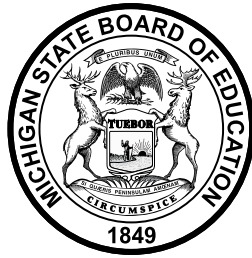




2022 Annual Report

Michigan Department of Education - Low Incidence Outreach



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**“This has
been a busy
year for
MDE-LIO.”**

Message from the Director

This past school year, MDE-LIO was excited to start providing some in-person events. We also continued to support the field with opportunities to participate virtually in trainings, workshops, and other activities. Schools and families continued to face challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic while working to meet children’s educational needs.

Throughout this annual report, you will see data supporting the work we do and the faces behind it all. This has been a busy year for MDE-LIO: In addition to providing learning opportunities for school personnel, families, and students, our staff has also been working to support new teachers of students who are Blind or Visually Impaired (BVI) and/or Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH), as well as orientation and mobility specialists, through ongoing meetings and in-person work.

This year, MDE-LIO’s braille book production team worked at a record pace to complete books for students. Thank you to teachers and staff supporting students who are BVI for requesting book orders in a timely manner this past year.

Our efforts to improve communication with those we serve through emails, Facebook, and newsletters have increasingly broadened our outreach efforts. We have also continued to partner with other state agencies, organizations, schools, and families to serve the field to the best of our abilities.

I hope you enjoy this annual report, which offers just a glimpse into all we do.

Roxanne Balfour
MDE-LIO Director



Thank You

We would like to extend our gratitude to MDE-LIO staff, contractors, team members, families, school personnel, and presenters for your contributions. Thank you for supporting our efforts to provide equal access to a quality education for all students who are BVI or DHH.

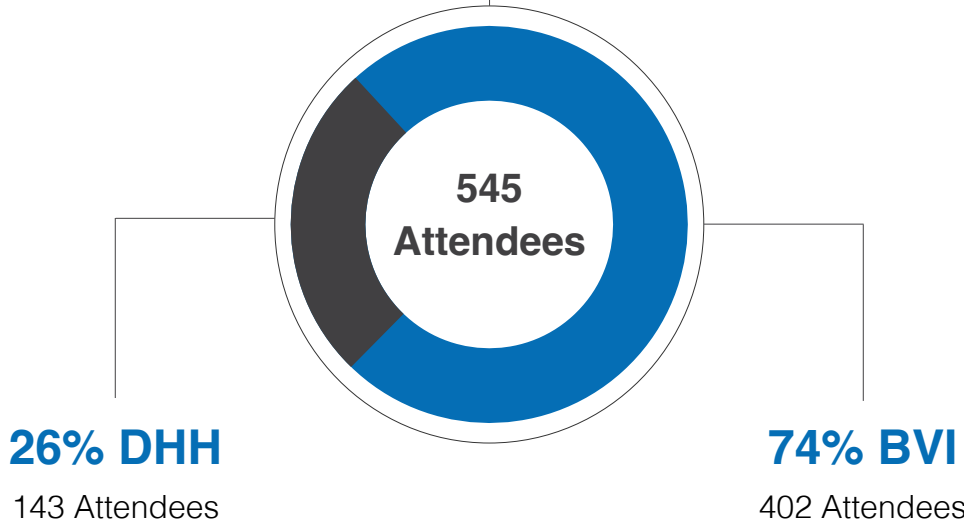
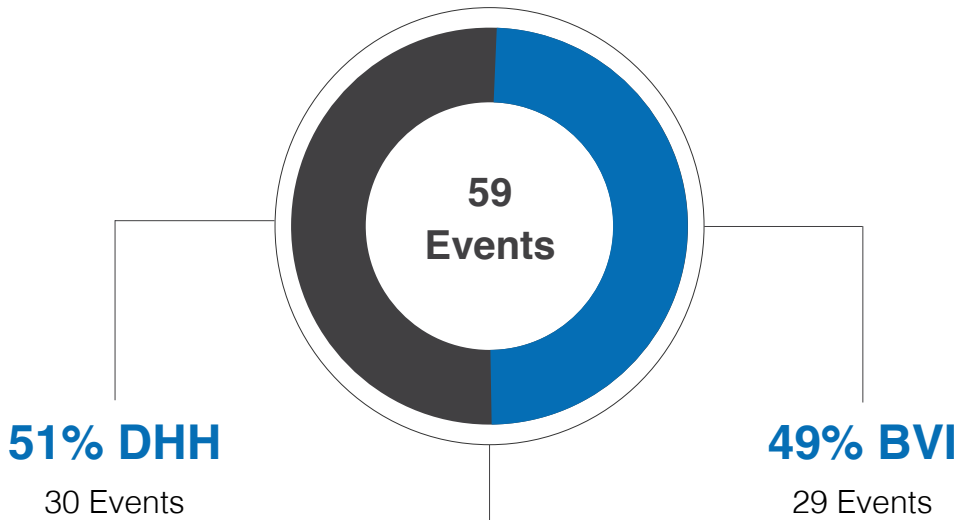


