



Superintendent's Message December 2008

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Introduction

As we anticipate the Christmas season and approach the end of 2008, we may reflect on the past with a sense of "where has the time gone?" The fall has been full, with our annual inservice, strategic planning, and other changes as we seek to improve our programs and services for children.

The following pages represent a sampling of your efforts to help students succeed; from Sports (Paralympic Games) to Drama (Beauty and the Beast) to Academics (the Rhodes scholarship) ... various aspects of well-rounded education!

Take Your Child to Work Day

- Jennifer MacLeod
DHH Itinerant Teacher

November 5 was "Take your Child to Work" Day across Canada for Grade 9 students. Kayla Frazee spent the day travelling from school to school with her Itinerant Teacher, Jennifer MacLeod.

Kayla enjoyed meeting some of the other direct service students on Jennifer's caseload and learned about some of the responsibilities that come with being an Itinerant Teacher. When asked about her favourite part of the day, Kayla answered, "Yummy pizza, and the TTY payphone at Northumberland Regional High School. I want to ask for one for my high school too."



(l-r): Jennifer MacLeod, Tracy Moore (Educational Interpreter), and Kayla Frazee

Decorated swimmer imparts her wisdom

- Jim Brown
The Journal Pioneer

(Article and photo published in the October 27, 2008 edition of The Journal Pioneer newspaper in Summerside, PE, and submitted by Jennifer Shields, APSEA Provincial Supervisor. The three children in the picture; Sarah Noye, Megan Larter and Colton Profit are all APSEA students and are supported in their club memberships by the APSEA trust fund.)

Swimmer Chelsey Gotell, winner of five medals at the 2008 Paralympic Games, had to overcome more adversity than most swimmers. She has only 10 per cent of normal vision in each eye. One of Canada's most decorated swimmers, Gotell dropped by Summerside's Credit Union Place pool recently, bringing her medals, including two gold.

"I used to be one of those kids, too. I came from small-town Antigonish and I swam with the Antigonish Aquanauts for my whole swimming club life," said Gotell, after meeting dozens of youngsters with Summerside's Dolphin Swim Club. She later dived into the pool to share a few tips with several visually impaired swimmers.

The 22-year-old Beijing Paralympian was joined by her coach, Andrew Cole, head swim coach at McMaster University, where Gotell is studying psychology.

Gotell said she was astonished at how much the Paralympics has grown in just a few years. Developing the proper techniques, training strategies and discipline to be an elite athlete is important, but fun can't be overlooked, she said.

"I think when you're young, when you're still under the age of 10, it's more about having fun," said Gotell. In 2004,

when she won her first gold, her accomplishment didn't get much attention in the national media. That's all changed.

"Now everyone knows what the Paralympics are and it's pretty exciting to the movement."

One of the things that really stood out from the visit is what she learned about how to identify every swimmer's strengths and weaknesses "and to be able to build a better swimmer" based on that knowledge. Many of the children came with sweatshirts and scraps of paper for Gotell to autograph.

"It's an amazing opportunity for our swimmers to have a Paralympian here, to share her experiences," said Dolphins head coach Tracy Stevenson. "It's great to have a high-profile coach and swimmer to speak to the group and to tell us a little bit about how they train and the type of things that they do."



Beijing 2008 Paralympic double gold-medallist Chelsey Gotell, 22, paid a visit to Summerside's Credit Union Place pool recently. The Antigonish, NS, swimmer, gave a clinic for youngsters with visual disabilities. She demonstrates the proper stroke technique to Sarah Noye, a member of Charlottetown's Bluefins, as Megan Larter, left, also from the Bluefins, and Colton Profit of the Summerside Dolphin Swim Club look on.

Stevenson has coached the Dolphins for the past six years, but has noticed in just the past couple of years that enrolment has taken a huge jump - all due to the new pool. "When we were at Centennial Pool we were hovering around 30 swimmers and now we're up over 60," she added.

Tanya Tynski, also with the Dolphins and a parent of two swimmers, a son and a daughter with the club, described Gotell's presentation as "inspirational and motivational."

An Eerie Tale

- Tony Hart

(Tony is a DHH student in grade 11 at Northumberland Regional High School. Tony wrote this story while attending a short-term program at APSEA from October 27-31, 2008.)

It was the dead of night. I was asleep in my bed in my basement room. I woke up at 12:00 midnight. I felt a cold wind. Someone was out in the hallway. I walked out into the hallway and saw a spirit there near the door. "Who is that?" I saw the color of her dress: red and pink. It looked like a school dress. Her clothes were very old. I said, "Hey, Who are you?" The spirit turned around and gazed at me. It was eerie. I walked backwards away from her. I went upstairs into the living room and then back downstairs to my bedroom. I looked into my room. It was messy. I thought to myself, "Oh my God what a messy room." I looked around and saw the spirit there near the stairs. She said, "Bye" and was gone. I never saw her again.

