

WESP-DHH 2015-2016 Year in Review

We had such a busy and exciting year! As Interim Director, I am so proud to let you know about some of our accomplishments.

Providing comprehensive education and support services to all Wisconsin deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children has continued as the driving force for both WESP-DHH Outreach and Wisconsin School for the Deaf staff this year. The evidence is clear when considering the events and accomplishments of students, parents, and staff throughout the 2015-2016 school year!

The WESP-DHH Outreach program has provided educational consultation services to Wisconsin school districts and parents regarding the educational needs of over 45 deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind students this year. The consultation process has been redesigned to include action planning support as well as observation and evaluation summaries.

The Outreach team continues their planning for what promises to be an outstanding Professional and Family Conference this coming November. Ongoing Program Support Teachers regional meetings, Summer Institute, and the Partners in Listening Seminar provided support to parents and professionals from around the state. The Outreach team has also taken on the scheduling and proctoring of EIPA (Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment) throughout Wisconsin. Wisconsin parents have continued to be supported via the Outreach Deaf Mentor Project, Wisconsin Parent Guide Program (formerly Guide by Your Side), and the Role Model Infusion Program.

The Wisconsin School for the Deaf is proud of the nine seniors who graduated this year! Student numbers are showing an increase again causing our preschool program to split into morning and afternoon programs to accommodate all the new students! Nine new students joined WSD since last January and we already have an additional nine new students to replace our graduates at the start of next school year.

WSD continues to see growth in student achievement as evidenced in the steadily increasing ACT test scores for WSD students. Teachers focused their instruction to support advanced student learning outcomes and updated curriculum to promote rigor and challenge in all content areas. More online courses were provided this year and accessed by ten deaf and hard of hearing students throughout Wisconsin. The transition programming at WSD was an ongoing focus. Transition activities were carried through into the residential hall for application of learning and transition experiences. The Student Transition and Employment Program was aligned to the Wisconsin College and Career Ready initiative. The Walworth County Transition Fair was hosted at WSD this year for special education students from throughout the county.

Students participated in many educational, athletic, and extracurricular activities this year. Proudly, the WSD Battle of the Books Buff Team won 4th place in the national competition this year. The Marie Jean Philip competitions in ASL poetry, ASL storytelling and the Deaf art contest were well represented by WSD students. WSD's track and field team advanced to WIAA sectionals. WSD also hosted the GPSD tournaments this year. This was a huge endeavor that provided awesome athletic and social opportunities for students. Members of the Jr. NAD also attended the Deaf Legislative Day in Madison, Wisconsin, providing them with the Wisconsin Deaf perspective and knowledge about government.

The administrative team and staff worked hard to manage the budget during the transition to a new State financial program. Through it all, the new WSD playground installation has begun, football helmets were purchased, the literacy studio was constructed, and students were able to travel for athletic competitions in other states. Additionally, several new software programs such as IEP Anywhere and the Brightarrow emergency contact system were obtained.

Staff were bombarded this year learning numerous new software programs. They survived the seamless transition to Google Apps for Education, the new STAR time reporting and STAR finance systems, new IEP software, and new testing protocols. They have proven that WSD staff members are committed lifetime learners and great role models for our students.

WSD continues to provide a language rich educational environment where students directly communicate with their peers and staff using American Sign Language!

Deaf adult role models at WSD work directly with students throughout the campus. Deaf staff include 69% of teachers, 62% of educational assistants, and 60% of child care counselors. In addition, prominent Deaf adults, such as Howard Rosenblum from NAD have visited with WSD students. Both Outreach and WSD are obtaining video footage of parents and alumni testimonials for posting on the WESP-DHH websites.

Health and wellness continue to be promoted by the WSD Health Center staff. This year a successful 5K Color Run was sponsored as well as the Field Trip to Wellness program. Again this year, the HC staff worked with students in community service sponsoring a blood drive.

Technology is a main focus every year. Emergency alert systems have been investigated, the literacy studio has been completed, and the new GAFE platform has been implemented.

Progress with meeting long range plans has also occurred this year. The CEASD accreditation process has been initiated and the support of WESP-DHH staff, students, parents, and the Deaf community will be needed in this process.

The list of accomplishments, tasks, hard work, and opportunities experienced during the 2015-2016 school year is extensive and this "Year in Review" only highlights a few.

As WESP-DHH Outreach and WSD continue to provide the very best services for Wisconsin's deaf and hard of hearing children, some of our plans for the 2016-2017 school year include:

- Higher performance and student achievement for Wisconsin Deaf and Hard of Hearing students
- CEASD accreditation continued
- Parent and Deaf community involvement in WESP-DHH programs and initiatives
- WESP-DHH Summer Camps – Driver's Education, Literacy, and Transition themes
- Deafblind programming
- Website additions – Parent and Alumni Testimonials
- Fiscal responsibility
- Comprehensive facilities emergency alert system

Lots to look forward to, indeed!