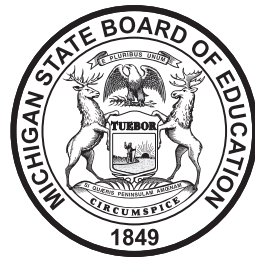




2021 Annual Report

# **Michigan Department of Education - Low Incidence Outreach**



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The Michigan Department of Education Low Incidence Outreach (MDE-LIO)  
is funded under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) through  
the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education.

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# Introduction

In 2021, we continued to face challenges and celebrate victories in supporting students who are Blind/Visually Impaired (BVI) and students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH). As I reflect on the past year, however, I think about the creativity and flexibility I saw from families and school personnel working to meet the needs of children in Michigan.

This year, Michigan Department of Education – Low Incidence Outreach (MDE-LIO) staff worked to keep pace with ever-changing circumstances. Our staff was unable to work in person for months, which became a challenge for our Instructional Materials Center (IMC) staff as they worked to produce and distribute braille and enlarged-print books and provide equipment, supplies, and materials to teachers and families in a timely manner. IMC staff members were eventually cleared to begin coming into the office on a staggered basis, but the IMC was far from being fully staffed until late spring.

Trainings, conferences, workshops, and other events continued in a virtual format. Our efforts gave us an opportunity to reach out to education personnel and families who may not have been able to attend in person. These efforts also pushed us to be very creative in engaging our participants in the learning process.

The data throughout this report showcases the work MDE-LIO accomplished during a global pandemic. Our staff felt the tribulations the field was experiencing, but we put forward our best efforts to keep the focus on students receiving the same access to the curriculum as their general education peers. We would like to thank the family members, teachers, administrators, and other school personnel for working with MDE-LIO through these difficult times to bring light to our children at the end of the day.

Roxanne Balfour  
MDE-LIO Director

# Thank You

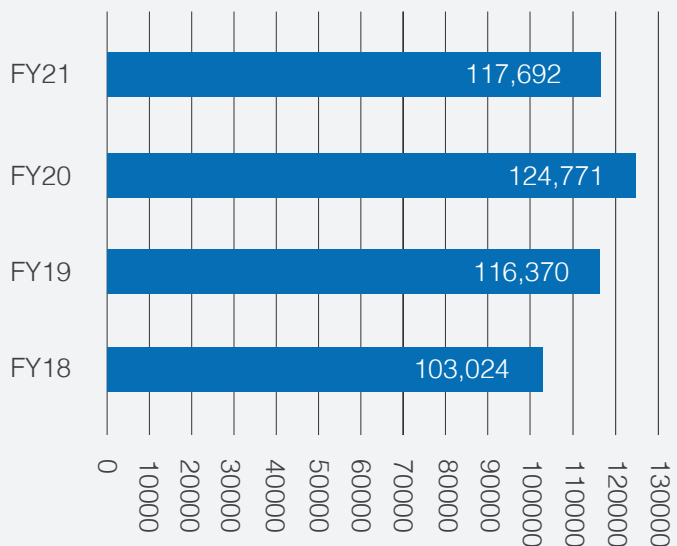
MDE-LIO would not be able to offer quality events and services without the hard work of staff members, team members, interns, and contracted staff. Every day, their work supports MDE-LIO's vision of ensuring equal access to a quality education for all students who are BVI or DHH. Thank you, MDE-LIO staff, for your dedication to supporting Michigan students.



MDE-LIO and Camp Tuhsmeheeta (Camp T) staff at Camp T

# Website Data

## Total Pageviews



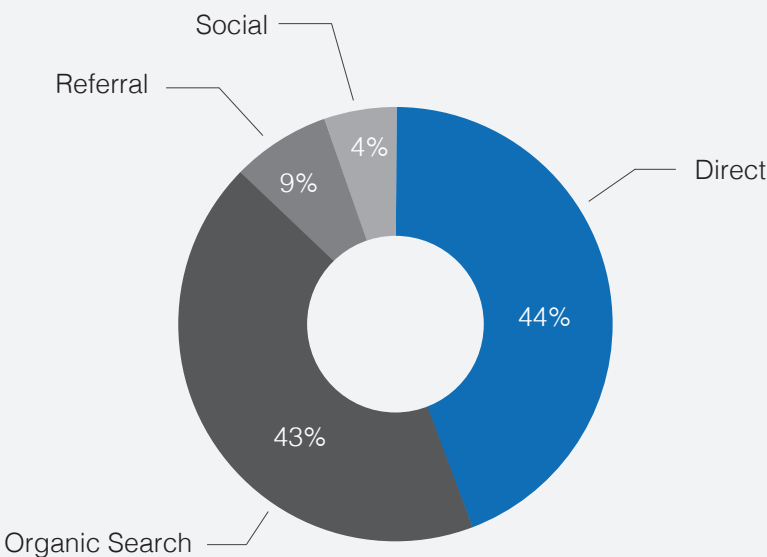
## Most Visited BVI Pages

- Independent Living Skills
- Severity Rating Scales
- Request APH Products
- Orientation and Mobility
- BVI Resources for Educators and Families

