attention, school performance and conduct are also very common in children presenting to a neurology clinic. Despite the fact that sleep disturbance is well know to exacerbate many neurological and developmental disorders, such as seizures, headaches and autism, a sleep history is not always obtained. Obtaining such information in a

comprehensive manner can help identify children early in the course of medical care, thereby making the resolution of such problems part of initial management.

Since sleep disturbance may result in behavioral problems and, indeed exacerbate neurological and developmental problems, identification and treatment of sleep disorders may be important early in the course of management of childhood disorders. Unfortunately few studies have taken a close look at the prevalence of symptoms of sleep abnormalities in normal children. Without such normative information it is difficult to know the significance of sleep symptoms in abnormal populations.

In this study we aim to elicit important information about the frequency of abnormal sleep behavior in normal children and in children with medical and developmental disorders. We have developed a comprehensive sleep survey that includes the information from all other childhood sleep surveys and can be accessed on-line. We will ask parents to complete this on-line survey anonymously so that no identifying information is recorded.

Procedures

Parents will be given the web address of the sleep survey hosted on the Survey Methods website (<http://www.surveymethods.com/>). An outline of the survey is attached. Essentially the parent completes approximately 40 on-line screens of questions. Some of the screens may have many questions, while some may have only one question. The survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. The questions include the child's demographics, medical history and questions regarding bed time routine, behavior observed during sleep, night time awakening, waking behavior and symptoms of sleepiness during the day. We will ask local and national parent support groups to advertise our survey in their publications or websites. We will also ask patients in the pediatric clinics to volunteer to fill out the survey.

Course of Study

This project may require up to two years gathering data from the targeted 1000 respondents.

Enrollment

The expected sample size is approximately 1000 completed surveys.

Recruitment

We will ask local and national parent support groups to advertise our survey in their publications or websites. We will also ask patients in the pediatric clinics to volunteer to fill out the survey.

Known Risks

The procedures are non invasive and do not include medications or treatments. There are no risks or discomfort associated with answering the survey. If the

parents or patient become uncomfortable answering questions, they can discontinue answering the survey.

Data Safety Monitoring

All procedures are non invasive. The data is collected anonymously.

Protection against Risk:

There are no risks..

IND #

Not applicable

Proposed Funding Source

Startup funds to Dr. Richard E. Frye, M.D., Ph.D., F.A.A.P.

Data Analysis

The prevalence of sleep symptoms across age and gender groups as well as for different medical or developmental diagnoses will be calculated and compared. A normative database will be developed from this data.

References

1. Archbold, K.H., et al., Symptoms of sleep disturbances among children at two general pediatric clinics. *J Pediatr*, 2002. 140(1): p. 97-102.
2. Tran, K.D., et al., Child behavior and quality of life in pediatric obstructive sleep apnea. *Arch Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg*, 2005. 131(1): p. 52-7.
3. Beebe, D.W., et al., Neuropsychological effects of pediatric obstructive sleep apnea. *J Int Neuropsychol Soc*, 2004. 10(7): p. 962-75.

[Back to Top](#)

Thanks,
Laura Soule
Executive Assistant
Learning Disabilities Assoc. of Maine (LDA of ME)
PO Box 67
Oakland, ME 04963
Phone: 1.877.208.4059 or 207.465.7700
Fax: 207.465.4844
Web Site: <http://www.ldame.org>

Attachments

MISSION STATEMENT

The Learning Disabilities Association of Maine is dedicated to assisting individuals with learning and attention disabilities through support, education, and advocacy (SEA).