

## School Focus



## Downeast Community School

by Theolyn Staples, Principal

It is with great pleasure that we share our thoughts about Downeast School with the greater Bangor community. The Downeast School was built in 1960 to serve the military families stationed at the former Dow Air Force Base. Downeast School is now a K-3 school housing about 260 students.

Last year was my first year as principal at Downeast replacing Mrs. Dorothy Pratt, who had been at the helm for eighteen years. In my tenure here, I have been impressed with the dedication of the staff to the children and families of our school community. This staff is a highly qualified group of educators who commits many hours of work beyond the regular school day for the benefit of their students. Their dedication is demonstrated over and over as they provide before and after school programs, in addition to the regular school experience, to enrich and enhance the learning for all children.

In addition to the regular school staff, we have several retired former staff members who volunteer on a regular basis. Because many of the staff members have been together for many years, the school culture is steeped in traditions and routines specific to our school. The school staff is intrinsically motivated to continue these customs, which makes the collegiality here second to none.

Many of our children are in transition, which makes our school staff very much a team that focuses on each child who comes through our doors. The regular nine to three school schedule is supplemented by strong before and after school programs and a variety of integrated learning activities that makes student learning experiences more connected for these young children. Grade level groups or wings of the building commonly

share in connected learning activities, such as participating in traditions or activities connected to specific holiday or unit themes, all of which enhance student learning. Our involvement with Bangor High School students through the "Sidekicks" program makes a special link across time between our children and students who went to this school many years prior. Through "Sidekicks", Bangor High School students come for weekly visits and after school activities with Downeast students.

We are a school that is highly committed to academic excellence. The many challenges of the federal legislation "No Child Left Behind", State of Maine Learning Results and Bangor School Department curricula provide the structure for instructional planning and development. Our school, along with our district colleagues, is currently involved in school planning processes based on Bangor School Department's thirteen "Core Competencies". (see page 2, *Beyond 2000 for details*) Our goals are currently focused on math and writing. Our school leadership team has been working with the entire staff to develop a document that showcases staff professional development initiatives and student outcomes. Our students meet local, state and national standards and are able to shine in a variety of ways.

We see a number of our students excelling in academics, sports and award events after leaving our school. Through cross-grade level team meetings for program planning, support, enrichment and service needs, the Downeast School's goal is to create the best learning experience for every child under our care.

## "Sidekicks" Enters Its 6th Year

by Theolyn Staples

It started with a letter. In 1998 Megan Brooker, then a Bangor High sophomore, proposed to the Downeast School principal that a group of BHS students, with the help of the local Big Brother/Big Sister program, become mentors to second and third grade students. A few months later "Sidekicks" began.

Now in its sixth year, the "Sidekicks" after school program continues at Downeast School. Every Tuesday afternoon twenty Bangor High students arrive at Downeast school to meet their second or third grade matches. The students share a snack together, work on arts and crafts, play board games and talk. The goal of the

program remains the same; to provide positive role models for younger children.

This year the Ellsworth Big Brother/Big Sister agency is providing the training of the Bangor High students and helping with the program's overall logistics.

"Sidekicks" is a true collaboration among three organizations: Big Brothers/Big Sisters, a group of dedicated teen-agers from Bangor High and Downeast School. Together we have positively influenced the lives of nearly 100 elementary students, trained and encouraged some outstanding high school students, and contributed to building a caring community here in Bangor.



**LITERACY NIGHT:** On Nov. 19, Downeast School held its first Parent Education Night. The evening topic was literacy. Parents met with a teacher from their child's grade level. Teachers demonstrated ways to support reading and writing at home. The evening was the first in our Parent/School Education Evenings. Parents left with a better understanding of how to help their children with reading and writing at home. Future Parent/School Education Evenings will be held once a month. Topics will include understanding math strategies to help children with homework, parenting classes, nutrition/cooking classes and computer training. For more information contact the Downeast School's main office.

## Downeast Friends

by Tina McLaughlin

Downeast Friends is the name of our parent teacher organization. Our PTO is a very special part of our school and enjoys giving "a little extra" to enhance our school community.

The PTO sponsors many events throughout the year. In March we invite all families to our school to share time playing a game with their child/children. Teachers share their games and games are brought in from home for this fun event. Also, families are given the opportunity to purchase games for their homes. The idea for this event was brought to the PTO by some very special people who wanted children and parents to have an opportunity to share time together. Each May we host a Spring Fair. This event includes games, face painting, cookie decorating, a bounce house, food sale and cotton candy. Earlier this year we held a Jack-o-Lantern Jubilee with stories, games, mask making, face painting, costume parade and a candy tunnel.

The PTO sells popcorn to students and staff on arranged Fridays. We also hold a dinner in the fall to benefit the Bangor Children's Fund and the school. Area businesses donate to the event and the United Technologies School's Culinary Arts class prepares a very delicious meal. Our parents and teachers provide desserts. During the evening we sell tickets and hold several drawings at the end of the evening. In the fall and spring we host book fairs. PTO volunteers collect for different

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## Community School

by Nicole M. Pelletier

Over 100 students at the Downeast School have been busy with activities before and after school. This is my first year as coordinator of Community School and I am very pleased to see the enthusiasm shown by the children who are involved in these programs. We have a wonderful staff who offer their talents to the students at the Downeast School. Some of the programs we have include: Sign Language Club, Nutrition Club, Science Club, Reader's Theatre, Story Hour, Math Games, Garden Club and Homework Room.