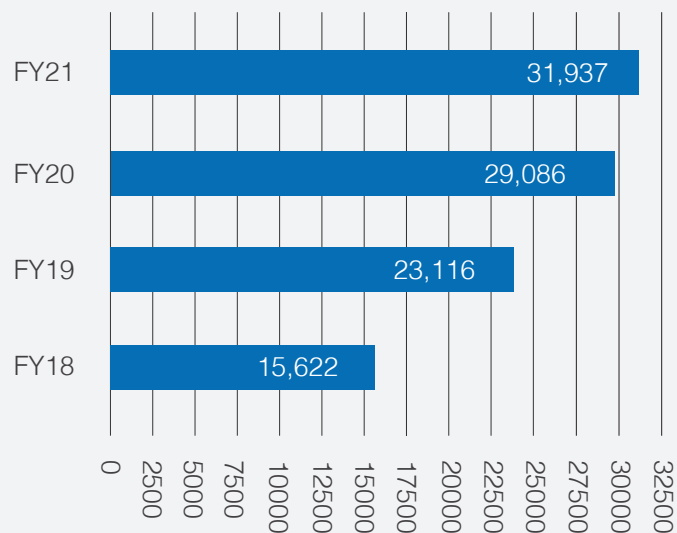
## Most Visited DHH Pages

- ASL Assessments
- Service Delivery Tools
- Social-Emotional Skills
- DHH Resources for Educators and Families
- ASL Learning and Standards

## Incoming Website Traffic



## Website Visitors



## Website Traffic Key

### Direct

Visitors who came to the MDE-LIO website without a traceable referral source, such as typing mdelio.org into their address bar or using a bookmark.

### Organic Search

Visitors who came to the website after using Google or another search engine.

### Social

Visitors who came to the website from a social network.

### Referral

Visitors who came to the website from another website by clicking on a link.





About LIVE With LIO

LIVE With LIO is a webinar series that offers an opportunity for school personnel and families to learn from MDE-LIO staff and ask questions directly. Two webinars are held each month, one for BVI topics, and one for DHH topics.

Professional Development Credits Now Offered

For the 2020-2021 school year, MDE-LIO began offering professional development credits for all LIVE With LIO webinars.

DHH webinar credits:

- State Continuing Education Clock Hours (SCECHs)

BVI webinar credits:

- SCECHs
- Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP)

Total Broadcasts

20

10 DHH  
10 BVI

Total Attendance

445

217 DHH  
228 BVI

BVI LIVE With LIO Programming

Date	Subject	Attendance
9/22/2020	Online Platforms	25
10/13/2020	Conducting Essential Assessments in the Age of COVID-19	25
11/10/2020	Building Literacy Skills for Students With Neurological Visual Impairment	31
12/8/2020	Using Public Transportation	22
1/12/2021	Creating, Navigating, and Presenting Google Slides	22
2/9/2021	Creating Literacy-Rich Environments at an Early Age: Braille, Tools, and Resources	28
3/9/2021	Upcoming Summer Camps	15
4/13/2021	Creating, Navigating, and Sharing Google Sheets	11
5/11/2021	Transition Tips and Tools	24
6/8/2021	Reflect on the Past, Energize for the Future	25

DHH LIVE With LIO Programming

Date	Subject	Attendance
9/15/2020	Early Intervention	16
10/20/2020	Working With an Educational Interpreter	11
11/17/2020	Michigan Communication Plan for Students Who Are Deaf/Hard of Hearing	49
12/1/2020	Open Question-and-Answer Session	16
1/19/2021	Fostering Self-Identity	29
2/16/2021	Expanded Core Curriculum	19
3/16/2021	Audiology	24
4/20/2021	Self-Advocacy	25
5/18/2021	Summer Programming and Resources	16
6/1/2021	Open Question-and-Answer Session	12

