



Superintendent's Message

January 2011

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Introduction

The mid-point of the school year approaches, with temperatures dropping and many people anticipating the start of the Canada Winter Games. This *Message* has two special features: Information Technology and Accessibility. Specifically, Peter Bowers provides an update on IT, while Reg Dunphy reports on the work of the on-campus accessibility committee.

As always, you are encouraged to submit items which may be of interest to the APSEA community.

APSEA Accessibility Committee Review

- *Reg Dunphy, APSEA Audiologist*

The APSEA Accessibility Committee was formed in January 2010. The purpose of this committee is to make recommendations on how to make the APSEA campus as accessible as possible for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. The committee members are: Ron Alley, Reg Dunphy, Sonny Gallant, Sheila Jamieson, Joseph MacDonnell and Bert Tulk. The committee has been meeting monthly to discuss accessibility issues and make recommendations for improvements. The initial work of the committee was to tour the APSEA Centre to identify obvious accessibility issues and to rank those issues in terms of importance with a time line to address them.

Some of the priorities identified were:

- Tactile site maps in the school and residence buildings for individuals who are blind and use Braille.
- Signature guide for the residence security sign in sheet.
- Visual doorbell and telephone monitors in the residence areas and in the parent apartments for students and staff who are deaf or hard of hearing.

- Improvement in the yellow step markers in the school building.
- Improvement in the sound field systems in the gymnasium and cafeteria.
- Tactile fire exit maps in the school and residence buildings.
- Numbered Braille signage on all doors in the school and residence buildings to assist individuals who are blind in finding landmarks when they are travelling.
- Reduction in glare from the windows in the cafeteria.
- Monitor cameras or motion sensors in the hallways of the residence areas so that residence staff who are deaf would be able to know if students were in those areas after bedtime hours.
- Improvements in a communication system for residence staff in emergency situations (cell phones, for example).
- Visual fire alarms in all rooms in the residence and parent apartments for students and staff who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Communication system at the front desk of the school building and the security area in the lobby of the residence building which would allow individuals who use sign language to type a message for the receptionist or security person.

Some of the priorities have already been accomplished:

- Joe MacDonnell has consulted with a company called Eye Catch Signs and the APSEA Braille department to create tactile site maps and tactile fire exit maps. Much work has been done to produce multiple fire exit maps, since each one needs to identify the exact location of the person who is blind and the most efficient pathway to exit the building. Fire exit maps will be posted in the near future.
- A signature guide is now available to sign in at the security desk in the residence building.
- Visual telephone and doorbell monitors have been installed in the residence areas and the parent apartments in the residence building.

The committee had an informative presentation by Marilyn Neal, who visited the new offices of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind headquarters in Toronto. Marilyn was given a tour of the facility and took pictures of various areas in the building. Committee members were interested in the universal design considerations which had been included in the planning of the CNIB building. Some examples noted were: the non-glare floors with diffuse lighting and high contrast doors, signage identifying offices were at a 45 degree angle at waist height with Braille and raised print, wheelchair accessibility in all areas of the building, and ergonomic work stations for individuals who are blind or visually impaired and/or wheelchair users.

The committee has also been considering the long term plan for the physical site of the APSEA Centre. Since it appears that both buildings will remain in use, we will continue to work toward improvements in the accessibility of the residence building as well.

The committee encourages feedback from staff, particularly those who are blind or visually impaired and deaf or hard of hearing, to ensure that recommended changes are useful and practical.

APSEA Information Technology Update

- *Peter Bowers, Manager of IT*

It's been a busy year for IT at APSEA with new initiatives in several areas. Here are some of the highlights:

- Much of our internal network infrastructure has been updated including the addition of a 10MB fiber-optic Internet line.
- A remote helpdesk server has been created. This allows IT staff to access staff and student computers anywhere and solve problems without having units shipped back to Halifax.
- Our disaster recovery plan has been improved with enhanced power filtering and better provisions for generator backup in case of a major power failure.
- Wireless Internet access has been established throughout the campus offices and most of the residence floors as well.
- A new file server has been installed to better handle workload volumes, especially from the Braille Department.
- Many new laptop computers have been distributed to the itinerant teachers and many new desktops have been installed throughout the campus.
- Our GroupWise E-mail server has been upgraded to the latest version, providing better access both on and off campus.
- GroupWise Calendar is now being used to reserve meeting rooms and other facilities on campus.
- Our database server has been enhanced with the inclusion of Trees, our own in-house blogging system available to all staff.
- Video conferencing has expanded greatly with the adoption of Internet-based AV software and many successful meetings have now been held 'virtually'.
- APSEA has a fledgling Moodle server (<http://www.moodle.org>) which is allowing staff from anywhere to connect and share professional development resources and other information.
- The Helpdesk server, Moodle server and Novell server have all been created as 'virtual' servers allowing us much greater control over resources and security.