MDE-LIO Events

During fiscal year 2022 (FY 22), MDE-LIO continued to host fun learning opportunities for students and their families, as well as valuable professional development events for school personnel. Family events included camping, learning financial literacy, discussing the transition from high school to adult life, social skills, and more. MDE-LIO also provided regional independent living skills workshops. Professional development events focused on a variety of topics such as assessments, braille, American Sign Language, assistive technology, and transition.

After more than a year of being unable to offer in-person events due to COVID-19, MDE-LIO began hosting events onsite once again. With COVID-19 safety protocols in place, MDE-LIO supported Camp T Family Nature Club events and overnight summer camps for students at Camp Tuhsmeheeta. Additionally, MDE-LIO collaborated with several intermediate school districts to provide regional independent living skills workshops. MDE-LIO also collaborated with the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons to provide three hybrid events on the topic of transition and a financial literacy event that included four online sessions followed by an in-person session. The hybrid events gave registrants the option of participating online or onsite. Some MDE-LIO events also offered the option for participants to register to access a recording of the live event.

In the coming year, MDE-LIO will continue to offer many learning opportunities for students, families, and school personnel in a variety of platforms, including online, onsite, hybrid, and recorded events.



Popular DHH Events

- Exploring American Sign Language (ASL)
- Beginner ASL for School Personnel
- Intermediate ASL for School Personnel
- Pack of All Traits
- Community Pals

Popular BVI Events

- Talking Transition Across the Lifespan with Karen Wolffe
- Career Day
- Unified English Braille Class
- Demystifying the Expanded Core Curriculum
- Assessments of the Trade

Braille Challenge

This year’s Michigan Regional Braille Challenge once again exceeded our expectations, especially during a pandemic. Of the 27 students who participated across the state, six were brand new to Braille Challenge, and seven attended the virtual or in-person contest for the first time.

As MDE-LIO launched its eighth year of hosting the Michigan Regional Braille Challenge, the plan was to keep the event accessible for all participants.

Participants were given three options for competing: attend the event in person, participate online, or complete the challenge separately with their teacher for the visually impaired (TVI). Six students opted to complete the challenge while working with their TVI. Three students, with the support of their parents and a virtual proctor, participated in the online event.

Genesee Intermediate School District (ISD) and Kent ISD were eager to get back to the in-person excitement of Braille Challenge. In January and February, both ISDs provided space and volunteers to support students and their families who gathered in person. Eighteen students came ready to read and write braille, and to showcase their skills.

While the students competed, their parents attended a technology workshop led by MDE-LIO Technology Team Member Nancy Ozinga and American Printing House for the Blind Outreach Specialist Scott Hegle. Hegle and Ozinga shared information about different types of accessible technology, from braille displays to virtual reality games.