These opportunities offer our eager children the chance to learn many new skills. Sign Language Club has two different groups; the Kindergarten session and the second and third grade session. Participants have learned how to sign their names, the names of places around our school, food, animals and transportation.

First grade students in Reader's Theatre have been busy acting out parts of a book and practicing reading. They recently put on a show for parents and relatives at which they performed the book *A Turkey For Thanksgiving* by Eve Bunting.

Third grade students in the Science Club have been focusing on weather. They have been learning

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## Morning Tutors

by Janet Morneault

A new three-day-a-week morning tutoring program, funded by a grant from Bangor Adult and Community Education is helping several Downeast students meet the grade.

Headed by Janet Morneault, an educational technician in the school's Resource Room, the new program is geared towards boosting student achievement. Teachers refer students who would benefit from the extra help; parents provide transportation, and Mrs. Morneault teaches specific skills. Recently, first grade teacher Lisa Simko and educational technician Allie Brown also joined morning tutoring sessions.

Mrs. Morneault wears another hat as the school's tutor. She screens new students entering Downeast from other school districts providing classroom teachers with up-to-date data.



**COLONIAL DAY:** Downeast kindergarteners celebrated Colonial Day on Nov. 19th. Colonial Day provided a chance for the children to learn Native American and Colonist activities hands on. By the end of the morning students had made butter, dream catchers, sock puppets and balsam bags, written with quills, dipped candles, ate maize corn and strung popcorn and cranberries.



**JACK O'LANTERNS:** Chenra Green and Jenna Procise (above) from Bangor's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program pose with the prize pumpkin they carved in their class for the deaf at Downeast School.

## Home/School Liaison

by Amy Peterson-Roper

Thanks to a grant from Bangor Adult and Community Education, Downeast School has established a home/school liaison position. Inspired by Bangor's Core Competency to develop community support for schools, kindergarten teacher Lisa Brooker has organized volunteer opportunities for the Downeast School. The home/school liaison promotes the importance of volunteering and being involved in the educational growth of children. Other projects that Lisa has taken on include welcoming new families to the school and helping to develop a monthly school newsletter. Mary Helen Williams and Amy Peterson-Roper oversee the implementation of this new program.



## New Flags and Flagpole

Through the support of the Downeast Parent Teacher Organization and the "behind the scenes" work of several dedicated and persistent Downeast staff members, the Downeast School has a wonderful new flagpole with beautiful new flags. Mrs. Gammon, our lunch accountability person, Mrs. MacDonald, our head cook, and Mrs. Quinn, thirty-four year Downeast staff veteran, worked tirelessly to be sure that our new lighted flagpole hoisted a national flag which had been previously flown over the Capital Building in Washington D.C. The flag pole also bears a State of Maine flag. Children and staff enjoyed the presentation of the flagpole and flags at a special ceremony attended just before Memorial Day last spring. At left, the Bangor High School JROTC color guard and Rick Gammon, community member, conducted the flag raising ceremony. Above, Mrs. Gammon, Tsgt. Richard P. Gammon, USAF, Ret., and Mrs. Quinn at the ceremony.

## Sign of the Times

by Chris Huckins

This year the elementary portion of the Bangor Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is located at Downeast School. From this level, students progress through the Bangor schools just as their hearing peers do, attending Fairmount, J.F.D., and, finally, Bangor High School. As the largest regional day program in the State of Maine, it has been in existence for over 30 years and serves children in grades K-12 from Southern Penobscot County who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Children attend regular classes, as well as receiving support from a certified teacher of the deaf and a speech/language pathologist. Not only do these students receive specialized instruction in academics and speech and language, some also benefit from the latest technology in FM and personal sound field systems, which are designed to improve the quality of auditory input the student receives in the classroom. Because of the availability of these services, students have the unique opportunity to interact with hearing as well as deaf peers on a daily basis. The teacher of the deaf, mainstream teachers and speech/language pathologist work closely as a team to ensure each student in the program has the best possible educational experience. Currently, there are six students at the K-3 level: two Kindergarteners, three 2nd graders and one 3rd grader. These students participate fully in the Downeast school community. This year the students are also participating with their hearing peers in an after school sign language program taught by the teacher of the deaf and sponsored by the Community School program.

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about different types of clouds and symbols that go on a weather map. When I asked Breanna Spencer what her favorite part of science club was so far she said, "I like the teacher and I like learning about weather. We made our own cloud finder chart, and each week we go outside to observe the kinds of clouds."

I look forward to continued work with the children and staff at the Downeast School, and offering a variety of programs so more children have the opportunity to participate in some type of extra curricular activity.



