



## Spring/Summer 2019

### The **Maine Autism Institute for Education and Research**

(MAIER) is a partnership between the University of Maine College of Education and Human Development and the Maine Department of Education.

MAIER is dedicated to building state-wide capacity to improve outcomes for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

- Leadership
- Training
- Professional Development
- Technical Assistance
- Consultation
- Research

**Donate to  
MAIER**

Help support MAIER's outreach to Maine families through our educational and social events. It's easy using our online donation page: <https://umaine.edu/autisminstitute/donate-to-maier/>



**MAIER Family  
Partnership Event**

### **The Outdoors are for Everyone!**

Saturday, August 10

Full day of outdoor activities at the Adaptive Outdoor Education Center in Carrabassett Valley. FMI see article in this issue of *Pathways*.

### Greetings from the Maine Autism Institute for Education and Research

It is hard to believe we have completed another academic year of work here at the Maine Autism Institute for Education and Research, our fifth year of offering professional development and workshops to better support students on the autism spectrum. In this issue, we share the latest news about our projects, research, and events in support of families impacted by autism and professionals who work with them. You can help us by sharing this newsletter with others that may have an interest in MAIER's work or offerings.

We wish you all a peaceful, safe, and enjoyable summer. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if we can be of assistance. Contact us by email ([maineautisminstitute@umaine.edu](mailto:maineautisminstitute@umaine.edu)) or phone (207-581-2352)

Best regards,

*Deborah L. Rooks-Ellis, Ph.D. Director, MAIER*

*Donna Doherty, M.S., Editor, MAIER Family Partnership Director*

### *Early Start*



### Early Start Maine Outreach Services through Telehealth Network

The last few months have been busy ones for MAIER and the Early Start Maine program. In late February, we launched the Early Start Maine Outreach Services through Telehealth Network (Early Start MOST). Using videoconferencing, this new telehealth program is led by MAIER Early Start Maine Consultants (ESM-C) in collaboration with Maine Child Development Services (CDS). Currently, ten families are participating in Early Start MOST, representing seven of the nine CDS sites.

Early Start MOST supports parents and caregivers in using evidence-based strategies from the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM) during their everyday routines and activities with their child. An ESM-C provides Early Start MOST services to families through videoconferencing, with parents actively participating in 12 weekly videoconferencing sessions.

During the weekly sessions, the ESM-C and parent work together to develop a shared meaning of ESDM strategies and concepts. Parents participate in activities with their child to promote engagement and social interactions and share how they use ESDM strategies during everyday activities. The ESM-C provides participants with ongoing  
*(continued on page 2)*

**Upcoming 2019-2020  
Professional  
Development Series**  
(Locations to be announced)

**September 26, 2019:** Social Communication Skills for Students' Academic and Community Success

**October 10, 2019:** Using Technology to Support Students with Disabilities

**March 14, 2020:** Assistive Technology Mini-Maker Fair: Developing and Supporting Communication Skills for Individuals with ASD

**April 16, 2020:** Keeping it Simple: Easy Tier 2 Group Strategies to Increase Student Engagement

**Save the dates**  
Topics to be determined

November 7, 2019  
February 13, 2020  
May 14, 2020

**Online Registration** opening soon!

**Workshops:** \$35/person, with check-in at 8:30am and start time at 9am. Contact hours certificates are provided at each PD, with CEUs available by contacting MAIER two weeks prior to each event and a \$20 processing fee.

Lunch is responsibility of participants.

**“Autos for Autism” promotes autism awareness while fundraising for MAIER!**

This past winter the **Mid-coast Business Development Group (BDG)**, an association of independent automotive service and repair businesses located on mid-coast Maine, contemplated how they could join forces to give back to their community. They settled on the idea of supporting a Maine autism organization during Autism Awareness month in April. After doing some research, Meg Lewis, Vice President for the business group, reached out to MAIER to learn more about our family and community outreach. After hearing about the MAIER Family Partnership (MFP) activities, resources, and projects, the group voted to make us the recipient of their fundraising efforts for 2019.