# Events

## Total Events

43

21 DHH Events  
22 BVI Events

## Total Participants

1,000

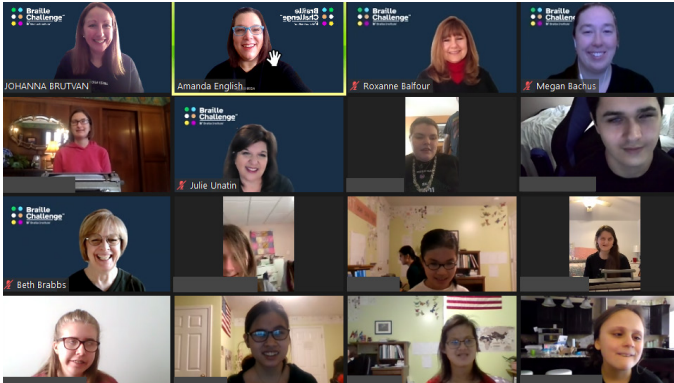
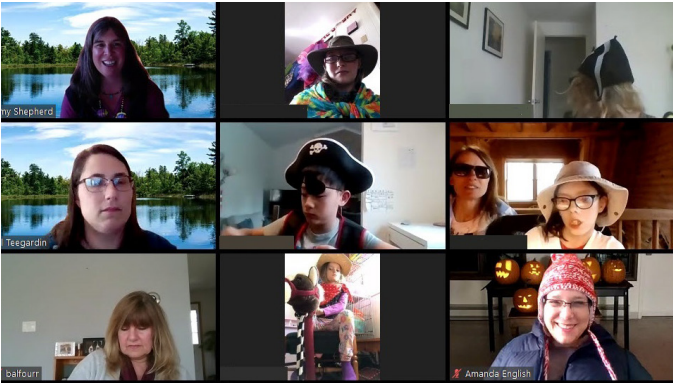
391 DHH Events  
456 BVI Events  
153 Combined Events

Throughout fiscal year (FY) 2021, MDE-LIO continued to offer a variety of valuable professional development events for school personnel as well as educational and enjoyable events for families. All of the events MDE-LIO offered in FY2021 were virtual. Student and family events included distance learning with online gatherings and activity kits that were shipped to the families. MDE-LIO also provided many online professional development events for school personnel, offering one or more of the following continuing education credits:

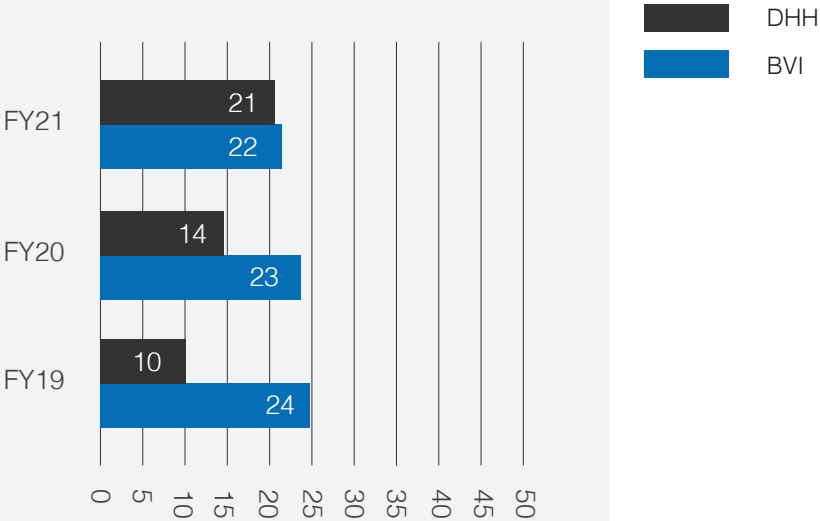
- SCECHs
- ACVREP credits
- Michigan Interpreter Continuing Education Units (MI-CEUs)
- Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Continuing Education Units (RID-CEUs)

### Impact of COVID-19

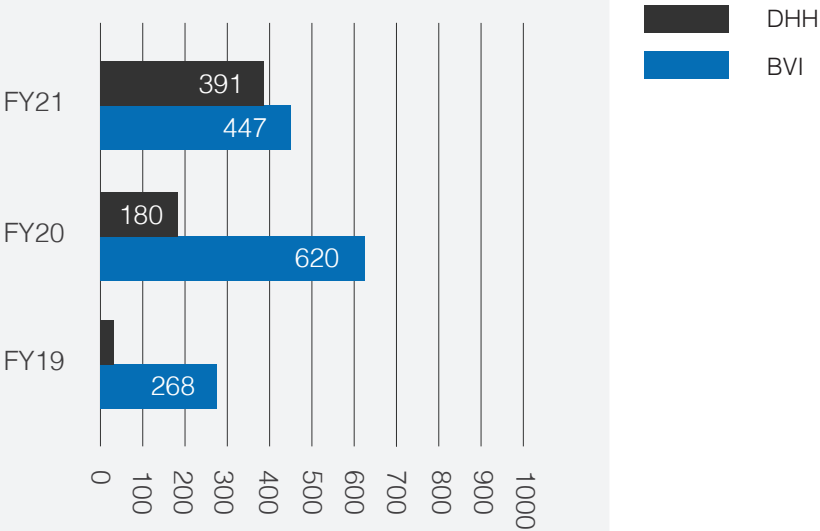
All FY2021 events were offered virtually. This next year, we will continue to offer online events. Additionally, we plan to offer some in-person and hybrid events while continuing to follow state guidelines for preventing the spread of COVID-19.