As usual, all students who participated in the Michigan Regional Braille Challenge received a goody bag and a Braille Challenge t-shirt, whether they competed in person or virtually. We would like to give a shout-out to MDE-LIO Graphic Arts Designer Rory Goodine, who has created each year’s t-shirt design since the beginning.

One student from Michigan, Julia, qualified to compete at Braille Challenge Finals in June. She earned a third-place medal at the Varsity level. Julia just graduated from high school, and this was her last year competing in Braille Challenge. She has made it to Braille Challenge Finals each year since first grade. What an achievement!

“We really enjoy the online version. It is relaxing and allows students that are more comfortable at home to do well at the Braille Challenge.” - Parent Survey



“It’s a great event! Very organized, a lot of good information, friendships formed, and just a lot of fun! Thank you for all you do!” - Parent Survey



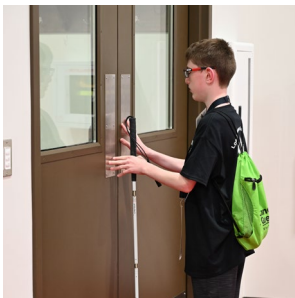
Cane Quest



In May, MDE-LIO hosted the first annual Michigan Regional Cane Quest competition. Cane Quest is a challenging orientation and mobility (O&M) contest for students, created and organized by Braille Institute.

Regional Cane Quest events are held across the country, and contestants are divided into three groups: Scouts, Explorers, and Trailblazers. Our event in May focused on the Scout level, for students in grades 3–6 who are Blind/Visually Impaired.

During the competition, which was held at Camp Tuhsmehta (Camp T), students were challenged to demonstrate fundamental travel techniques and O&M skills, such as locating dropped objects, navigating with a human guide, and using the touch-and-drag cane technique.



“Thank you for doing this, our family enjoyed it so much!”

- Facebook comment

MDE-LIO Education Consultant Beth Brabbs organized the event, along with several volunteers.

“Students and families were thrilled with the day’s activities,” Brabbs said. “I also want to thank the many volunteers who generously gave their time and talents to make this event such a great success. We couldn’t have done it without them.”

While students participated in the contest, their siblings participated in outdoor adventure activities, and the adults attended a parent workshop. Everyone participated in a goalball workshop hosted by goalball Paralympian John Kuskus in Camp T’s Oak Recreation Center.

Students’ scores were tallied during the event. Students received feedback on the skills they performed, as well as suggestions for improvement. Their O&M specialists also received this information so continued learning can take place.

In fall 2022, MDE-LIO hosted another Michigan Regional Cane Quest event in partnership with Leader Dogs for the Blind. Our staff looks forward to offering this challenge each year for students and families.



LIVE with LIO

MDE-LIO continued to offer LIVE with LIO webinars throughout the 2021–2022 school year, covering important topics for those in the Blind/Visually Impaired (BVI) and Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH) fields. The webinars were presented by MDE-LIO consultants and guest presenters discussing useful programs, resources, and tools. One BVI webinar and one DHH webinar were held each month.

