



# Superintendent's Message

## March 2013

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### Introduction

Longer days and March breaks are just around the corner ... welcomed by many, as our Atlantic weather starts to transition from winter to spring. This active period in the life of schools is reflected in this *Superintendent's Message*, which shows both student and staff work, ranging from poetry to technology, from space camp to research and special causes. In the interests of sharing among our colleagues, please submit items for the next newsletter to: [Pam\\_Edmonds@apsea.ca](mailto:Pam_Edmonds@apsea.ca)

### Board News

#### APSEA Review

The external Review of APSEA continues, with Dr. Fushell meeting a broad range of individuals and groups across the Atlantic Provinces to explore questions pertaining to the Terms of Reference. Many of us have already participated in the consultative process, with other opportunities for input during March and April. Your engagement in the Review is encouraged and appreciated.

The final report is scheduled to be presented to the Board in mid-May.

## The Boston Marathon

Nicole Gushue (DHH Itinerant Teacher in Yarmouth) will run in the Boston Marathon on 15 April in memory of her cousin's son, Nicholas Defelice, who lost his battle with childhood cancer in June 2012. She will be a member of the Mass General Hospital Marathon Team, the hospital at which Nicholas was treated. Having run in the first Yarmouth marathon in August 2011, Nicole started her training in December. She will run for three days and cross-train for two days weekly for sixteen weeks. Raising funds is part of Nicole's commitment to the team and any donations would be appreciated.

The link for donating to Nicole's run is

<http://www.crowdraise.com/TeamMassGeneralHospital/fundraiser/nicolegushue>

You can follow Nicole's progress with training and fundraising on a Facebook group called "Nic for Nick".

## Side Eyes – A Production of Sad Eyes

- written and illustrated by Rosa Riedel (grade 5 BVI Student from NB)

I am side eyes

Mama calls me pretty eyes Side eyes

Pretty eyes

A whole lotta crazy eyes

Small eyes

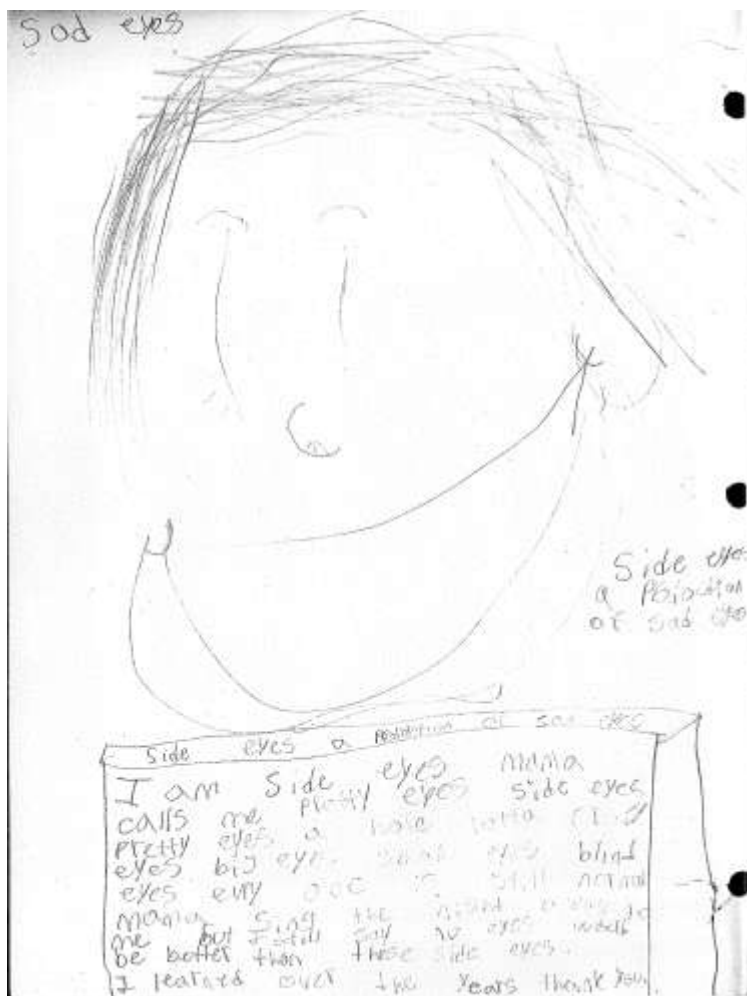
Blind eyes

Everyone is still normal

Mama sang the night away to me

But I still say no eyes would be better than these side eyes

I learned over the years that it does not matter they are just eyes.