Believe It Or Not!

MOSAIC

The "APSEA MOSAIC" is now hanging in the foyer of the Sir Frederick Fraser Building in all its splendor and glory! From a distance, one sees the APSEA logo; closer inspection reveals that it is really made up of hundreds of small pictures of people who are a critical part of the APSEA community (Auxiliary, Board, Executive, Committees and Staff). On your next visit the Centre, take a moment to "find yourself."

Special thanks to Steve Muisse for setting it up.

No vision is no problem for Rilind Dragoshi: 14-year-old Harrison Trimble student is overcoming visual impairment in role with District 2's Beauty and the Beast

(Article and photo published in the November 28, 2008 edition of the Times & Transcript newspaper in Moncton, NB)

- Cole Hobson
Times & Transcript Staff

The theatre at Moncton High School is abuzz with activity as the last days approach before the District 2 production of Beauty and the Beast moves to the Capitol Theatre for final rehearsals and performances, which run from December 3-6. Actors busily prepare lines and scenes, try on costumes, and speak with a nervous excitement about the performance that lies ahead.

Amidst it all, 14-year-old Rilind Dragoshi sits in the first row of the school's auditorium, taking everything in, waiting patiently for instruction and always willing to help out whenever needed.

Like all those involved with the grandiose production, Rilind is excited for rehearsals to wrap up and opening night to arrive. However, unlike all his colleagues, Rilind is blind.

Despite his impairment, the Grade 9 student from Harrison Trimble -- who will play the role of an apple seller in the village scene and is part of the chorus -- has hardly missed a beat.

"I wanted to get involved because these productions are always really great and really professional, just being a part of one is fun. You also get to meet people, you get to learn how to be in a production, singing and dancing and acting," Rilind says. "It has challenged my abilities to sing and dance. I don't dance too well, but I found out I can dance this year. I never thought I could dance."

Rilind, who is originally from Kosovo, was also surprised to find out he got a singing role. "I used to think I could sing very well, but then I recorded my singing and it didn't sound good when I played it back for myself like two or three years ago. But apparently I sing well enough to make the district musical," he says.

In addition to his work on stage, Rilind has also helped out set work, creating some of props that will be used in the production.

"It feels really good. Even though I'm blind, I try to do whatever I can and if there's something I can't do because I'm blind or figure out I can't do, I just figure that at least my goals would be set to something that is more productive. That's the way I look at it," he says.

Michael McArdle, the production's lead director, says Rilind demonstrated a good interest, willingness and dedication in his audition and that attitude has rubbed off

into rehearsals. "He's rolled with the punches so well and he's so patient. Patience is certainly a virtue with Rilind," McArdle says. "He's done his fair share of painting and his share of glue-gunning and backstage work as best as he can."

McArdle says it's also not uncommon for Rilind to be the first one to show up to rehearsal and for him to want to be one of the last ones to leave. "Last weekend during the storm, his Dad showed up early to pick him up. He didn't want to leave. We had 15 minutes left and there was really nothing he needed to do in that time, but he wanted to stay because everyone else was there," McArdle says.

Rilind says he has been treated well by all the other students and teachers involved in the play. He hopes his being in the production will help show that a visual impairment doesn't have to a huge detriment in someone's life.

"Even people who are blind can play sports, they can adapt skills that they want to adapt, they can act, they can sing, they can learn how to play instruments. It just takes work, like everybody else," he says.



Rilind Dragoshi glues the bon-bons as he works backstage at the District 2 production of *Beauty and the Beast*.

- photo by Ron Ward

"It's just like somebody who is short can play basketball if they work hard at it. Somebody who is blind can do things that are a little harder if they work hard enough at it."

Art at APSEA

- Christy Everett
Assistant Program Supervisor

By now you have noticed the interesting works of art displayed throughout the APSEA hallways. The idea to enhance our walls with such pieces originated with our own Steve Trussoni, Music/Itinerant Teacher here at the centre. Thank you Steve!

Veith Street Gallery is an agency of United Way Halifax. It is a collective of artists with disabilities. Veith Street works of art are on display in the upper hall of the school building as well as in the lobby and cafeteria annex of the residence building. The Veith Street works of art are for sale. Each piece has a list price attached.

Works of art by students from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD), are displayed in the main corridor of the school building. The pieces are an interactive tactile adventure for the senses. Take time to enjoy the view!

Clarifying Roles and Services

- Jennifer MacLeod (DHH) and
Julie Windebank (BVI)
APSEA Itinerant Teachers

On October 30/08, school principals in Pictou County area were provided with a presentation on APSEA Services.

The Referral Process, how level of service is determined, and the various supports that are available from the APSEA team were discussed. Time was also spent on the components of a Service Plan and APSEA's role as support to the schools.