## Number of Events



## Number of Participants



# MDE-LIO Events

## BVI Events

Subject	Location	Attendance
ILS Modules Workshop	Online	14
Unified English Braille Class: Fall	Online	6
Family Nature Club: Fall Frenzy	Online	16
Active Learning	Online	15
Family Nature Club: Giving Thanks	Online	41
Family Nature Club: Winter Wonderland	Online	12
Train the Trainers: Assistive Technology Assessments	Online	30
Virtual Career Day	Online	97
Introduction to the BrailleNote Touch Plus	Online	18
Michigan Regional Braille Challenge	Online	17
Unified English Braille Class: Spring	Online	8
BVI, DHH, and DeafBlind Transition Conference	Online	153
Providing Early Intervention Services to Infants and Toddlers Who Are Blind/Visually Impaired	Online	53
Family Nature Club: Bird Bash	Online	15
Family Nature Club: Around the World Adventure	Online	31
Muffins With Mom	Online	9
Mantis Q40: An Alternative Productivity Tool	Online	17
Popsicles With Pop	Online	8
Unified English Braille Class: Summer	Online	4
BVI Summer Family Challenge	Online	27
Camp T's Club Connect	Online	9
Tricks of the Trade	Online	39

## DHH Events

Subject	Location	Attendance
ASL Class for MDE-LIO Staff	Online	9
EIPA Workshop	Online	23
Supporting Young Children Who Are DHH	Online	47
DHH Swap Meet: West	Online	14
ASL Class for Families	Online	8
ASL Class for Families II	Online	7
Beginner ASL for School Personnel: Winter	Online	8
Intermediate ASL for School Personnel: Winter	Online	8
DHH Swap Meet: East	Online	11
DHH Winter Escape	Online	28
BVI, DHH, and DeafBlind Transition Conference	Online	153
DHH Swap Meet: North	Online	7
EIPA Workshop: Advanced	Online	31
Beginner ASL for School Personnel: Spring	Online	7
Beginner ASL for School Personnel: Spring (2)	Online	8
Building Bridges Conference	Online	88
DHH Around the World Adventure	Online	39
DHH Summer Family Challenge	Online	24
Beginner ASL for School Personnel: Summer	Online	8
Beginner ASL for School Personnel: Summer (2)	Online	8
Beginner ASL for School Personnel: Fall	Online	8



# 2021 Braille Competition Goes Virtual



Every year, Michigan students who are Blind or Visually Impaired (BVI) compete in a regional contest that promotes braille literacy.

Braille Challenge, created by Braille Institute, celebrated its 21st year in 2021. It is the only academic competition of its kind in North America for students who are BVI. The Michigan Regional Braille Challenge is one of 51 regional Braille Challenge events that take place across North America each year, drawing more than 1,100 participants. MDE-LIO coordinates Michigan’s Braille Challenge event, which is held each February.

During the regional competition, students take timed tests in five categories:

- Reading comprehension
- Spelling
- Speed and accuracy
- Charts and graphs
- Proofreading

Each student’s test is scored by volunteers who are teachers of the visually impaired. Contestants who receive a score in the top ten within their age group nationally are invited to compete in the Braille Challenge Finals against students from across North America.



Riley at the 2020 Michigan Regional Braille Challenge



Sarah at the 2020 Michigan Regional Braille Challenge



2020 Michigan Regional Braille Challenge introductions

Riley, who competed in the regional challenge this year, said Braille Challenge keeps her motivated.

“I feel like it’s a great program to practice our skills in braille,” she said. “It also pushes me to want to improve my braille skills, to be better and better for the years to come.

## Switching to Virtual

Usually, the Michigan Regional Braille Challenge is held in person at Genesee Intermediate School District (ISD). Students and their families gather to take a group photo, catch up with friends, grab some goodies, and break out into their testing rooms.

In 2021, the Michigan Regional Braille Challenge was held virtually for the first time due to COVID-19. On February 20, ten students participated in the virtual event. Seven additional students across the state competed throughout the month, proctored by their teacher for the visually impaired.

Although the competition had never been held virtually, everyone was up for the challenge, including parents. To prepare, the proctors and parents met online to talk through the day of the event as well as the testing materials that were sent to students’ homes.

A few special features helped everyone feel connected and ready to participate in the virtual event. Prior to the competition, students received their testing materials and a Braille Challenge gift bag filled with goodies such as a water bottle, face mask, hand sanitizer, and Uno cards with braille and large print. Audio devices and braille writers were also sent to families who requested them for their student’s participation.



# 2021 Braille Competition Goes Virtual



Sarah and her mother during a Braille Challenge interview



Riley and her mother during a Braille Challenge interview

Sarah, another Braille Challenge competitor, said she felt calmer completing the tests at home this year instead of traveling to a different location.

“Nothing seemed very challenging about the setup, because everything is online so much,” she said. “What I really did like was that it was relaxing and slower paced.”

