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Introduction

Time continues to fly ... perhaps a reflection of how busy we all are! Short-term programs, regional staff meetings, and regular school- and Centre-based events make for a vibrant calendar. This sense of excitement is accentuated by the “big rocks” presently on the APSEA agenda.

The Senior Management Team continues to build on lessons from the Review to transition toward the development of a Strategic Plan. The process will accelerate as issues concerning Autism and facilities become clear.

Articles in this issue are indicative of the wonderful diversity within the APSEA community. Especially poignant are the contributions by students about a CNIB portal (Dakota Ketch) and a personal growth experience (Danica Ketch). Students are also the focus of the article on Technology Placements by Ron Alley, while Eileen Conway-Martin extends our reach through her report on a recent collaborative, cultural event in a Mi'gmaq community.

Ashley and Katelyn's Technology Placement

- by Ron Alley
APSEA Classroom Teacher

During the week of March 25 I had the pleasure of working with two young New Brunswick students who were attending APSEA to begin learning to use a notebook computer with JAWS. JAWS, or “Job Access With Speech” is a screen reading program, which enables the computer to vocalize what is on the screen.

Ashley Hache (age 12) from Dieppe, and Katelyn Denbow (age 10) from Campobello Island, were presented with their new notebook computers on their first day of class, and immediately began learning all they could about using their computers in a classroom setting. Karen Keats, one of APSEA's on campus teachers, and coincidentally Katelyn's former itinerant teacher, assisted by presenting part of the program, and between the two of us we covered the basic information the students would need to use their computers in their home schools.

With the assistance of Mike Phelan, APSEA's Adaptive Technology Specialist, Ashley and Katelyn's computers were equipped with the latest adaptive soft wear, as well as a word processor, Internet Explorer, and to Ashley and Katelyn's elation, Windows Live Messenger.



Mike Phelan with Ashley and Katelyn.

Joining Ashley and Katelyn through the week were a number of representatives from their home school districts, including their itinerant teachers, program assistants, as well as Katelyn's mom, who is also her Language Arts teacher at Campobello Island Consolidated.

I am pleased to say the girls worked very hard during the week, and left with a true sense of accomplishment.



Ron with Katelyn.



Ron with Ashley.

CNIB Children's Discovery Portal

- by Dakota Ketch

(Submitted by Lesley Anthony, Itinerant Teacher)

The following is a review of the CNIB Children's Discovery Portal, written by Dakota Ketch, a grade seven APSEA student with optic atrophy.



The CNIB Children's Discovery Portal is a great website for CNIB children who are 6 to 14 years of age. The website is good for kids who have low vision, because you can change the text size. If you are blind you can use your screen reader. There are a lot of things you can do on the site. For example you can chat, answer questions about yourself, play games, read online magazines, get help with your homework, or go on the library and borrow books.

The games are good. There are three games on the site. They are called dreadnought, doctor wacky, and crazy concerto. Dreadnought is pretty much like Battle ship, doctor wacky is a memory game, and crazy concerto is about matching and remembering.

There is a speak out column in which you answer questions related to the website. The CNIB kids portal has an event column. It shows you the events of that month. There is another column called favourites where you answer questions about yourself. There is a section called e-magazines. It has a variety of magazines for all ages of girls and boys. There are at least 40 magazines.

Homework helper is another section where you can e-mail the librarian a question or you can search a database for information on your topic. The last section is the library. In this section you can borrow books in print, in braille, or on cd and they come straight to your mail box. You can also download electronic books.

I would recommend this to kids in APSEA as a fun website. The best part about it is the games. My favourite game is Dreadnought. I also like the homework helper. It is useful if you are stuck on a question. This is one thing I don't like about the website. You can only chat for one hour on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, and it's really hard to remember when to go on to chat. I rate this website at 4 stars.

Miss Woodstock Pageant

- by Danica Ketch

(Submitted by Lesley Anthony, Itinerant Teacher)

The following article was written by Danica Ketch, a grade twelve APSEA student with optic atrophy. It was for her younger brother, Dakota that she did what she did, because she realized she should be a support for him as he faced the same challenges that she had. Here is her story:

On February 19, I found myself in a place I had never dreamt I would be. For years I had tried to hide something I thought set me apart from others. But on that day, I stood in front of 500 people with the spotlight on me as I shared my long time hidden secret. This was the talent portion of the Miss Woodstock Pageant, and I was one of the 11 young women in the running.

I have no real reason why I decided to run in the pageant. I thought it would be fun; a night at the Best Western Hotel, a spa

day at the local hair salon, taking part in a tea hosted by the committee and a fashion fitting. My only hesitation was the talent portion. What would my talent be? My mother had suggested a speech on my vision impairment and how I over came it. My first reaction was NO! and I scrambled for two weeks trying to find something else to do. In the end I could not find anything and decided to just do the speech, even though I had no experience in public speaking.

My mother and I sat down at the kitchen table and began to write the story that began with a little girl falling over the garden hose one too many times. For a week and a half I practised my speech to myself, but could never seem to bring myself to voice it in front of my parents.