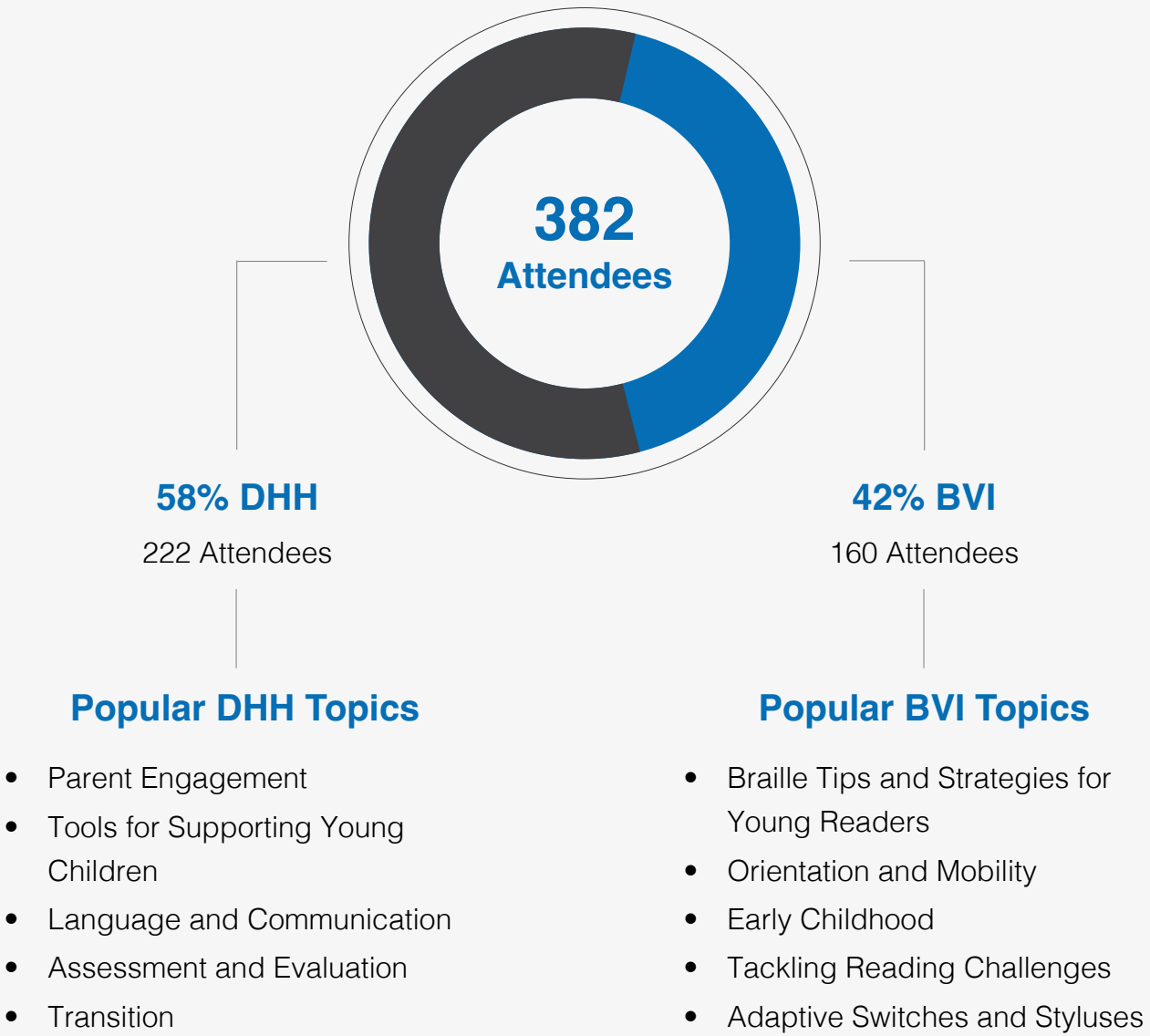
Here are just a few of the great things survey participants had to say about LIVE with LIO webinars:

- **“I love that you have done the work in compiling resources that are research-based and directly align with our discipline.”**
- **“Everything was nice. I always like to go back and review all of the links that are presented. Such a wealth of information!”**
- **“MDE-LIO Ed Consultants are so valuable, friendly, and I appreciate you all!”**
- **“Love LIVE with LIO! Thank you for doing them!”**

MDE-LIO will continue to offer LIVE with LIO webinars throughout the next school year.



Attendees



Digital Outreach

mdelio.org

32,085

Website Visitors

The total number of people who visited mdelio.org this year, including new and repeat visitors.

111,840

Total Pageviews

The total number of individual pages people viewed on mdelio.org this year.



