



# Superintendent's Message

## February 2012

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### Introduction/Update

Having passed the mid-point of the school year, many of us could be excused for wondering “what happened to winter?” It’s also an occasion for us to highlight some of the happenings around APSEA. As always, you are encouraged to contribute stories, pictures and articles for the next “Message” to [Pam Edmonds@apsea.ca](mailto:Pam_Edmonds@apsea.ca)



### Strategic Plan 2

As we approach the end of our first three-year strategic plan (SP1), it’s time to reflect on the status of its implementation and consider the 2012-15 period. While several of the SP1 committees have completed their mandates, others continue to work ... in fact; some of the current priorities will likely carry over for the next phase.

The Board of Directors has approved the following timeframe for the development of a new strategic plan: a survey of partners (February), focus groups in March-April, a draft SP2 (by May), and final SP2 to the Board for approval by June 2012. There will be various opportunities for input through this process in the coming months and you are encouraged to participate to the fullest; the greater the base of contribution, the more likely the priorities and associated action plans will reflect the projected needs of the APSEA community.

## **Playground**

You may have noticed some equipment was recently removed from our playground. We had been advised that some of the items may have been unsafe; accordingly, the pieces of equipment posing immediate safety concern have been removed from the site.

A playground committee has begun the task of planning for the “re-building” of an improved playground facility. This will include design work, and fundraising to facilitate the goal of the project ... to have a safe, state-of-the-art recreational area to serve the children we serve.

## **Campus Safety and Security**

The likelihood that we will retain use of both current buildings makes it appropriate to re-visit safety and security policies and procedures. To this end, we are working with Mark Young, School/Facility Safety Officer of the NS Department of Education to conduct a safety audit. His report will be written to support a phased-in implementation process.

To inform this process, an open-ended survey has been circulated to on-campus staff seeking their input. If you have any issues/concerns and/or suggestions about how to make our campus more safe and secure for students, staff and the general public, please forward same to [Pam\\_Edmonds@apsea.ca](mailto:Pam_Edmonds@apsea.ca) by 29 February 2012 so your feedback can be included in our safety audit.

## **Performance Evaluations**

On 27 January, all supervisors participated in a one-day inservice on performance assessment and evaluation. Michael Kennedy of Think Training clarified the principles of performance management, and associated standards, review processes and cycles. Participants, from a range of backgrounds and experiences, indicated the sessions were informative and should assist our efforts to support each other across the organization through performance evaluations.

## **Staffing**

Bon Voyage and Welcome Back!

Best wishes are extended to Myretta Farrell, who has gone on leave from her position as Provincial Supervisor (BVI) from Prince Edward Island, returning in February 2013.

This gives us an opportunity to welcome Jennifer Shields, who has “taken a break from her retirement” to work in a part-time supervisory capacity with the PEI team. With support from the Director of Programs (BVI), Jennifer will ensure the delivery of programs in PEI continues at its usual high level.

We are pleased to announce Peggy McCann is the successful applicant for the position of Braille Transcriber. Peggy will be moving from her position as Library Technician where she has worked for 13 years. We will miss her experience and expertise in the library but look forward to having her apply her skills on Braille Transcription. Congratulations Peggy!

### **National Appointment**

We are proud to announce that Sheila Bulmer, Coordinator of our Autism Project, has been appointed as an expert member of a new federal Autism Spectrum Disorders Advisory Committee. The committee will develop a national surveillance system for ASD to assist the Public Health Agency of Canada:

- Measure the frequency of ASD and how rates differ across Canada;
- Describe the population of Canadians living with ASD'
- Increase understanding of trends in ASD over time.

While this appointment is recognition of Ms. Bulmer's stature in the field, it also ensures Atlantic Canada will be at the leading edge of significant emerging research and knowledge about ASD. Well done, Sheila!

### **Parent & Family Weekend**

Parent Weekend 2012 is scheduled for the weekend of 27-29 April. Sessions and events for this event will be established based on the needs and interests as identified by the parents of children who receive support from APSEA.

### **Spring Professional Development**

Spring 2012 Professional Development dates have been set for May. Upon consideration of the feedback from staff during the 2011 Spring and Fall In-Services, as well as additional staff input in December, the following dates have been established:

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|-----------------|--|
| 4 May 2012:     | BVI and DHH New Brunswick at Fredericton   |
| 14-16 May 2012: | BVI and DHH Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island at APSEA Center<br>Atlantic Provinces APSEA Orientation and Mobility Team at APSEA Center |

The Spring PD sessions will invite opportunities for our own staff to display their expertise and knowledge. Sessions will be organized in areas of interest that have been identified by the teaching staff.

## Rick Hansen Man in Motion Tour

- Submitted by Lisa Weir, BVI Itinerant Teacher in NB, who received this from Eric's dad, Lloyd Ravn.

Eric Ravn was chosen as one of 7,000 "Difference Makers" across Canada to carry the Rick Hansen medal in a cross-country relay in celebration of the 25th anniversary of Rick Hansen's Man in Motion World Tour. Not only was Eric singled out as a Difference Maker, but he also received the honour of being the youngest Medal Bearer in the cross-country relay! (Eric is a grade one student.)

Eric's leg of the relay was sponsored by Invacare Canada, a home healthcare company who hand-picked Eric as the Difference Maker for one of their three sponsored legs of the relay across the country. Eric was selected by Invacare after they learned how hard he works and the impact he has had on the way those around him look at people with disabilities and at accessibility issues.

Eric carried the medal on Sunday, 2 October 2, 2011 for 250 meters starting at the Sussex Elementary School Sports Field.

## Remembrance Day Ceremony



Students attending short-term programs posed for a picture with Lieutenant Trejo after presenting him with handmade Remembrance Day wreaths following the ceremony held November 10, 2011 at APSEA.

## A Braille Christmas Celebration

On December 14, 2011, fifteen students, their families and staff in the Halifax area, attended A *Braille Christmas Celebration* at the APSEA Centre. Itinerant teachers could request copies of the activities that were planned, and some itinerant teachers did. The celebrations started with a turkey lunch and many delicious desserts. Of course no Christmas lunch is complete without the decorating of gingerbread men and women, using mini M&M's for braille dots.

Following lunch, everyone met in the gym for 45 minutes of Winter Olympics. The Winter Olympics activities included snowman bowling, angel making and ice fishing. Then it was on to a scavenger hunt on the APSEA campus. The O&M instructors gave the students instructions in Braille, and a stocking to fill, as they found clues and goodies.

After the scavenger hunt, students made tactile crafts and tactile Christmas cards, using the Perkins brailler. At the same time, a parent social was taking place, which gave parents the opportunity to meet and chat in a relaxed, informal environment.



Santa attended the Braille Christmas celebrations as well!

Then sadly the day started to come to a close. Everyone met in the gym for a reading of a Christmas story, singing of Christmas carols and of course a visit from the jolly man in red (which was no doubt the best part for the kids!). The day was summed up nicely by a student on her way home from the Centre who said, "It was a magical day!" and it really was a fun-filled day for everyone.

## Looking Ahead

As the days grow longer, we look forward to the various March breaks and the onset of spring. Our typical seasonal activities will be augmented by weekend camps, the launching of a new website, the start of a new cohort for both BVI and DHH Masters programs at MSVU, planning for summer activities and beyond to next year ... Enjoy what's left of winter!

Bertram Tulk, EdD  
Superintendent