



Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority

STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2020



History and Organizational Structure

The Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA) is an interprovincial co-operative agency established in 1975 by joint agreement among the Ministers of Education of New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island.

The *Agreement* provided for the creation of the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority and authorized it to provide educational services, programs, and opportunities for persons from birth to 21 years of age with low incidence sensory impairments. This includes children and youth who are blind or visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing and who are residents of Atlantic Canada.

Organizational Structure

Board of Directors

APSEA is governed by a Board of Directors of twelve persons, three from each province. The Deputy Minister of Education from each province is a permanent member of the Board. The two additional members from each province are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council for two-year terms. The Board is responsible for overall planning and policy development for the organization.

Standing Committees of the Board

- **Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee of the Board of Directors is made up of the four Deputy Ministers of Education in Atlantic Canada and is responsible for the consideration and presentation of recommendations to the Board on major matters having an overall impact on the management and operation of APSEA.

- **Program Advisory Committee**

The Program Advisory Committee, comprised of the provincial Directors of Student Services or equivalent and other appointed members, is responsible for advising the Board on matters relating to programs and services for children and youth who are blind or visually impaired, and deaf or hard of hearing.

- **Financial Advisory Committee**

The Financial Advisory Committee, comprised of the provincial Directors of Finance from each provincial Department of Education, is responsible for providing expertise and support, through the Executive Committee, to the Board of Directors in the financial management of APSEA.

- **Trust Fund Committees**

There are two Trust Fund Committees which determine how funds for scholarships, awards, or special projects will be distributed; one committee for the trust funds for children who are blind or visually impaired and one committee for the trust funds for children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Each committee consists of three members; the APSEA Program Director, the APSEA Director of Finance and Administration, and an individual from the community. The APSEA Board of Directors is the final authority for the administration of trust funds.

- **Autism in Education Advisory Committee**

The Autism in Education (AIE) Advisory Committee, composed of the provincial Directors of Student Services or equivalent, the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Specialists appointed by each province, the AIE Partnership Coordinator, and APSEA Superintendent, facilitates the advancement and dissemination of knowledge of Autism Spectrum Disorder in the area of empirically-supported educational instruction and practices.

Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles

MISSION

To provide educational services, in collaboration with our partners, to support children and youth from birth to 21 who are blind/visually impaired (BVI) and/or deaf/hard of hearing (DHH).

VISION

To support families and the public school system in the education of children and youth from birth to 21 who are blind/visually impaired (BVI) and/or deaf/hard of hearing (DHH). Our professional commitment focuses on providing comprehensive educational opportunities, which lead to the highest potential for independence, self-sufficiency and productive, fulfilling lives.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Key organizational principles guide the design, implementation and evaluation of educational services. APSEA is:

- child-focused and family-centered;
- collaborative, involving the student, family, teachers and other professionals;
- supportive of independence and self-advocacy;
- committed to equality of educational opportunity;
- research and evidence-based;
- accountable for learning outcomes;
- guided by provincial policies, procedures and guidelines; and
- future-oriented, flexible and innovative.

Strategic Themes

In order to achieve our vision, APSEA will focus on the following strategic themes:

1. Safe and Inclusive Culture
2. Service Delivery
3. Communication

Goals, Strategies and Indicators of Success

Strategic Goal 1:

To promote and strengthen a culture which is safe and socially-just with a focus on equity, diversity and inclusion

Strategy:

- 1.1 Ensure that fairness, equity and inclusion are integrated as essential principles to all policies, programs, operations and practice

Specific Initiatives:

- 1.1.1 Develop and facilitate professional development sessions related to inclusion and diversity for staff and the Board of Directors
- 1.1.2 Review hiring policies and practices and revise as necessary to ensure fair and equitable hiring practices
- 1.1.3 Review APSEA's Vision and Guiding Principles and revise as necessary
- 1.1.4 Create accessible and inclusive learning and work places, spaces, processes and opportunities

Indicators of Success:

- APSEA's Vision and Guiding Principles reflect diversity
- Hiring policies reflect fair and equitable practices
- Staff and the Board of Directors have participated in the culturally responsive professional development sessions and report increased confidence in embedding the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion in their work
- Staff report an increased level of comfort and flexibility in embedding the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion in their work with children, youth, families and partners
- Protocols developed to assist members of the APSEA community in ensuring fairness, equity and inclusion

Strategic Goal 2:

To improve delivery of and access to services to children, youth and families

Strategy:

- 2.1** Develop and implement a process that includes meaningful engagement with and from parents to maximize the learning potential from birth to 5 years

Specific Initiatives:

- 2.1.1 Complete environmental scan to identify the strengths and challenges of the APSEA preschool model
- 2.1.2 Research models of service delivery for preschool children with vision or hearing sensory loss
- 2.1.3 Identify gaps in the current service delivery model
- 2.1.4 Professional development for staff
- Developmental milestones of birth to 5 years
 - Coaching and mentoring of parents and caregivers
 - Professional learning communities

Indicators of Success:

- Identified staff have completed professional development in the areas of developmental milestones of birth to 5 years and coaching and mentoring of parents and caregivers and report increased confidence in coaching parents and caregivers
- Based on an environmental scan, research and identification of gaps in the current service delivery model implement a process to bridge the identified gaps

Strategic Goal 2:

To improve delivery of and access to services to children, youth and families

Strategy:

- 2.2** Develop and implement a plan to maximize telepractice as a complementary service delivery option

Specific Initiatives:

- 2.2.1 Presentation to school board/district staff and provincial partners
- 2.2.2 Continue to field test the draft telepractice guidelines for schools
- 2.2.3 Professional development and training plan for APSEA and school board/district staff
- 2.2.4 Develop a technology plan, cost/benefit analysis and technology protocols
- 2.2.5 Implement telepractice as a complementary service delivery option

Indicators of Success:

- Increased number of children, youth and families accessing direct service through telepractice
- Educational teams reporting increased confidence in their knowledge and ability to reinforce Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) outcomes in their settings as a result of participation in telepractice with APSEA staff
- Educational teams reporting on the children and youth having increased transfer of skills from the telepractice sessions to other settings

Strategic Goal 2:

To improve delivery of and access to services to children, youth and families

Strategy:

- 2.3** Enhance supports and services to children and youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) through strategic refinement of professional development opportunities provided by the Autism in Education Partnership (AIE) for educational staff

Specific Initiatives:

- 2.3.1 Evaluate the translation of knowledge into classroom practice by educational personnel to support learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- 2.3.2 Develop and strengthen strategic partnerships with specific professional and academic organizations; government departments, non-government partners and stakeholders
- 2.3.3 Create and facilitate targeted collaborative learning opportunities as follow-up to AIE-provided professional development for interested groups of educational staff

Indicators of Success:

- Teams reporting increased confidence in their knowledge and ability to implement evidence-based strategies for learners with ASD
- Participants reporting increased implementation of strategies as a result of professional development
- Partnerships formalized with key professional colleagues and stakeholders

Strategic Goal 3:

To continue to improve internal and external communications in order to promote collaboration

Strategy:

- 3.1** Develop and implement an effective communication plan to support all APSEA employees

Specific Initiatives:

- 3.1.1 Continue to consult with staff regarding communication
- 3.1.2 Establish opportunities for APSEA colleagues to connect for professional growth
- 3.1.3 Support employees who are in leadership roles in becoming communication leaders
- 3.1.4 Develop and maintain an APSEA staff website

Indicators of Success:

- Staff report improved communication
- Staff section of the APSEA website established

Strategic Goal 3:

To continue to improve internal and external communication in order to promote collaboration

Strategy:

- 3.2** Develop and implement an external communication plan to more effectively communicate with children and youth, families and service delivery partners

Specific Initiatives:

- 3.2.1 Establish a procedure for reciprocal communication with children, and youth, families and service delivery partners
- 3.2.2 Develop and maintain a public section of the APSEA website
- 3.2.3 Develop presentations to be used to promote APSEA services and supports to school districts/boards, Departments of Education, colleges, universities, service delivery partners and at conferences throughout Atlantic Canada
- 3.2.4 Explore the possibilities of employing social media as a communication tool at APSEA

Indicators of Success:

- Children and youth, families and service delivery partners report improved communication
- Public section of the APSEA website is established
- APSEA promotional presentations are prepared and ready to use as the opportunities arise
- Prepare a report which includes a summary of findings regarding the use of social media as a communication tool at APSEA

Accountability for Our Process

Upon approval of the Strategic Plan, Senior Leadership will oversee the operational implementation of the strategies described herein. The entire APSEA Community will work together in the achievement of these organizational goals.

Progress towards the strategic goals will be communicated annually.