MDE-LIO uses three main digital tools to provide information about events, services and resources:

- mdelio.org
- social media
- email campaigns

Additionally, MDE-LIO partners with external organizations, communities, and listservs to promote services and resources. MDE-LIO sends an “external news” email every month to share news and events from other organizations.

Facebook

751

Followers

The number of people who “follow” us and see our posts in their news feed. This is a 12% increase from last year.

2,138

Page Visits

The total number of times Facebook users visited our page in the past year.

Email Campaigns

154

Emails Sent

MDE-LIO emails included reminders, announcements, event promotions, news, calendars, and reports.

66,219

Total Opens

Total opens measures each time an email is opened, including when a recipient opens an email multiple times.

40.76%

Email Open Rate

The percentage of users who opened an email. The average open rate for the education industry is 23.42%.

11,629

Total Links Clicked

Total links clicked measures every time a user clicked a link in an email they received.

Video Library

In October 2021, MDE-LIO added a video library to mdelio.org. The video library is a convenient place for school personnel and parents to find all of the videos MDE-LIO produces. Videos are becoming a key component of our support for students who are BVI and DHH. This year's video topics included:

- conducting functional vision assessments
- travel tips for students who are BVI
- DHH Reading Kits
- Hooray for Braille kits



New Equipment

MDE-LIO has been investing in new equipment that will help us make higher-quality videos. MDE-LIO has purchased gimbals, cameras, lenses, lighting, computers, microphones, backdrops, and tripods. This equipment will allow staff to record live events and produce short instructional or promotional videos.

Staff are excited to put this equipment to good use as they continue to provide resources and training to families and educational teams serving students who are BVI and DHH.

Upcoming Videos

MDE-LIO is already working on new videos for the video library. New videos will include:

- American Sign Language (ASL) vocabulary skills
- orientation and mobility tips
- instructional videos for BVI assessments
- Camp T promotions
- live event recordings

Library Management System

The MDE-LIO library is unique. Most libraries have a set catalog of items users can choose from. When all copies are checked out, users have to wait until they are returned to borrow them. This is not how MDE-LIO operates. Our goal is to get students accessible materials as quickly as possible so they can succeed in the classroom. In addition to offering items for loan, we purchase items from the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) and offer in-house braille and enlarged-print production.

Existing library management software doesn't have the flexibility to allow users to request anything they need, yet we encourage educators to request any items that are available from APH and any books their students are using in the classroom. Because of this, MDE-LIO has had two systems for years: One system managed the library and tracked who had items checked out. The other system managed requests and allowed our staff flexibility to handle requests for items that weren't in our library.

For the past three years, MDE-LIO has been developing a custom library management system (LMS) in partnership with the Center for Educational Networking. The new LMS will bring together our catalog system and our request system. This year, MDE-LIO launched the catalog system and has been working hard to develop the request system. The new LMS offers many exciting benefits. Here are just a few:

- user-friendly for staff and users
- automates time-consuming tasks
- includes improved reporting features
- web-based and can be used on any device that is connected to the internet
- can handle a variety of items with unique needs



9,019 Items Cataloged

The LMS catalog system launched in July 2020. Over the past year, we have cataloged thousands of books, products, and pieces of equipment. This included adding descriptions, images, identification numbers, and bar codes.

In addition, we culled out-of-date books and books with old braille codes. We also reworked our shelf numbering and organization system to make it easier to find items. We are already seeing the benefits of the LMS, and when the updated order system launches in FY 2023, we will see even greater efficiency.

4,653	Books Books include textbooks, leisure reading books, resource library books, and braille master files.
2,431	Products Products include a variety of educational materials offered by APH.
1,126	Pieces of Equipment Equipment includes assistive technology, braille writers, and electronics.
809	Budding Seedlings These books are early literacy books produced by Seedlings Braille Books for Children.