### ‘It’s Amazing’

Despite competing remotely, each contestant brought the same level of enthusiasm and love for reading and writing as they would during an in-person Braille Challenge. Braille writers hummed, and fingers flew across pages as participants demonstrated their understanding of braille.

When Braille Challenge is held in person, students are placed into testing rooms while their parents do other activities. For the virtual event, however, parents were able to observe the testing for the first time. Annette Letterman, whose daughter competed in Braille Challenge this year, said she hadn’t realized how fast-paced the competition can be.

“As a parent, when we’re at the actual face-to-face Braille Challenge, we’re always a little nervous but are thinking, ‘Oh, they’re doing fine,’” she said. “But when you’re sitting in the room with them, and you’re seeing how quickly they braille and how they work their way through it, it’s amazing.”



Group photo at the 2020 Michigan Regional Braille Challenge

### Wrapping Up Another Year

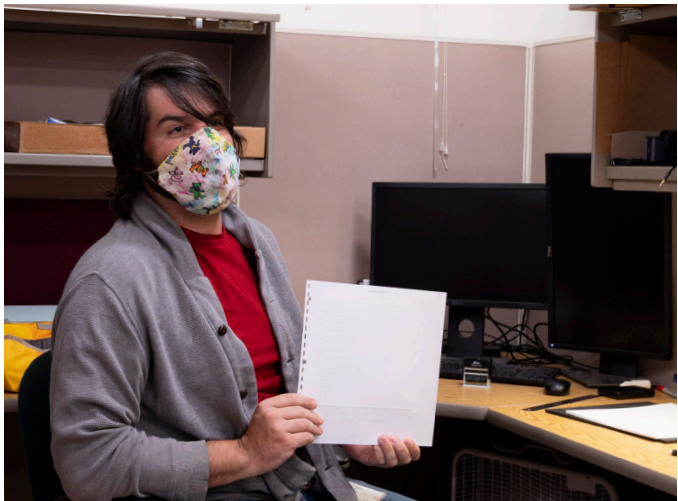
After the final contest was scored for the Michigan competition, students, parents, and proctors met once again to celebrate their successes. Students opened their prize boxes, played games, and danced to a few songs. Students were also given awards in categories such as perseverance, organization, excellence in reading comprehension, and excellence in charts and graphs.

Everyone felt a sense of pride as the 2021 Michigan Regional Braille Challenge came to a close. When Sarah was asked for one word to describe how she felt after the competition was over, she laughed.

“It would either be ‘proud’ or ‘relieved,’” she said.



# Instructional Materials Center Staff Returns to the Office





# Braille Production

## Volumes Produced

1,052

## Total Braille Pages

121,262

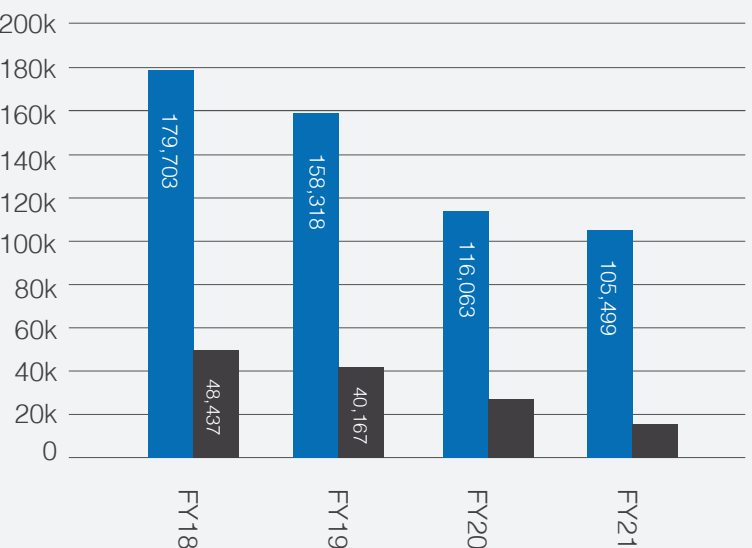
## Braille Text Pages

105,499

## Tactile Graphics

15,875

## Braille Page Production



■ Braille Text Pages  
■ Braille Tactile Graphics

# Enlarged-Print Production

## Books Produced

46

## Volumes Produced

60

## Pages Printed

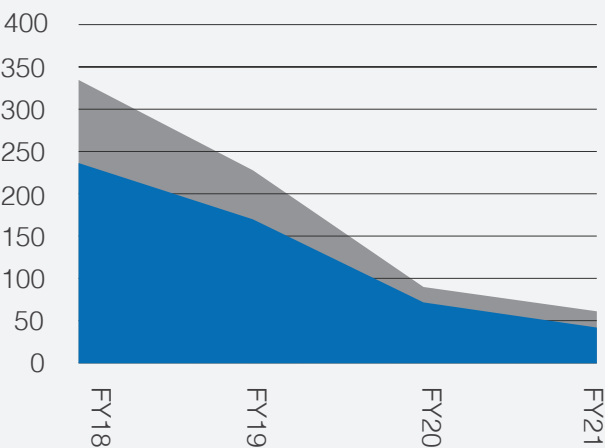
10,367

## Enlarged-Print Production

MDE-LIO's enlarged-print production serves a valuable niche for students who read text but need it in a larger font. When an enlarged-print book isn't available in our library or from other vendors, MDE-LIO will produce an enlarged-print book.