Staffing

Sharon Robertson has been appointed Provincial Supervisor (DHH) for New Brunswick while Joan Skinner is on leave.

Strategic Plan

The mid-point of the school year also marks the mid-point of our three-year plan. Accordingly, all SP committees are preparing a “status update” as to their respective progress, challenges and projections in relation to their mandates. These committee reports will form a consolidated report for the next meeting of the Board of Directors and will be placed on our database/Trees.

As noted in the November *Message*, Audiology Services moved to the DHH division from Resource and Assessment Services effective 1 January 2011.

The Leadership Cohort gave extremely positive evaluations of their experience with the *7 Habits of Highly Effective People Program* in early December. Given this response, we plan to make the program available to more APSEA staff in future.

Communication was identified as an area needing improvement; a communications committee has been established with Lori Moore as chair. Its first meeting will be held in early February.

Board News

Autism

The implementation of “Action on Autism” project has reached a pivotal phase, with the appointment of Sheila Bulmer as Autism Project Coordinator. Currently the Provincial Autism Consultant at the NB Department of Education, Ms. Bulmer will commence her new position at APSEA in February. Her extensive training and experience with autism services across several provinces should bode well for the new Atlantic Canadian partnership. The initial appointment is effective through 30 June 2011.

Property

Directors and Supervisors have begun considering space requirements, given the probability that APSEA will continue to occupy both buildings. While some short-term adjustments have recently been made, the longer-term focus on effective and efficient utilization of space will be a priority in the coming months. Mr. Charles Ritcey of the NS Department of Education's Facilities Planning and Operations will continue to assist this process.

Looking Ahead

This year's calendar has been impacted by the Canada Winter Games and an adjustment to our PD calendar, which moved the fall inservice to early September. As a result of feedback received about the timing of the 2010 inservice, the decision has been made to return to the late October slot (the week of the NSTU Provincial PD day); hence, next year's annual fall inservice will be held 25-27 October 2011.

The year-end inservice will proceed as scheduled on 22-24 June 2011 in Halifax. Presenters have been confirmed, as has the agenda, including the retirement banquet. As in the past,

participant evaluations of the event will be used to help determine future directions for the end-of-year PD schedule.

DHH Sessions

The DHH focus for the June inservice will be *Infants & Toddlers who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing: Identification Process, Foundations of Communication and Developmental Milestones*.

The biographies of the facilitators are below;

Donald M. Goldberg, Ph.D. CCC-SLP/A, FAAA, LSLs Cert. AVT - Dr. Goldberg, currently the Co-Director of the Hearing Implant Program (HIP) in the Section of Audiology at the Cleveland Clinic's Head and Neck Institute, is a practicing clinician, administrator, and researcher who frequently presents on topics of Auditory-Verbal Therapy, cochlear implants, communication assessment, educational audiology, and the clinical efficacy of AVT. He has presented throughout the USA and Canada, along with China, India, Hungary, Italy, Austria, Malaysia, the Philippines and Australia. Dr. Goldberg is a co-author of *Educational Audiology for the Limited Hearing Infant and Preschooler: An Auditory-Verbal Approach* (Pollack, Goldberg, and Caleffe-Schenck, 1997).

Sharon Sandridge, Ph.D - Sharon A. Sandridge, PhD, Auditory Electrophysiology expert (ABR, OAE, ASSRs and does all the sedated/induction room testing of infants at Cleveland Clinic) is currently Director of Clinical Services in Audiology and Co-Director of the Tinnitus Management Clinic and Audiology Research Lab at Cleveland Clinic. Her primary clinical and research interests are in the areas of amplification -- hearing aids and assistive technology, the evaluation and treatment of tinnitus, and auditory electrophysiologic assessment including neurodiagnostics, intraoperative monitoring and identification of children with hearing loss.

- Lori Moore, Director

BVI Sessions

The June inservice for the staff who work with students who are blind or visually impaired is promising to be an excellent opportunity to gain more knowledge within our field of expertise. We are in the final stages of confirming a guest presenter for the June 2011 inservice. This individual is a well known expert in the field of working with students who are blind or visually impaired. Upon receiving official confirmation, more specific information about this professional development opportunity will be shared with staff.

- Glenda Parsons, Director

Best wishes,



Bertram Tulk, EdD
Superintendent