Library Services

Requests Received

289

Book Requests
A modest increase over the 288 book requests received last year

1,532

APH Requests
A 15% increase over last year's 1,332 APH requests



2,004 Items Checked Out

This year, MDE-LIO used the new LMS to check out books, products, and equipment. It takes a lot of effort to complete these requests. Some braille books have more than 100 volumes, which need to be inspected and packaged into several boxes. Many products include hundreds of small pieces, and our staff checks to make sure everything is included before it's shipped. Equipment needs to be inspected, charged, and tested before it is sent to the borrower. This year, MDE-LIO staff members have shipped thousands of items that have helped hundreds of students across Michigan.



1,859

APH Products
APH products include assistive technology and learning resources for students.



42

Books
Books include textbooks as well as leisure reading books.



21

Resource Library Items
These items include professional development books and tools for both BVI and DHH.

82

Assistive Technology Devices
These items include magnifiers, braille notetakers, brailers, and Oticon FM system.



MDE-LIO has been producing braille for 16 years.

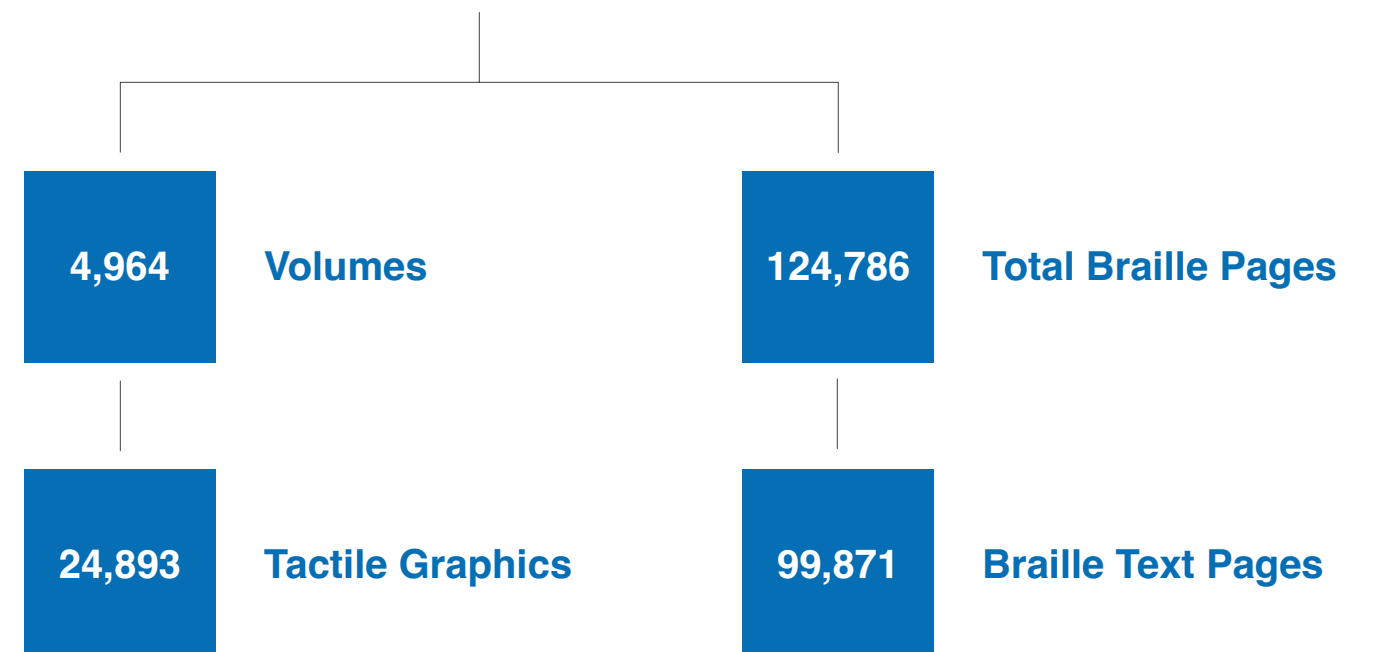
Braille Production Improvements

This year, we leveraged SharePoint to transfer large files between our staff and the transcribers. Transcribers are now able to download a single scanned file and begin working right away. In addition to being more eco-friendly, the new process has led to the following improvements:

- streamlined workflow for both parties
- dramatically improved efficiency
- reduced need for shipping supplies
- no extra cost, compared to shipping

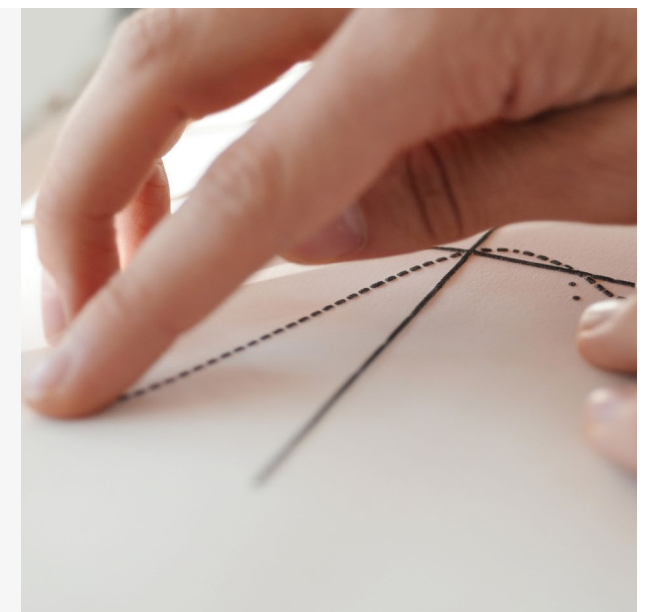
This process also helps districts save money. Before, we needed two print copies of a book to complete the braille transcription process. One copy would go to the transcriber and one copy would go to the proofreader's sighted copy-holder. This new process only requires one copy, which is removed from circulation per copyright law.

Key Numbers



Digital Tactile Graphics

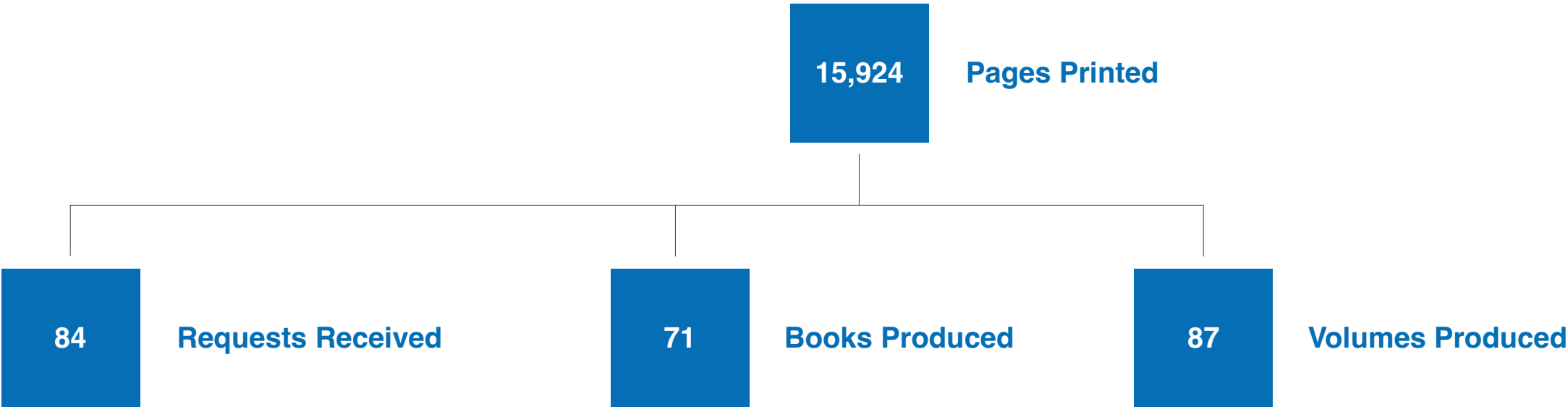
This year, MDE-LIO fully switched to digital tactile graphics. This process involved collaborative work, in-depth learning, and training to ensure our staff and state vendors uniformly made the switch. Transcribers now produce digital files for MDE-LIO staff to emboss with specialized machinery. Because our master copies are now digital, we have been able to cut the need for costly plastic thermoform paper by more than 70 percent. Replacements and corrections can also be made quickly, reducing shipping times and streamlining the production process.