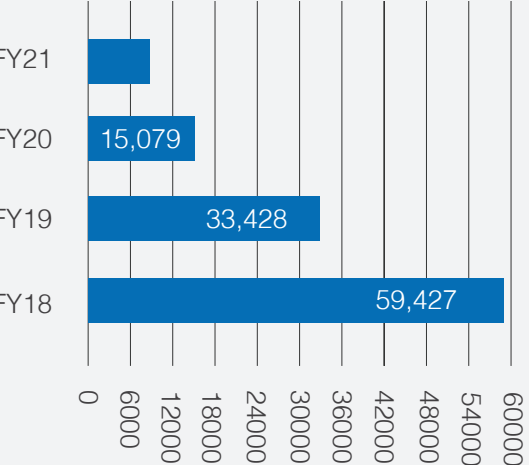
This year, enlarged-print production, like all services within our Instructional Materials Center, was dramatically impacted by a reduction in orders as schools were closed and uncertainty surrounding the 2020-2021 school year persisted.

## Enlarged-Print Production



■ Enlarged-Print Volumes Produced  
■ Enlarged-Print Books Completed

## Pages Printed





# Library Services

## Items Loaned

8,264

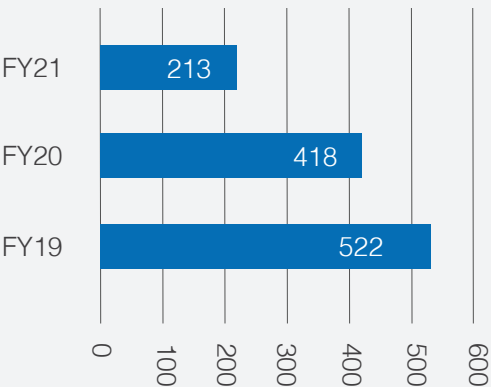
## Items Returned

2,531

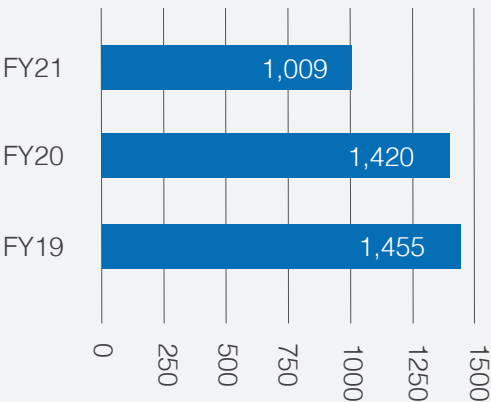
## Value of Reused Items

\$358,998

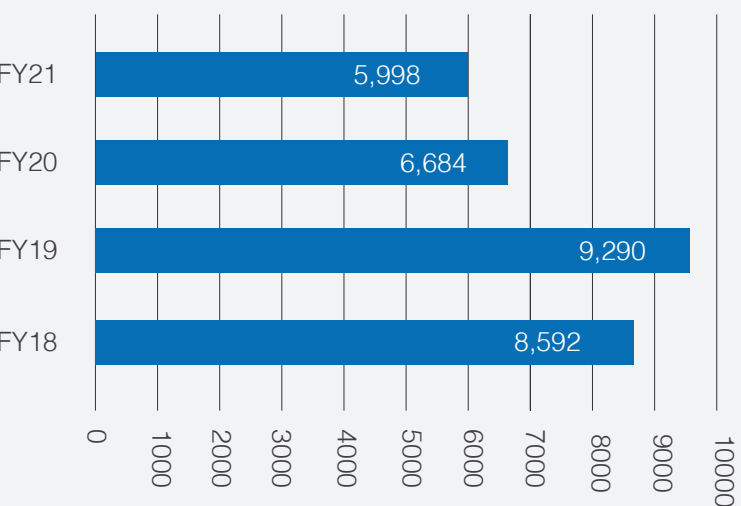
