



Superintendent's Message March 2009

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Introduction

Early March is accompanied by winter thaws, a visible sign we are in the second half of another school year!

While the past few weeks saw some interruptions due to weather conditions, our major activities have proceeded on schedule. This "Message" will bring you up to speed on the "big rocks" of APSEA's operation. In addition to a focus on strategic planning (**inviting your response by Friday 3 April**), the following pages contain reports about the 2008 Space Camp and a celebration of Louis Braille's 200th birthday. We are also delighted to add our congratulations to students and staff on recognition/awards.

Our Strategic Plan

The development of our strategic plan continues.

The wide-ranging fall consultations were used to develop, through constant refinement, the first draft of our strategic plan (attached - pages 7-9). The statements of Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles have been crafted to embody the core elements of what we, as members of the APSEA community, are about ... our purpose, our aspirations, and our values.

These philosophical underpinnings have been applied to the challenges identified to chart our broad goals for the next three years.

Feedback & Time Frame

The coming weeks provide an opportunity for each of us to react to the above statements (Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles) and the draft priority areas for the next three years. This feedback will lead to further modification of the strategic plan; specific action items, resource identification, time frames and evaluation criteria will be designed accordingly. With Board approval, the strategic plan will be finalized for implementation to begin in September 2009; the plan will chart APSEA's course through 2012.

Evaluation/Survey Form

Please use this link (<http://apsea.ca/Survey/April2009/>) to access the feedback form regarding the strategic plan information (pages 7-9). Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey by April 3.

Staff Changes

As preparations for next school year gather speed, major changes continue in our APSEA team.

Joan Skinner, Director of Programs (DHH) has decided to return to her former position as Provincial Supervisor for New Brunswick effective September 2009. While her service with Senior Management has been two short years, her contribution has been quite significant. Joan's wealth of field experience and critical thinking skills have proven particularly useful in the strategic planning process. We will continue to rely on Joan's advice and expertise to improve programs and services to children... with sincere appreciation for past and future efforts!

Jennifer Shields, PEI Supervisor for BVI, has confirmed she will be retiring at the end of the current school year. Her dedicated career of service to students is much appreciated and will be sorely missed. We wish nothing but the best to Jennifer as she seizes the opportunities of retirement to more fully pursue other interests, particularly in the performing arts. See you on stage, Jennifer!

Space Camp for Interested Visually Impaired Students (SCIVIS) 2008

by Nova Herring, BVI Itinerant Teacher and Bernie Power, BVI Itinerant Teacher

During the week of September 19 - 26, 2008, four APSEA students and two APSEA teachers/chaperones (Nova Herring and Bernie Power) travelled to the US Space and Rocket Centre in Huntsville, Alabama for a week long camp. SCIVIS is a week set aside at the US Space and Rocket Centre's

Space Camp specifically for blind and visually impaired students. This year 178 students from 24 States and 4 countries (Canada, Ireland, St. Lucia, Australia) attended. Of the four APSEA students attending SCIVIS this year, three were from NS and one was from Newfoundland.



Nova Herring and Bernie Power with students, Devon Roach (NS), Laurie Boucher (NS), Carolyn Naylor (NS) and Tyler Butler (NF)

During the week, there are six camps running concurrently; three space related camps and three camps with a focus on aviation. This year, APSEA students attended three separate Aviation Challenge camps, Mach I, Mach II and Mach III.

The focus of these camps was on aviation history, military survival and a strong focus on team building and leadership skills. Students had a chance to work collaboratively with their teammates; experience how science, math and technology have a direct impact on their every day lives; push themselves to try new experiences and develop deep friendships with other visually impaired students from around the world.

All students stated they thoroughly enjoyed the camp. One student reported, "It was the best experience of my life!"

APSEA students were able to attend this camp due to the support of the following sponsors: APSEA Trust Fund, APSEA Auxiliary, Kiwanis Club of Kelligrews

(Conception Bay South, Newfoundland), Bill Estabrooks (MLA Timberlea/Prospect), Becky Kent (MLA - Cole Harbour/Eastern Passage), Ms. Valerie MacGowan, Space Camp Delta Gamma Scholarships, Participants and their families. Thank you very much to all the sponsors!

Plans are underway for another group of APSEA students (Grades 4-12) to attend Space Camp in 2010. Stay tuned for more information!

Louis Braille's 200th Birthday is Celebrated in Harmony Heights Elementary School

by Julie Windebank
BVI Itinerant Teacher

On January 23, 2009 celebrations took place at the APSEA Centre in Halifax to mark the 200th birthday of Louis Braille.

One of the students who participated in the festivities was Rachel Yorke, a Grade 3 student from Salmon River, NS. Rachel was at the APSEA Centre for a two-week short-term program to work on Braille skills.