Enlarged Print

MDE-LIO produces enlarged-print books for students in Michigan. Enlarged-print books are typically produced in 14-to-16-point font, depending on the size of the original book. While they are not as effective as large-print books with 18-point font or higher, enlarged print books provide a critical resource for students with low vision. Large-print books take a lot of time to produce because the book needs to be digitally reformatted.

Enlarged print, on the other hand, uses scanners and printers to reprint books on larger paper. This limits the maximum font size but can be completed in a matter of hours with a single staff member. Very few books are available in large print, so we offer our enlarged print services to ensure students in Michigan have something easier to read in the classroom right away.



Did You Know?

Enlarged-print books have long spines, often 14 to 16 inches long. In the past, we used strip binding, which uses a piece of fabric with glue on one side, to bind our books. Strip binding is easy to use, sturdy, and can be completed quickly.

However, strip binding requires specialized equipment and materials that have become difficult to find. This year, we switched to comb binding and are exploring spiral binding as an alternative.



APH Annual Census

This year, 1,509 students were counted in the annual APH census. The census provides more than just data. Each student counted contributes to Federal Quota funds that can be used to purchase books, products, and equipment from APH, at no cost to schools or districts.

A single assistive technology device can cost more than \$3,000, and a braille textbook can easily cost more than \$2,000. These funds are crucial to ensuring students in Michigan have the materials they need to succeed in the classroom.

Census by Region

Region 1

127 Students

Region 2

304 Students

Region 3

412 Students

Region 4

633 Students

Region 5

33 Students

Collaborations

MDE-LIO collaborates with several organizations to coordinate events, provide training, and ensure students receive resources. This year, MDE-LIO worked with the following organizations.

In addition, MDE-LIO collaborated with several intermediate school districts.



Top 10 Strategic Education Plan Goals

In FY 22, MDE-LIO offered many events and activities. When planning events, we strive to align with and meet the Michigan Department of Education's Top 10 Strategic Education Plan goals. Below are just a few areas of our work that accomplish these goals.

To **expand early childhood learning opportunities**, we offered several virtual opportunities for families and young children who are DHH to play educational games and get to know each other. We also partnered with intermediate school districts to educate Early On teams about working with young children who are BVI.

To **improve early literacy achievement**, we began offering DHH Reading Kits that include a book and activity ideas. We also partnered with Seedlings Braille Books for Children to offer Hooray for Braille Kits, with print and braille books for children ages birth to five.

To **improve the health, safety, and wellness of learners**, we offered a two-part virtual social and emotional learning workshop for school personnel and parents supporting students who are DHH.

To **increase the percentage of students who graduate from high school** and **expand secondary learning opportunities**, we have offered several opportunities to learn about the transition from school to adult life. In November 2021, we partnered with Bureau of Services for Blind Persons to offer three events with Career Consultant and Counselor Dr. Karen Wolffe on the topic of transition for students who are BVI, including a career day event. These events helped parents and school personnel learn how to plan for the transition to adult life before the student reaches adulthood.

There is a shortage of teachers in the BVI and DHH fields in Michigan. To **increase the number of certified teachers in these areas**, MDE-LIO manages the Consortia for Teacher Preparation, partnering with out-of-state colleges and universities to help teachers earn a BVI or DHH endorsement. Since the Consortia began in 2012, 46 teachers have completed the program.





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