The enthusiasm and work of the Mid-Coast BDG was inspiring! The group designed and printed posters and donation cards to encourage customers to consider donating to the cause, while MAIER supplied autism fact sheets and MAIER brochures to display at the participating businesses. Several businesses generously added their own donations toward the fundraiser with special sales or matching gifts. Together the group raised \$3200 for the cause!



*Donna Doherty, Family Partnership Director for MAIER, receives fundraising check from the Midcoast Business Development Group*

Thanks to the kindness and efforts among the Mid-Coast BDG, communities along midcoast Maine learned a bit more about autism and its impact on individuals and families, while **supporting** MAIER's family and community **outreach** efforts. We are especially grateful to Meg Lewis for all her work in spearheading this effort, and we offer our heartfelt thanks to the businesses that participated and the community donors who supported the fundraiser!

*(ES MOST... continued from page 1)*  
feedback and coaching during videoconferencing sessions. One participating parent described her experience with Early Start MOST saying, *“As a parent, you have to be willing to do the work. But it's going to be super rewarding, and so worth it!”*

Both the Early Start MOST videoconferencing program, and the Early Start Maine in-home program are intended for families with very young children with autism who are eligible for or are currently receiving early intervention services with Maine CDS. For more information about either of these programs, contact Deborah Rooks-Ellis at MAIER: [maineautisminstitute@maine.edu](mailto:maineautisminstitute@maine.edu) or call 207-581-2352.



*Early Start MOST mom engages with her son using ESDM principles during play activities.*

## Research Opportunities

MAIER is currently recruiting both families and professionals to take part in research studies to help us better understand educational supports and practices in our schools, from the perspectives of both families and of the educators and professionals who work with them. See below to learn more about these projects, including how to participate.

### **Teacher Survey: Understanding Motivators and Stressors of Maine's Teachers**

This survey is being conducted by a team of researchers at the University of Maine to examine teacher efficacy, motivators and stressors, teacher perceptions of the efficacy of evidence-based practices, and professional development needs related to working with students with developmental disabilities, including autism. To learn more about this research, with hyperlink to the consent and survey, visit our website: <https://umaine.edu/autisminstitute/pathways/spring-2019/teacher-survey/>



Interested in participating in research to better understand the effectiveness of strategies and programs used by schools to help high school students on the autism spectrum to prepare for the "Road Ahead?" Researchers at the University of Maine are assisting Boston University researchers to recruit both families and professionals to participate in this research study.

**Professionals:** Researchers are recruiting high school personnel (general and special educators, therapists, administrators) to participate in a study conducted by Boston University researchers. Researchers at the University of Maine are assisting in this study. University of Maine researchers will only receive data summaries that do not include individual identifiers.

This research is funded by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) which is part of the Department of Education. We want to better understand the strategies and programs that schools use to support high school students with autism who are accessing the general education curriculum and planning to graduate with a regular high school diploma.

If you have direct experience working with this population and are willing to participate in a web-based survey, visit this webpage: <https://umaine.edu/autisminstitute/pathways/spring-2019/teacher-survey/>

Participants will have the opportunity to enter a raffle for one of two iPad tablets for use at their school. Please share this opportunity with all educational professionals who interact with students with autism.

If you have questions about this study, contact:

Dr. Deborah Rooks-Ellis  
Maine Autism Institute for Education and Research  
University of Maine  
(207) 581-2352  
Email: [Deborah.I.rooks@maine.edu](mailto:Deborah.I.rooks@maine.edu)

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Department of Occupational Therapy  
Boston University  
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**Families:** Boston University researchers are recruiting high school students on the autism spectrum and their parents to participate in an 18-month longitudinal study. Researchers at the University of Maine are assisting with recruitment for this study. They are looking for students on the autism spectrum who are in their last year of high school and who will graduate with a regular high school diploma. Parents and students will complete a set of online and mailed measures now and then 18 months from now. Participation should take 30-60 minutes at each time point. Parents will receive two \$25 Amazon.com gift cards (one at each time point) and youth will receive two \$15 Amazon.com gift cards (one at each time point).

