

Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives



Joanne Haley Sullivan,
Executive Director

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Media Contact: Alia Spring
Phone: 617-993-0003
Email: alia@jgpr.net

MOEC Reflects on Hard Work of Educators Over Course of Pandemic During Teacher Appreciation Month

As Teacher Appreciation Month nears its end, the [Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives](#) (MOEC) wishes to thank and recognize educators from its 25 member collaboratives for their exceptional student support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"During the past few years, collaborative educators have worked tirelessly to adapt to new technologies, adjust their curriculum to remote and hybrid learning, and so much more. It is important that we recognize the important contributions that staff in our collaboratives have made and will continue to make in our new normal," MOEC Executive Director Joanne Haley Sullivan said.

[READS](#) Collaborative's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program (DHH), which is located in both Norton Public Schools and Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical High School, tailored changes prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic to support the diverse needs of their students, like other collaboratives across the Commonwealth. Students with hearing difficulties from 35 school districts, primarily in Southeastern Massachusetts, attend DHH.

DHH staff provided students with packets and resources to help them understand what was going on and how to use unfamiliar technology like Zoom at the beginning of the pandemic. Staff also made sure that students with specific needs were equipped with the necessary technology at home, like FM Systems, a device that enhances audio in noisy environments.

The pandemic brought a boom in virtual resources, but DHH staff found that many were not accessible to those who were hard of hearing. For example, many museums offered virtual tours while they were closed to the public, but some tours did not have closed captioning. DHH teachers recorded some of these tours and produced videos of themselves interpreting the tours with American Sign Language so that students could enjoy them.

"Our staff rallied together to support students and create innovative programming to best meet their needs," READS Executive Director Dr. Theresa Craig. "Their commitment to the students, the families and each other has really shone over the past several years, and we thank them for their dedication every single day."

During summer 2020, DHH reached out in unique ways to provide its Extended School Year Program. At that time, students and staff were allowed to gather outdoors so long as they were wearing masks. Educators seized the opportunity to interact with students once again.

One preschool teacher began the process of hatching chicks in an incubator. She recorded the process and sent a video of every milestone to students. Once the chicks hatched, she visited each preschool student's home, bringing the chicks along with her.

Just as quickly as educators pivoted to remote learning, they once again shifted to provide a safe and welcoming in-person learning environment to students. DHH returned to school in September 2020 to a hybrid model with students and staff being

required to wear masks at all times.

Masks proved to be a challenge for those in the deaf and hard of hearing community because visible facial movements play an important role in American Sign Language. Facial movements can help express the tone of a conversation, indicate the answer to a yes or no question, and more.

Teachers worked with students to find the best masks to fit their needs, including testing clear masks. Teachers also supplemented their communication with students by increasing their hand gestures.

"These are just a few examples of how collaboratives went above and beyond to support students, but there are countless others from across our 25 collaboratives. We want all of our collaborative educators to know that their efforts are recognized today and every other day," Director Haley Sullivan said.

DHH Director Evelyn Rankin and Director Shannon Allen expressed pride in their students amid the challenges of the past few years.

"Our students showed up. They logged on. They were engaged even amid uncertainty and difficulties. I am so proud of their resilience," Director Rankin said.

Added Director Allen: "A big part of their success during this time can be attributed to our educators who supported students every step of the way."

About Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives

[MOEC](#) represents the Commonwealth's 25 educational collaboratives. MOEC serves as the voice of its members and works to develop a full appreciation for and understanding of educational collaboratives at the state, regional, and local levels. MOEC is the Commonwealth's primary advocate for collaboratives and the critical role they play in the Massachusetts educational system.

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**A message from the Massachusetts Organization of
Educational Collaboratives**