Artwork by Corey Mallonee, Mosaic 2003

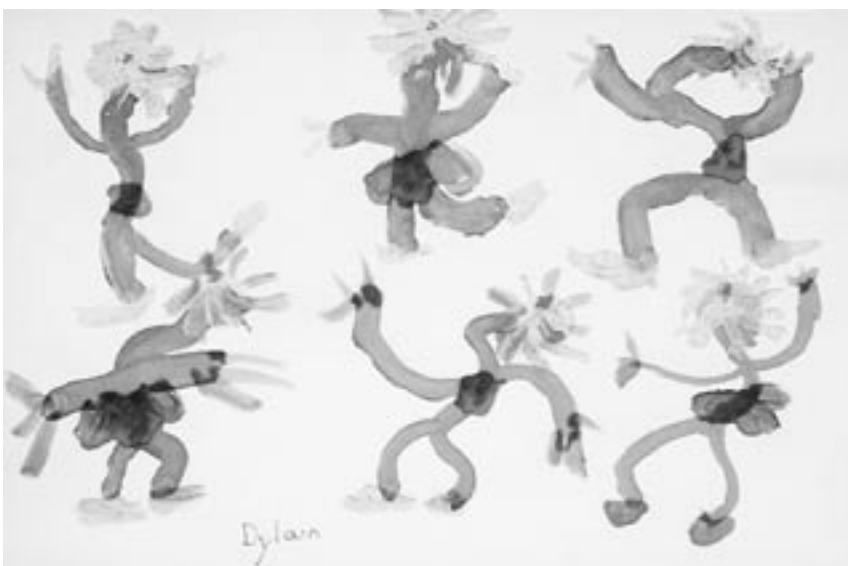
## Downeast Community School Schedule

Contact Downeast School for more information

TUESDAY	WENDESDAY	THURSDAY
Sign Language (K)	* Garden Club (K-3)	Sign Language (2, 3)
Homework Room (2, 3)	Story Hour (K, 1)	Homework Room (2, 3)
	Homework Room (2, 3)	Reader's Theatre (1)
	Math Games (1)	Math Games (2)
	Science Club (3)	Math Games (3)
		Nutrition (2, 3)

\* Garden Club meets in the morning from 8:00-8:50.

All others meet after school from 3:00-4:00. No Monday or Friday Programs.



Downeast and Fourteenth Street Schools' art classes were inspired by the elementary schools' music unit on *The Nutcracker* ballet. (At right) Second graders constructed three-dimensional nutcrackers of their own. Grade one students painted their interpretations of the "Waltz of Flowers" from *The Nutcracker*. Downeast first grader Dylan Caruso's painting is shown above. At top, three first graders pretend to be the Sugar Plum Fairy.

## Downeast Friends (continued from page 10)

fund-raising programs; Box Tops for Education, Dollars for Scholars, Campbell Soup labels, and recycle ink jet cartridges and cellular phones. Our major fund raisers are held in the fall and spring, during which students sell items from selected fund-raising companies.

The PTO has purchased a school flagpole, the Downeast Elementary School sign, enter and exit sign posts on both driveways, and, most recently, installed a new playground set with the help of some special volunteers. Along with the school's Garden Club, the PTO assists with the upkeep of the school gardens. We also fund enrichment activities, field trips, Community Reading Day and Third Grade Recognition. We purchase school magnetic calendars for each student, maintain our school playground, make donations to scholarship funds and host a special teacher and staff appreciation week to show our heart felt appreciation for the wonderful job they do with our students and our school. One of the group's favorite times is helping with the end of the year "Kid's Cookout". Parents, teachers and students all enjoy cooking hotdogs and hamburgers on the grill and seeing all the smiles of the children.

## The Nutcracker in Downeast Music by Michelle Hall

Downeast students have been listening and moving to music from *The Nutcracker* ballet this fall. The music program at Downeast School follows Bangor's K-3 singing and movement based curriculum. In addition to *The Nutcracker*, they have been singing and dancing in a variety of musical styles.

Grades one and two have had extended opportunities to explore the world of ballet through movement workshops and a live, abridged performance of *The Nutcracker* presented by the Robinson School of Ballet. Both events were part of a PAL (Partners in the Arts and Learning) grant written by Bangor K-3 music staff. First and second graders have also created nutcrackers and "Waltz of Flowers" paintings in art classes.

As part of a December 19 assembly, all of Downeast's creative young musician/artists shared several of their *Nutcracker* movement pieces. The assembly was a sing-along of partner songs and poetry in choral literature. It also featured the Downeast Singers, our school's third grade chorus.

## The Nutcracker

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abbreviated performance of *The Nutcracker* performed by members of the Robinson Ballet Company. (Some of the performers were the same age as our students!) From the moment Ms. Robinson welcomed them to the curtain call, the students were entranced. Students were delighted by the battle between the Nutcracker and the Rat King, the Chinese Dance, the Trepek, featuring the Russian dancers, and the Sugar Plum Fairy. At the end of the program, the dancers lined the hallway and greeted the students as they exited.

This opportunity was made possible through a Partners in Arts and Learning Grant. The K-3 music teachers are grateful to the Cohen School for their warm hospitality and the Robinson Ballet Company, especially Maureen Robinson, for their role in introducing and engaging students in the wonderful world of ballet.