To learn how to participate send an email to [Deborah.I.rooks@maine.edu](mailto:Deborah.I.rooks@maine.edu) or call (207) 581-2352. Or, you can send an email directly to the study at [buroad@bu.edu](mailto:buroad@bu.edu) or call (617) 353-2060. For more information, visit the project website: <http://sites.bu.edu/roadahead/>

## MAIER Professional Development

MAIER's Professional Development (PD) workshops have come to a close for the 2018-19 school year, with more than 350 educators, paraprofessionals, and educational support personnel participating from all over the state. Topics included developing strategies and methods for teaching written expression, executive function, emotional regulation skills, and sexuality and relationship skills to students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), including those on the autism spectrum.

Overall, workshop participants told us this year's workshops were engaging and useful for their teaching practice, and often stimulated self-reflection and new approaches to supporting students with IDD and autism. Educators said they appreciated the knowledge and expertise of the presenters and valued the opportunity to engage with their peers during these trainings.

Next fall we will open our PD Series with "Social Communication Skills for Students' Academic and Community Success" presented by UMaine faculty Sarah Howorth, Ph.D. and MAIER Director, Deborah Rooks-Ellis Ph.D. on September 26<sup>th</sup>.

Check out our "Sneak Peek" PD flyer for additional sessions already planned and for the dates of additional workshops with topics to be determined. Registration opens this summer, so be sure to visit our website Professional Development page for updates: <https://umaine.edu/autisminstitute/trainings/>

**Save the dates**  
PD topics to be determined

November 7, 2019  
February 13, 2020  
May 14, 2020

### Sneak Peek!

#### 2019-20 Professional Development Series

Locations to be determined – check our website for more information and registration options this summer!

September 26, 2019

##### **Social Communication Skills for Students' Academic and Community Success**

Sarah Howorth, Ph.D., BCBA-D, UMaine

Deborah Rooks-Ellis, Ph.D, UMaine

This session will share strategies for teaching students how to successfully navigate friendship building, awkward social situations and verbal bullying.

October 10, 2019

##### **Using Technology to Support Students with Disabilities**

Don McMahon, Ph.D, Washington State University

This session will cover many popular technology platforms (iPads, Chrome/Chromebooks, etc.) and the wide selection of educational apps available for them. There will be multiple opportunities to share, collaborate, and explore new classroom resources.

March 14, 2020

##### **Assistive Technology Mini-Maker Fair: Developing and Supporting Communication Skills for Individuals with ASD**

Jennifer Seale, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, UMaine

This hands-on learning workshop seeks to facilitate participants' recognition of and ability to use readily available material and technologies to support communication skills of individuals with Autism. Come create with us!

April 16, 2020

##### **Keeping it Simple: Easy Tier 2 Group Strategies to Increase Student Engagement**

Cary Trump, Ph.D., BCBA, University of Northern Colorado

The purpose of this presentation is to provide a comprehensive guide on implementing group contingencies. Group contingencies increase student on-task behavior and opportunities to respond

#### **Did you know MAIER's 2016-17 PD series was available to view free online?**

All nine of our workshops are now available to view online for free and *Contact Hours* are available. This Archived viewing option allows you to watch each selected workshop at a time convenient with your schedule. Check out our Professional Development page to register: <https://umaine.edu/autisminstitute/trainings/>

## Family Focus

Hello from MAIER's Family Partnership!

As the MAIER continues to grow in our programs, partnerships, and community outreach, I am always humbled when I meet or reconnect with a family member or cultivate a new community partnership. I continue to learn from each of you, and in turn try to use that new insight, understanding, or idea in our planning and programming for MAIER's Family Partnership (MFP). These past months have been a whirlwind of new activities and opportunities for the MFP, all in the spirit of raising awareness, understanding, inclusion, and acceptance for individuals on the spectrum and their families. And, of course, to also have some family fun- right? (See our plans for our summer event in this issue.)