## Technology Tells the Story

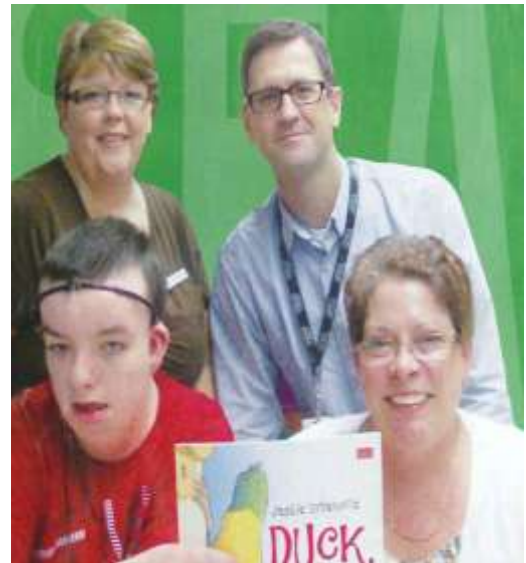
- by Patrick Daley (DHH Itinerant Teacher)

Published in the Fall 2012 Achieve Magazine (Anglophone East School District, NB)

Have you ever dreamed of being an author? Many of us have, but are never able to realize this dream. But we have found several students at Beaverbrook School and Riverview High School who have interesting stories to share with their classmates, schools and communities. When our group sat down together as an inclusive educational team to set common goals, we looked at inclusion beyond the four walls of their home school and how technology could play a role in this endeavour, with ever shrinking budgets.

This year our inclusive educational team is comprised of a school administrator, methods and resource teachers, educational assistants, school guidance counselors and myself, an APSEA itinerant teacher.

Supporting families and the public school system in the education of children and youth with sensory loss, the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA) is an interprovincial cooperative agency established in 1975 by joint agreement among the Ministers of Education of New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. As the only agreement of its kind in Canada, APSEA authorized the provision of educational services, programs and opportunities for persons from birth to 21 years of age with low incidence sensory impairments. Through best practice, and in the most natural environments possible, APSEA develops comprehensive educational opportunities for children and youth who are deaf, deaf-blind, hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired who are residents of Atlantic Canada. This leads to the highest potential for independence, self-sufficiency, and productive, fulfilling lives.



Patrick with a student and members of the educational team.

The educational team shares common cross-curricular goals of language and communication and developed a plan to publish a book to serve as a vehicle for delivering stated outcomes. Language communication goals that develop procedural storytelling and process writing can be best accomplished using existing technology at the schools. At present, students have access to an iPad/iPod for Alternative Augmentative Communication, as well as educational Apps. Through incorporating existing technology such as the Smart Board and video conferencing, the students can become visiting “published authors” to other classrooms and schools within the district and the communities beyond.

Wish us luck – our challenges include building knowledge on self-publishing. We are novices with respect to the use and application of some educational and communication Apps. As lifelong learners, educators can effectively model the learning process for our students. Hopefully with a leap of faith and current technology tools, our student authors will be able to share their stories. Who knows – we may even blog about it one day.

## Space Camp 2012

- by Ashley Hache (grade 12 BVI Student from NB)



APSEA students went to the US Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama for SCIVIS (Space Camp for Interested Visually Impaired Students) from 19-28 September 2012. SCIVIS is a week-long camp set aside for visually impaired students from all over. We find out who gets accepted approximately one year before the camp, and then we raise funds to allow us to go to Space Camp. This year a total of five APSEA students were accepted.

We got to experience a lot of new things and make new friends. SCIVIS consists of Space Camp and Aviation Challenge. Aviation Challenge is all about team work and pushing yourself to try new things. We went zip-lining, water zip-lining, rock wall climbing, and we got to fly flight simulators. We participated in top gun using the flight simulators. This is when you fly the simulators to try to shoot down your opponents and bomb buildings.

We also got to participate in drill and ceremony and patrolling. Drill and ceremony is a condition in which your team leader calls commands and you must do them quickly. When you make a mistake, you are out of the competition. Patrolling is like what people in the army do. You are given a mission and must complete it without getting captured by the other teams. At the end of the week, there is an award ceremony where all participants get a certificate and team awards are given out. The camp was focused around teamwork and making new friends.



**Chaperones Nova Herring and Bernie Power with the group at Space Camp.**





My favourite activity at space camp was the rock climbing and the zip-lining. It was a great experience and very fun. I strongly recommend attending space camp. It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and you will not leave disappointed. By the time the week is over, you won't want to leave. I made so many close friends who I am still in touch with.

We would like to extend our sincere thank you to those who supported SCIVIS 2012: APSEA Auxiliary, APSEA Trust Funds, Danny Johnson, Delta Gamma Scholarships, Black Educators Association of Halifax, The Halifax Regional Municipality, North and South Esk Elementary School, Sunny Corner, NB and the NS Department of Education.

*Editor's note: Ashley did not mention it, but she was awarded the "The Right Stuff" award for her attitude and team spirit while at SCIVIS! Congratulations Ashley!*



## Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence 2013

The Prime Minister's Award honours K-12 teachers in all disciplines who instill in students a love of learning and equip them with knowledge and skills to excel in a 21<sup>st</sup> century society and economy.