The day of dress rehearsal was the first time I had ever delivered my speech in front of an audience, if you can call 20 people an audience. I was nervous, shaking, I almost cried and I forgot half of my speech.

The following day was talent day. The audience had grown to about 100, and the judges were watching. I had watched several of the girls perform from back stage and then came my turn.

Walking to the podium I had many feelings, but when I turned the corner and faced the audience I felt relaxed. To my surprise, I could not see anyone's face, due to my vision impairment.



Danica with her brother Dakota.

This actually made delivering my speech easier. While other girls could see their family and friends staring at them I only saw faceless shapes in the crowd. If I had been able to see the emotional expressions of my family, I would never have gotten through my speech.

Being in the pageant was an experience I will never forget. It pushed me out of my comfort zone in a good way. Even though I had already accepted my vision impairment, the positive comments from people about my speech has made me more open about discussing it. Today I do not feel so shy about letting others know who I really am. This summer I am going on a senior class trip to Europe, and this fall I am attending university, which are two more things I never dreamed I would do.

For those who know Danica, such an accomplishment shows just how much she has grown over the years. Both Marjorie Rector (Danica's first itinerant teacher) and I had the privilege of watching this beautiful young woman compete in the Miss Woodstock 2008 Pageant.

Mawiomi: A Gathering of Culture & Collaboration



- by Eileen Conway-Martin
Itinerant Teacher (BVI)

On April 17, 2008 a special gathering of thirty "helpers" from the Stan Cassidy Rehabilitation

Centre, Extra Mural, Rexton Elementary School, Elsipogtog Community, and APSEA was held in Elsipogtog (Big Cove, NB).

"Mawiomi: A Gathering of Culture & Collaboration" had a twofold purpose: 1) to learn, understand, and celebrate the Mi'gmaq Culture; 2) to gather professionals in a spirit of collaboration, within one helping "Circle."

For the Mi'gmaq Culture, the Circle is a powerful symbol. As told by a Mi'gmaq Elder, Josie, the "Circle" represents the Four Nations, Holistic Health, and the Interdependency of all Life. In being with Mi'gmaq Families, Josie reminded us that we all need to realize our interdependency with one another and gather around one Circle, ... one Circle of Help and Hope.

We began the day with a smudging ceremony and by offering tobacco, as a sign of respect to Elders and Leaders present. Following these offerings, Josie, a Mi'gmaq Elder, shared the Opening Prayer and key Mi'gmaq Teachings. The Teachings centered around the Medicine Wheel, Holistic Health, and the Stages of Life. After a lunch, involving traditional Mi'gmaq food, bannock, we were introduced to the "Eastern Door Healing Centre," designed to reach out to families.



Finally, the entire group participated in a Community Development Exercise, based on the teachings of the Mi'gmaq People. Within this exercise, "tears" along with "dreams" of the eagle were identified. In addition, strengths of the bear and wolf were named, with individual commitments stated, as a way of reaching the ultimate and collective vision of the group. In the end, it was evident that the day had made a difference in many ways ... how we understood one another, related to each other, and would now come even more together for the best interests of the children and families.



When the "Closing Prayer" was finished, we went away in a spirit of true collaboration, knowing that we truly were one Circle... one "Circle of Help and Hope" with children and families that we serve.

Wela'Lieg. (Thank-you)

Staffing Update 2008-09

Below is an initial list of staff changes for the coming school year. As there are still positions to be advertised and interviews to be conducted, a further update will be provided in the next newsletter.

Christy Douwsma - DHH Itinerant Teacher, School District 15 (Bathurst, NB)

Janice Gavin - DHH Student/Family Counsellor (NS)

Michelle Knockwood - DHH Itinerant Teacher, CCRSB (Truro, NS)

Sheree Larade - BVI Assessment Team Teacher (APSEA Centre)

Glenda Parsons - BVI Assistive Technology Consultant

Jim Parsons - BVI Student/Family Counsellor (NS)

Sacha Russell - DHH Itinerant Teacher, School District 10 (Saint Andrews, NB)

Heather Sangster - DHH Itinerant Teacher, HRSB (Halifax, NS)

Bethany Searles - BVI Itinerant Teacher, School District 10 (St. Stephen, NB)

Looking Ahead


As temperatures rise and the grass turns green, our priorities shift to necessary preparations for the next school year. While the retirement trends continue, we are doubly impacted by the retirements of two “career APSEA” individuals. John McConnell and Richard Thompson have a combined service of 50 years in various positions and locations; their contribution has been significant and they will be greatly missed by the APSEA community.

Regarding the long-term supply of trained and qualified teachers of the BVI and DHH, I am relieved to confirm that a new cohort in the MSVU program will start in July 2008. To further enhance their effectiveness, Sheila Jamieson and Joyce Kennedy have been appointed Coordinators of the BVI and DHH programs, respectively.

The annual Parent Workshop is set for 30 May – 1 June. The agenda has been designed in conjunction with the APSEA Parent Association and includes representation from the provincial Departments of Education.

The annual spring inservice sessions have also been confirmed for BVI (22-23 May at Memramcook) and DHH (18-20 June at Tatamagouche).

Enjoy spring,



Bertram Tulk, EdD
Superintendent