While continuing to work on our *Places and Spaces Project* (<https://umaine.edu/autisminstitute/maine-family-partnership/places-and-spaces/>) I have sought out like minds from across the state of Maine, the country, and the world at large. One concept in particular caught my attention and reframed my thinking, which I would like to share with you. Working toward toward autism awareness, understanding, and acceptance in our communities are truly worthy goals. However, I would propose we add "appreciation" to our inclusion goals- appreciation for the gifts, talents, quirks, and thoughts and wisdom that individuals on the spectrum bring to our communities. Send me an email with your thoughts or ideas related to this effort, and we can work together toward true appreciation for the unique gifts we all have to share.

I hope you will take a few moments to read and share this edition of *Pathways*, and perhaps drop me an email or make a call to share what you have been up to.

Hope to see you in the coming year!

Donna

## MAIER Family Partnership Survey

Earlier this month, we sent an email to everyone on our MFP mailing list to invite you to participate in a short survey to assess the impact of MAIER family partnership activities and resources. Thanks to all of you who took the time to respond to our invitation! Your participation in this survey will help us examine our effectiveness and guide MAIER's future planning for our outreach to Maine families.

Can't find your email invite? Or perhaps you didn't receive an email, but would like to participate? If you have not completed the MFP survey yet, we would love to hear from you! Contact Donna at MAIER to request a survey: [donna.doherty@maine.edu](mailto:donna.doherty@maine.edu) or call 207-581-2468. Completing the survey takes about 15-20 minutes, and all responses are anonymous.



The Autism Society of Maine (ASM) offers summer day camp experiences for children on the autism spectrum in both Farmington and Biddeford. Read about these camp options below, and visit the ASM website for more information about these and other summer camp opportunities in Maine.

**Camp Summit** (Farmington, ME) July 29- August 8, 2019. For children ages 8-13 years w ASD.  
**Finding the Pieces Summer Camp** (Biddeford, ME) August 5 – August 16, 2019. For children on the spectrum in grades K-5.

For more information about these ASM camps, including application information, visit the ASM website (<https://www.asmonline.org/News/107/Article/6683/>) or call the ASM: 1-800-273-5200.

# Outdoors for Everyone!

Join us for a day of outdoor activities and games at the **Adaptive Outdoor Education Center** in Carrabassett Valley on **Saturday, August 10th, 2019, 10am-3:30pm**

The Maine Autism Institute for Education and Research (MAIER) is partnering with the Adaptive Outdoor Education Center (AOEC) to offer this **FREE** event **for children, teens, and adults on the autism spectrum and their siblings, families, and caregivers.**

Accessible playground and tree house with musical and dramatic play props

Outdoor games and activities with support from our volunteers

Take a guided nature walk around the pond

Safe wooded trails to explore. Join in on our nature scavenger hunt and crafts

Fishing with a Maine Fish and Game expert!



Bring your own lunch and picnic with other MAIER Family Partnership attendees at nearby Sugarloaf Mountain. We'll supply the drinks and snacks.

**Registration with MAIER is required.**

**Register online at: [umaine.edu/autisminstitute/event/outdoors-for-everyone/](http://umaine.edu/autisminstitute/event/outdoors-for-everyone/)  
Or Contact Donna at MAIER: (207) 581-2468 / [donna.doherty@maine.edu](mailto:donna.doherty@maine.edu)**

To learn more about MAIER, visit: [maineautisminstitute@maine.edu](mailto:maineautisminstitute@maine.edu)

To learn more about AOEC, visit: [adaptiveoutdooreducationcenter.org](http://adaptiveoutdooreducationcenter.org)



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## Local theater groups bring autism awareness to their performances



Photo courtesy of the Some Theater Company

Who would have imagined an afternoon or evening at the theater could open your eyes to the world of a teen on the autism spectrum and to the daily challenges and joys parents encounter in that world?