## Requests for Books



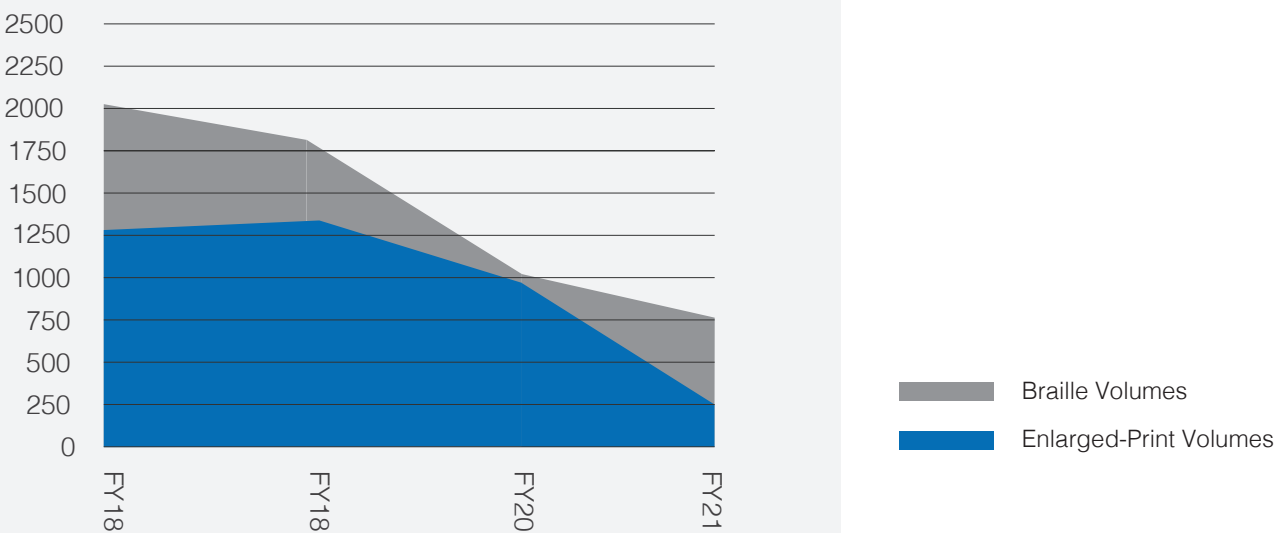
## Requests for APH Products



## APH Products Loaned



## Braille and Enlarged-Print Volumes Loaned



Library services include loaning books and educational materials from the MDE-LIO library, as well as from the American Printing House for the Blind, to school personnel supporting students who are BVI or DHH. Resources are also available for school personnel, college students, and parents/guardians to borrow.

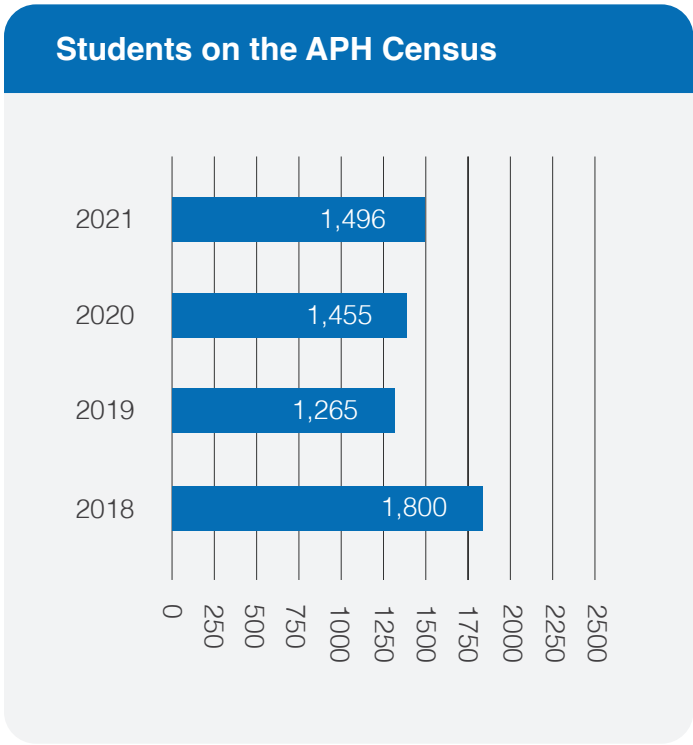
**Please note:** Library services data covers October 1, 2020 - July 31, 2021.