### Awards

- up to 15 national awards worth \$5,000
- up to 35 regional awards worth \$1,000
- winners are honoured by the Prime Minister
- awards for outstanding Aboriginal teachers
- winners' schools share recognition

### Eligibility

Certified Canadian teachers in good standing who have been teaching full-time at the elementary or secondary level for at least three years are eligible

### Selection Criteria

- innovative and exemplary teaching practices
- digital literacy and information and communications technologies in the classroom
- student skills development
- student achievement and participation
- teacher commitment and leadership

### How to Nominate

For the full Guidelines and Nominations Form, visit: [www.pma.gc.ca](http://www.pma.gc.ca), call: 613-946-0651 or email: [pmate-ppmee@gc.ca](mailto:pmate-ppmee@gc.ca)

## **Literacy Achievement of Deaf Learners with Cochlear Implants**

- Peter Papoulidis, DHH Itinerant Teacher

In 2008, I had the good fortune to conduct a research study with two highly-skilled colleagues, Connie Mayer and Pam Millet, from York University in Toronto. Our casual conversation during a coffee break at one of Connie's workshops led (with considerable nudging from Joan Skinner) to a full scale research project replete with proposals, ethics committees, and endless tweaking of methodologies and information gathering. The topic of conversation centered on the rapidly-growing subgroup of students who had cochlear implants (CI's) and who had access to auditory-based language. We knew of several studies that provided empirical evidence linking CI use to significant improvements in speech, auditory abilities and oral language; however, little research existed – none in the Canadian context - that showed whether cochlear implants provided similar improvements to academic achievements of profoundly deaf children who were in the regular classroom. The experience was both exhausting and highly invigorating. More importantly, it came at a moment in my career when I was ready for a new challenge.

### **Synopsis of our rationale for the study and preliminary findings in Atlantic Canada:**

Two of the most recent and significant developments to impact the field of deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) education have been the introduction of Universal Newborn Hearing Screening (UNHS) and the advances made in cochlear implant technology. With the introduction of newborn hearing screening and the opportunity to hear at a much earlier age (for example, by 6 months of age) it may be possible for DHH infants to develop auditory skills (and subsequently speech and language) that follow the developmental path of normally hearing infants much more closely. The combination of UNHS (which ensures the earliest possible intervention) and cochlear implantation (which provides the best hearing levels possible with today's technology) are the two necessary, and interacting, factors that are resulting in outcomes for children who are deaf that surpass those that were possible in the past.

One of the more well-documented outcomes of cochlear implantation is improved access to auditory input with increased potential for listening and spoken language development. The interdependent relationship between language and literacy – also well documented in the literature - should hold as true for DHH individuals as it does for the hearing population. Therefore, if learners with implants have improved oral language, it should follow that this will also have a positive impact on literacy development. To date, there is some evidence to suggest that this is the case.

The focus of our study was to examine this issue in the Canadian context, where no published data was currently available, and to collect data on writing as well as reading achievement, as this is an area that has unfortunately received less research attention. The specific aims of our research was three-fold: to document reading and writing levels for a cohort of learners using cochlear implants; to compare these data to chronological age norms for hearing learners to investigate relationships among demographic factors (such as age of implantation and additional disabilities) and literacy outcomes; and to identify relative areas of strength and weakness in this group of literacy learners. Such an investigation is especially important at this juncture in the field, given the increasing number of children receiving cochlear implants at younger ages as a consequence of universal newborn hearing screening (UNHS), with many infants routinely receiving implants under one year of age.

Findings from this research are very encouraging. Preliminary results indicate that students with cochlear implants are demonstrating improved literacy outcomes, in both reading and writing, relative not only to performance reported for deaf learners in the past, but to that of their hearing age peers.

In both reading and writing almost 70 percent of the students in this study were achieving at or above grade level. No impact of age of implantation was found, but this may be a consequence of the relatively late age of implantation for the entire APSEA cohort. Not surprisingly, the presence of additional disabilities and the non-implant use were related to poorer performance.

Overall these are encouraging results and speak to the need to develop longitudinal data bases to systematically track literacy development in the growing numbers of children receiving cochlear implants (to ensure that gains are maintained over time) and **to identify those variables which impact on literacy performance in order to inform both policy development and pedagogical practice.**

It should be noted that APSEA, and the students we serve, was among the first to participate in this study. We have a unique structure and delivery of service which provides a homogenous educational experience to students and families in our region. Our extensive data base has not gone unnoticed by the academics. It is well known that APSEA has access to a large (800+) group of DHH students who can participate in educational research. Certainly this is fodder for more research possibilities within APSEA and with colleagues from away.


Follow the link below to access the full article:

<http://hearinghub.ca/pdfs/MayerMillettPapoulidisAERApaper2012.pdf>

## Looking Ahead

The next few months will pass quickly, as we continue with the Review and prepare for events such as the Parent Weekend on 19-21 April, the spring inservice on 21-24 May ... by which time, planning for a new school year will be in high gear!

All the best,



Bertram Tulk, EdD  
Superintendent