Thanks to the Some Theater Company (STC) in Orono and the Midcoast Actors Studio in Belfast recent productions of “The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time,” theatergoers were immersed in the life and sensory experiences of Christopher Boone, a teen on the autism spectrum with exceptional math skills and a desire to become a NASA scientist. As Christopher sets out to solve a neighborhood mystery, his life takes an unexpected turn, revealing the complex family dynamics and emotions of family life and love when it includes a child with autism.

Both theater groups were dedicated to the honest portrayal of their characters and toward using this production as a means of raising autism awareness and understanding in their communities. Elaine Bard, Artistic Director for the STC described their inspiration saying, “Often theater has the ability to break down barriers and help facilitate education in important topics. Our hope is that by bringing this show to our community, we can help overcome obstacles and reach out and teach.” She added, “*Curious Incident* challenges its audience to understand the complexities of truly

accepting difference.”

The Maine Autism Institute for Education and Research (MAIER) supported the efforts of both theater groups by providing autism information and support to the casts and crews as needed and by participating in promotional radio interviews and a Talkback session. During the shows, we offered autism fact sheets and MAIER information to those attending, and also partnered with the theater groups to host a sensory-friendly show especially for individuals on the spectrum and their families. Suzanne Ramczyk, Director for the Midcoast Actors Studio production of “Curious,” described the positive feedback her cast and crew received from the community, adding, it “was a rewarding experience for me [as the Director], overall, and I was thrilled to do such an important piece.”

MAIER would like to express our sincere thanks to Elaine & Gerry Bard of the STC and Jason Bannister and Suzanne Ramczyk of the Midcoast Actors Studio, and their cast and crews, for their energy and commitment to this experience and to their outreach and support of the autism community.

**Do you have a family member on the spectrum** that is interested in acting or theater production? The “STC is committed to diversity and encourages performers of all ethnicities, gender identities, and ages, as well as performers with disabilities, to audition. [The STC is dedicated to] representing all members of our community on stage” ( <https://www.stcmaine.org/about> , retrieved 6/8/19). For more information on getting involved with the STC, contact Elaine Bard at [sometheatrecompany@gmail.com](mailto:sometheatrecompany@gmail.com) or call 207-356-6501.

### Upcoming: Sensory-Friendly theater production of *The Little Mermaid*

The Maine State Music Theatre In Brunswick is offering a sensory-friendly performance of *The Little Mermaid* on August 17. This 50-minutes long musical version of the familiar fairy tale is free to children with social, cognitive, or physical challenges, but tickets are required. Visit the MSMT website (<https://msmt.org/sensory-friendly-performances/> ) for more information on tickets or call 207-725-8769 to reserve seats. And be sure to check out the MSMT social narrative (<https://msmt.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Sens-Friend-Packet-18.pdf> ) before attending the show!

## New Resources

Be sure to visit MAIER's **Family Resource** webpage (<https://umaine.edu/autisminstitute/resources/>) and **Professional Resource** webpage (<https://umaine.edu/autisminstitute/resources/professional-development-and-resources/>) as we are always adding new resources. Check out these new resources targeting issues related to teen and adult life.

[Love, Dating, Relationships and Disability](#) : Explore the world of relationships and dating through the eyes and words of individuals with disabilities, including autism. This website explores mature relationships in all its forms through personal stories and words of advice from those who live life with a disability.

[Center on Secondary Education for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders](#): Research reports and extensive resources suitable for professionals and families to support teens on the autism spectrum through his/her high school years and the transition to adulthood. CSESA focuses on developing, adapting, and studying comprehensive school and community-based education programs for high school students on the autism spectrum.

[Career-Centered Active Listening Game \(C-Cal\)](#): The Center on Technology and Disability introduces a new job coaching tool “developed to help provide job-coaching tips and advice, through a series of Q&A listening exercises. The module is intended to strengthen the auditory processing skills of students with disabilities and prepare them for post-secondary environments, particularly the workforce Scenarios presented include



The Maine Department of Education provides significant support and funding for the activities and outreach of the Maine Autism Institute for Education and Research.