# Annual Student Census

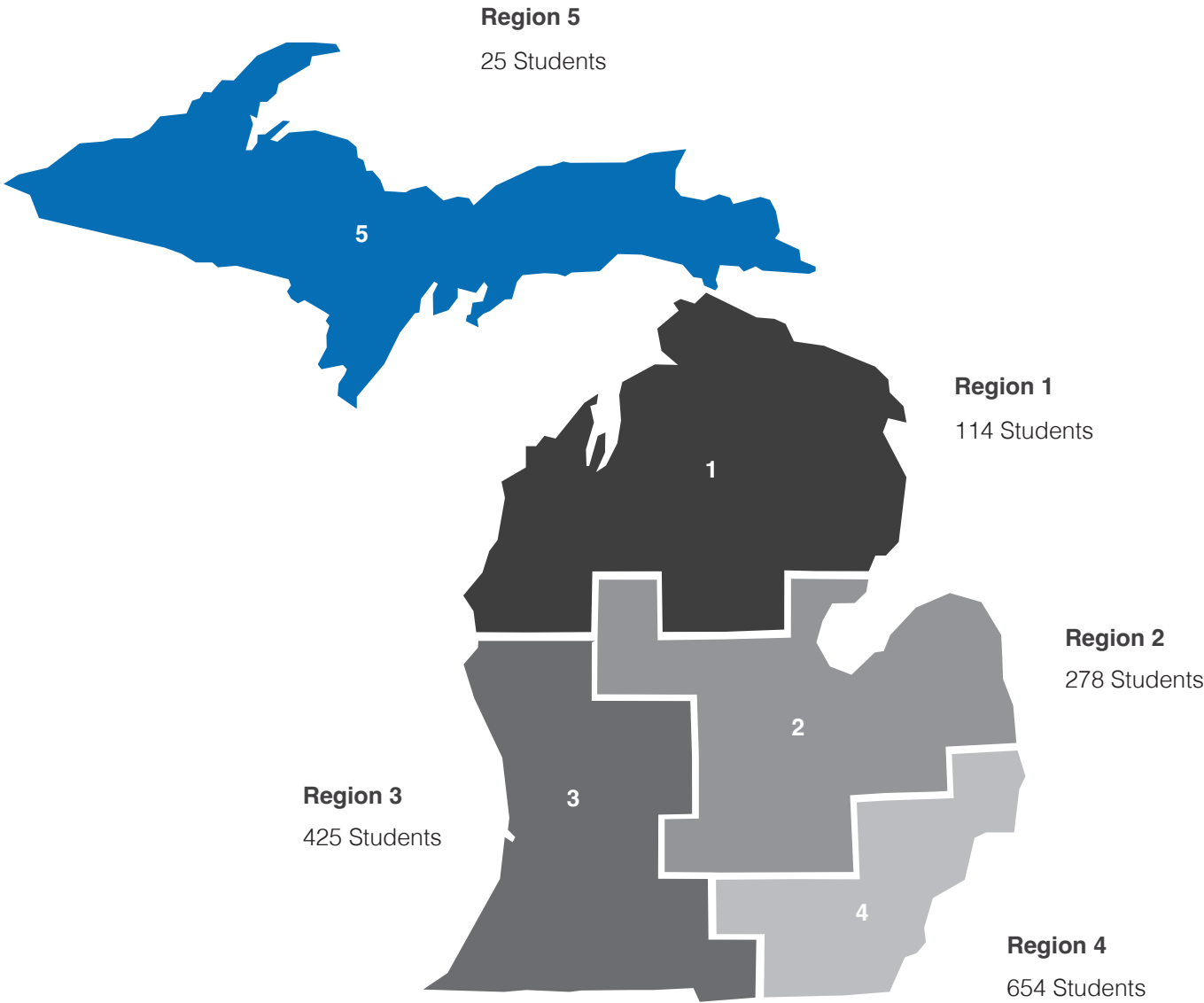
The American Printing House for the Blind (APH) provides educational materials for students who are BVI. The Federal Quota Program provides funds for states and agencies to purchase educational materials from APH. Funds are allocated annually based on information collected through an annual student census. Students must meet a specific set of criteria to be eligible for Federal Quota funds.

MDE-LIO conducts the APH census via an online system, replacing a lengthy manual process that involved mailing census forms to and from districts. While creating the online system, MDE-LIO invited stakeholders from the field to test the system and provide feedback.

Michigan is one of only a few states that have fully moved this process online. The new system has streamlined the process, saved money by reducing printing and postage costs, and saved hours of staff time.



# Census Data by Region



# Collaborating Organizations

## BVI

Michigan:

- Michigan Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired
- Early On Michigan
- Intermediate School Districts
- Henry Ford Museum
- Michigan Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP)
- Western Michigan University
- DB Central
- Penrickton Center
- Disability Network of Southwest Michigan
- Michigan Career and Technical Institute
- Project Search
- Michigan Interagency Transition Team (MITT)
- Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS)
- Council for Exceptional Children

National:

- California School for the Blind
- New York Institute for Special Education
- Braille Institute
- Utah State School for the Deaf and Blind
- HumanWare
- American Printing House for the Blind
- Leader Dogs for the Blind



## DHH

Michigan:

- DeafBlind Central
- Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI)
- Early On Training and Technical Assistance (EOT&TA)
- Holley Institute
- Michigan Coalition for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing People
- Michigan Deaf Association
- Michigan Hands & Voices
- Michigan School Professionals for Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (MSPSDHH)
- Michigan Transition Services Association (MTSA)

National:

- Gallaudet University Regional Center (GURC)
- National Deaf Center (NDC)
- Phonak







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