Simulation opportunities were provided to support a better understanding of the challenges that students with hearing loss and vision loss can experience in the everyday classroom. The "Role of the Local School Board" guidelines from APSEA's Off-Campus Handbook (1999) and CCRSB's Student Services Manual (2006) were also updated accordingly and included in the handout package that was provided. The updated (2008) version is appended to this newsletter (see page 7).

Superintendent Lynn MacLean reported she received positive feedback from principals - mainly that the presentation was helpful for providing clarification.

Mount Pearl native heading to Oxford on Rhodes Scholarship

(Article published in the November 27, 2008 edition of The Telegram newspaper in St. John's, NL.)

A Mount Pearl man and former APSEA student, studying at McGill University in Quebec, has been named the province's newest Rhodes Scholar.

Stephen Aylward, 21, is a philosophy major, minoring in political science at McGill. Also an accomplished singer and musician, Aylward has served on the executive of the McGill Debating Union and competed in tournaments.

He is also a disciplined athlete and a committed volunteer who has been involved with Amnesty International for many years. "I have a vision and passion for justice and service" Aylward said in a news release. "I'm dedicated to the principles of human rights and I want to continue to focus on that."

Aylward plans to pursue a bachelor's degree in law at Oxford and hopes to build a career in immigration law.

The Rhodes Scholarship, established in 1902, is given to students who have achieved high academic standing and who have demonstrated respect for their fellows, an unselfish spirit and the potential for leadership.

Strategic Planning

Our strategic planning process can be described as "consultative" for much of this term. The geographical boundaries of APSEA itself posed a challenge to the organization of information and feedback sessions. The means of explaining the process and engaging in meaningful dialogue was necessarily varied; groups ranged from approximately 125 during inservice week to a meeting of a few participants. The resulting individual SWOT analyses have been collectively used to inform the identification of priorities for the strategic plan.

On Wednesday, December 17, Senior Management and Provincial Directors of Student Services reviewed the gathered data within the context of emerging trends for Atlantic Canada and education ... to form clusters of priorities for APSEA.

These clusters will next be refined into goals with specific action items, resource identification, time frames and evaluation criteria. The first draft of the strategic plan (with statements of Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles and these goals and action items) will be circulated among the APSEA community for reaction early in 2009.

The subsequent feedback will be used to finalize the strategic plan which, with Board approval, will begin implementation in September 2009.

Looking Ahead

For some, Christmas is a time to honour a religious rite. For others, it is a time to rekindle family traditions or create new ones. Whatever ways you choose to spend the gift of time that comes with the holidays, I wish you good health, the joy and comfort of moments with family and friends, and the sense of optimism and energy that a break provides.

I look forward to a new year of exciting initiatives and important work, with people I admire and appreciate. May the year's end bring you beautiful new beginnings.



Bertram Tulk, EdD
Superintendent

Role of the Local School Board

From APSEA's Off-Campus Handbook (1999) and CCRSB's Student Services Manual (2006)
Updated by Julie Windebank and Jennifer MacLeod (2008)

School districts are recognized as the jurisdiction having responsibility for the education of the school-aged population. Programs and services offered by APSEA are designed to support school districts in their efforts to provide appropriate programs for students who are Blind or Visually Impaired, Deaf or Hard of Hearing. The extent to which APSEA services and programs are utilized by individual provinces will depend on the needs of each province and/or school board.

When a school district is receiving support services for students who are Blind, Visually Impaired, Deaf or Hard of Hearing, the local school system provides:

- Ongoing communication and commitment between the school and the child's parents/guardians to support consistent follow-up of professional recommendations regarding visual impairment and hearing loss. In particular, the school will ensure that any amplification prescribed by the audiologist is worn consistently during school hours. Teachers cannot successfully carry out their responsibilities if students cannot hear what is being taught.
- all materials and text books provided to other students in the school
- collaboration with relevant school district support personnel (ie.-SLPs, Autism support, ATs, Psychologists, Program Support Teachers, etc.) To facilitate the collaboration, up-to-date contact info is made available to the Itinerant Teacher each year.
- opportunities for students who are blind or visually impaired to participate in extra-curricular activities
- furnished office space for APSEA personnel and adequate work space in schools for direct service delivery with students
- a phone with voicemail and long-distance privileges
- access to a photocopier, fax, and computer hook-ups
- day-to-day monitoring of service delivery provided by the Itinerant Teacher
- supports an understanding of the role of the Sign Language Interpreter

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- A designated Case Manager in each child's school, often the Program Support Teacher, to co-ordinate communications and the sharing of information among all those concerned about and/or involved with the education of students with special needs. This includes school staff, parents/guardians, Student Services staff, outside agencies, other professionals, and the student. S/he regularly consults and collaborates with all participants and at all stages of the program planning, implementation, and evaluation process. (Based upon the CCRSB Student Services Manual.)
 - For inclusion of APSEA in the Program Planning process, notification of meetings regarding any child who receives APSEA Services.