When Rachel returned to her home school, she was invited to Mrs. Vroom's Grade 5 class to talk about how she uses braille at school. Mrs. Vroom's class had finished reading the story of Louis Braille and was starting the Helen Keller Story, so the students were excited to know more about someone in their own school who uses braille. After Itinerant Teacher Julie Windebank explained the concept of the braille cell and contractions, Rachel demonstrated the use of her MBPro Braille writer and answered questions about how she does her work. The Grade 5 students were interested in her cane too. Each student then received a book mark with his or her name in braille, which Rachel had decorated with tactile stickers.

Rachel helped read the names of the students so they could get their bookmark.

Of course a good birthday party should have cake and Mrs. Vroom had thought of that; in fact it took two cakes to feed everyone at the party!



Rachel Yorke at the party.

Staff Recognition

Sally Austin - As reported in the Saturday, February 14, 2009 edition of The Chronicle Herald, Sally Austin (DHH Itinerant Teacher) was honoured for her long-term volunteer commitment with the Sexual Health Centre for Cumberland County.

Sally received the Canadian Federation for Sexual Health 2009 Janssen-Ortho Volunteer Award for her 28 years of faithful service to the Centre. Sally was a founding member of the volunteer board that operates the Centre, she has served as president, vice-president, treasurer, a director and is currently the board's secretary. Sally has played major roles in several significant accomplishments including the making of Loving Yourself, the first Canadian sex education video for the deaf.

Congratulations Sally!

Liverpool resident is IWK 2009 Children's Miracle Network Champion Child

by Mark Roberts
The Queens County Advance
Article online since February 16, 2009

Immediately after members of the IWK Health Centre Foundation finished introducing their 2009 Children's Miracle Network Champion Child, MacKenzie Colp started laughing and dancing with her friends, all of them talking at once. MacKenzie, her hands flying in sign language, was obviously thrilled. "I'm happy about it and excited," she said Feb. 16 through her sign language interpreter, Amanda Jurgenliemk. Her younger friends and family echoed her comments by calling her a "best friend."



Liverpool resident MacKenzie Colp, 10, was introduced as the IWK Health Centre Foundation's 2009 Children's Miracle Network Champion Child at a packed Dr. John C. Wickwire Academy assembly. She is shown giving her speech. Vocalizing MacKenzie's sign language is Amanda Jurgenliemk (APSEA Interpreter).

Photo by Mark Roberts

The 10-year-old Grade 5 student is representing the IWK Health Centre at Children's Miracle Network events throughout the Maritimes. MacKenzie's family will also attend Champions Across Canada presented by Wal-Mart in Ottawa and Celebration! in Orlando later this year.

In addition, said Brad Jacob, VP Development, IWK Foundation, "They get a chance to meet other children who are like them, very courageous..."

Not long after she was born, MacKenzie was diagnosed with CHARGE syndrome, which affects almost every part of her body. She's visually impaired, deaf, loses her balance easily, and has stomach problems, scoliosis, a nightly feeding tube, a cochlear implant, chronic pain and takes 10 different medications. MacKenzie also experiences seizures as a result of her syndrome and has kidney problems.

Despite these challenges, MacKenzie is happy and busy. For example, she roller blades, rides a bike, and goes bowling and swimming.

At the assembly, last year's representative, Matthew MacDonald also congratulated her. "I hope this champion child has just as many good memories as I do." After the assembly, he offered MacKenzie some advice. "Just enjoy every minute of it and expect a lot of surprises too. It was a lot of fun."

Parents, grandparents and numerous other relatives attended the assembly. MacKenzie's mother, Jeanie Colp said they are "truly honoured and humbled" by the opportunity. She added her daughter deserves it. "It's been a long journey. I think the proverb it takes a village to raise a child has never been more true."

In explanation, she praised the education system and hospital staff, adding they have always felt like "a member of the team, and that means the world to me."

She also thanked staff for the gift of language for her daughter and for the “unconditional love” MacKenzie has experienced.

After a letter from Premier Rodney MacDonald was read – he met MacKenzie during his Ceilidh for Kids IWK fundraiser last Dec. – Dr. Kim Blake via video message talked about MacKenzie’s friendly personality and strength of character.

“What I remember about you is the way you always find me wherever I am for a chat. You still have to teach me sign language though.” She added that even before sign language someone asked her if MacKenzie could talk. “I had to think” about it, she said. Dr. Blake is a lead researcher and has been involved with MacKenzie since her birth.

Another primary person in MacKenzie’s life is Dr. Dhiman Chowdhury, who said she amazes him. “Somehow she has changed from a little girl to a woman and to this Champion Child.” Dr. Chowdhury, like the other speakers from outside Queens Co., said they were excited to be at the school and to meet MacKenzie’s friends and family. He also praised Jeanie Colp’s efforts over the years.

Colp, after the assembly, said MacKenzie has done better than many expected because, “she would have been a high-spirited tenacious child regardless.” She added she looks forward to MacKenzie’s future. “She is capable of doing a lot of things.”

The event also included praise for sponsor Walmart and details about the 25th anniversary IWK Telethon at the end of May. The Children’s Miracle Network is a non-profit organization whose mission is to generate funds and awareness programs to benefit more than 17 million children served by Children’s Miracle Network-affiliated hospitals in Canada.

The IWK is one of 170 members of the Children’s Miracle Network.

Board Items

Possible Sale of Building

Charles Ritcey, Architect with the NS Department of Education, had preliminary meetings with representatives from different divisions in mid-February. Given the age of the school/administration and residence buildings (21 and 23 years respectively) and the evolution of our program delivery, this is an appropriate time to take a fresh look at our physical infrastructure needs. In the event the sale of the residence building becomes a viable option, further meetings will be held to develop and refine educational specifications.

Governance

The Handicapped Persons Education Act has long been in need of revision. The Executive Committee continues to work on preparing changes to the legislation, to make it consistent with current practice. The revised legislation will include changes to governance and will hopefully make the legislative agenda during 2009-10.

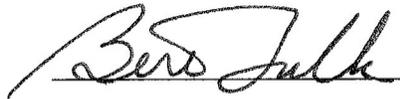
Autism Study

The Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET) has engaged the services of Dr. Susan Bryson to conduct a study of autism service delivery across Atlantic Canada. The first draft of her report is due in May 2009.

Looking Ahead

Our upcoming calendar of events includes inservice sessions at Tatamagouche for BVI (21-22 May) and DHH (17-19 June).

The Parent/Family Weekend is scheduled for 5-7 June and the Fall Inservice is scheduled for 26-30 October.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bertram Tulk". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "B".

Bertram Tulk, EdD
Superintendent



MISSION

APSEA provides quality services and supports to effectively meet the needs of children and youth from birth to 21 who are blind/visually impaired (BVI), and/or deaf/hard of hearing (DHH).

VISION

APSEA is a beacon for families and the public education system in supporting the education of children and youth with sensory loss. Our professional commitment focuses on providing comprehensive educational opportunities, through best practice and in the most natural environments possible, which lead to independence, self-sufficiency and productive, fulfilling lives.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Key organizational principles which guide the design, implementation and ongoing evaluation of educational services are:

- child- and family-centered
- collaborative, involving the student, family, and public school system
- research and evidence-based
- individualized in our approach, leading to student success
- future-focused, flexible and innovative
- committed to equality of educational opportunity
- accountable for outcomes, set in accordance with Provincial policies
- supportive of independence and self-advocacy for the children and youth we serve

Strategic Priorities 2009-2012

Alignment, Transparency, Accountability

- Integrate APSEA programs and services with provincial delivery models for special education.
- Develop and provide a range of delivery options which include regional and summer programs and services.
- Develop outcomes for programs and services provided and delivered by APSEA. Communicate outcomes on an ongoing basis to parents, students and educators.
- Develop and implement a reporting and accountability framework for student progress aligned with provincial reporting and accountability systems.

Relationships, Communication, Collaboration

- Enhance team-building skills among APSEA personnel and school- and board-based teams.
- Provide opportunities for increased involvement and participation of student services coordinators in planning, implementation and evaluation of services (board-based and school-based team connections).
- Increase involvement and participation of APSEA teaching staff with school-based program planning teams.
- Establish formal and informal mechanisms with schools to inform student progress.
- Develop a communication plan.

Research and Innovation

As decision-making is data-driven, evidence-based and guided by research APSEA will:

- Engage in research to build a body of knowledge to guide programming and delivery of services and to develop future innovative programming.
- Develop and implement a technology plan to address organizational and student needs.

People

- Develop an HR plan which incorporates the following:
 - Recruitment and retention
 - A performance appraisal process
 - Wellness in the workplace
 - Provide professional development and teacher training to address systemic changes and student needs (Clearly articulated and structured PD plan for staff – rooted in professional standards/competency maps for APSEA personnel)

APSEA's Organization

- Review the organization to determine the structure to achieve operational effectiveness and efficiency.
- Develop policies, procedures and guidelines in each area of functional responsibility.
- Review and update APSEA policy, procedures and guidelines.
- Develop a plan to communicate and implement practices consistent with policies and procedures.
- Re-design APSEA's physical facilities to make them consistent with the current and future modes of program and service delivery.