



# Superintendent's Message

## May 2013

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### Introduction/Update

As I write this *Message*, we are in the midst of both completing year-end tasks and preparing for September. Of course, the Review is also forefront in our minds ... as that process moves along. This issue includes an inspiring article on a student's successful "Dinner in the Dark" initiative, a positive student transition experience, information on the Parents' Association, a staffing update and our calendar for 2013-14.

Submissions for the *Superintendent's Message* are encouraged and should be sent to Pam Edmonds (Pam\_Edmonds@apsea.ca).



## Dinner in the Dark

- Nicole MacDonald, BVI Itinerant Teacher

Dominick Tait, Grade 9 student at Inverness Education Centre/Academy, worked hard all semester to plan and organize an event for his community. As part of a leadership project with APSEA Itinerant teacher, Nicole MacDonald, Dominick offered a "Dinner in the Dark" experience to bring awareness and understanding of visual impairment to his community. He collaborated with a variety of community members, Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), school administrators and volunteers in order to organize the event. Dominick successfully canvassed donations from community grocers (Mabou Freshmart and Shean Co-op) and a restaurant (The Village Grill) to provide food for the evening.

On March 23, 2013 there were 43 participants who arrived at the school's cafeteria to eat their meal under blindfold. It was a delightful evening. From the positive feedback at the end of the night, it was clear everyone left with a better appreciation for what it could mean to have a visual impairment. Participants were given time to explore materials used by people with visual impairments which included simulator glasses, large print, Braille materials, assistive technology and information about ID and Mobility canes. The evening was topped off with a speech by Lindsay Bryan, parent of an APSEA student. Lindsay relayed personal experiences of raising her six year old daughter, Mackenzie, who is blind. Lindsay provided real life experiences, focusing on the need for others to see her daughter as a capable and successful person. Lindsay emphasized the need for others to allow Makenzie to make mistakes in order for her to learn from them; to have expectations that she can and will be independent without over-supporting and taking those learning opportunities from her. Lindsay's lasting statement, "Makenzie sees the world, just not with her eyes" helped participants appreciate the quality of life Makenzie enjoys each day.

Dominick raised \$800 during the event. After researching his options, he discovered that less than 15% of children in developing countries have access to the kind of support/resources he receives. He decided to donate all monies raised from his event to support Vision-Aid. This organization helps children in India receive low vision support and rehabilitation. During the event, there was also a 50/50 draw. Dominick has generously given this portion of the money raised to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB).

As Dominick's itinerant teacher, I can only say, with youth showing this kind of determination and leadership, we can rest assured our future is in capable hands.



Participants of Dominick's "Dinner the Dark" event.

## Transition Opportunity

- Jennifer Allaby, Transition Planning Facilitator  
Sarah Wells, BVI Itinerant Teacher

As part of the transition planning process, Sarah Wells, Itinerant Teacher, and Jennifer Allaby, Transition Planning Facilitator, connected Joshua Hawkins, grade 12 APSEA student at Fredericton High, with Ian McWilliams (first year UNBF Engineering Student and past APSEA student). We met in April at the UNB Fredericton Student Union Building so Joshua would get a sense of the university atmosphere. Ian brought his favourite Assistive Technology to show Josh and the two young men discussed the transition to post-secondary. It was a great afternoon and as you will note from the photo, the two connected well and were very much engaged in the topic. Next month Joshua will have the opportunity to meet staff at the UNB Accessibility Centre.



Photo taken by Sarah Wells (l-r, Joshua Hawkins, Ian McWilliams and Jennifer Allaby).

## Staffing Update

While our staffing process continues, many positions for 2013-14 have been filled, as noted below. The update notes staff who are new to APSEA, and those who are changing location or position for the 2013-14 school year. A further update will be provided in the next *Message*.

Sharon Robertson – DHH Provincial Supervisor (New Brunswick)  
Janice Gavin – DHH Itinerant Teacher (Halifax, NS)  
Margaret MacDougall – DHH Itinerant Teacher (Moncton, NB)  
Shawna MacKay – DHH Itinerant Teacher (Truro, NS)  
Arnold Moeliker – DHH Itinerant Teacher (Halifax, NS)  
Peter Papoulidis – DHH Itinerant Teacher (Fredericton, NB)  
Fern Bannister – BVI Itinerant Teacher (Saint John, NB)  
Jessa Carr – BVI Itinerant Teacher (Strait Regional School Board, NS)  
Nicole MacDonald – BVI Itinerant Teacher (Cape Breton, NS)  
Cheryl MacNeil – BVI Preschool Consultant (Nova Scotia)

## Review Update

The Review process is nearing completion. Dr. Fushell presented her draft report to the Executive Committee on 6 May; the Deputy Ministers will provide further feedback on the draft by 21 May. The final report is scheduled to be delivered to the Executive Committee on 24 May and will be distributed to the Board of Directors shortly thereafter. The Board will meet on 7 June, at which time decisions will be made on the report's recommendations. Pending those decisions, detailed staff information session(s) will be scheduled for the following week.

The anxiety which accompanies any Review or evaluative process is natural and is to be expected ... but this acknowledgement doesn't make the process any easier. As we go through the upcoming weeks, please remember the quality and importance of the work you do is vitally important to the children and families who rely upon APSEA; I have confidence that this message will resonate in the Review report.

## Parent Association Executive

On 20 April during the recent Parent Workshop at APSEA, the Parent Association held an Annual General Meeting which included the election of officers for the Executive Committee. The membership for 2013-15 is as follows;

President:	Helen Smith-MacPhail (PEI)
Vice-President (BVI)	Ross Lloyd (NS)
Vice-President (DHH)	Marla MacDougall (NS)
Secretary:	Jamie Patterson (NS)
Treasurer:	Tanya Kenney (NB)

The following are the Goals and Objectives of the Parent Association Executive;

1. To provide group support and opportunities for social interaction for children and families involved with APSEA programming.
2. To recruit parents of APSEA participating students for involvement in professional development opportunities, meetings, conferences and other related activities designed to enhance the role of parents in supporting the education of their children and advancing their own educational needs.
3. To provide information to parents of APSEA participating students regarding APSEA issues and in consultation with other parents to bring questions, concerns and ideas regarding APSEA related issues to the attention of school staff, administration and other school community stakeholders.

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## Atlantic Autism Educators Meet, Share Expertise and Learn from Each Other

- Sheila Bulmer, Autism Project Coordinator

Autism in Education hosted a two-day forum at APSEA on April 10-11, 2013, titled Advancing Capacity through Collaborative Learning. The forum brought together 50 key educators in the area of autism from across the Atlantic Provinces for professional development and to share their expertise in implementing evidence-supported practices in schools to benefit students diagnosed with ASD. Dr. Cathy Pratt, Director of the Indiana Resource Center for Autism at the Indiana Institute on Disability, provided a full-day session on utilizing a range of instructional approaches in inclusive education settings and strategies for managing behavioral challenges.

Participants provided a very positive evaluation of the day. Most notably people spoke about the value of learning and networking with their counterparts in the Atlantic Provinces. Many participants noted the differences, but also the significant similarities in issues surrounding the area of autism. The forum was co-sponsored by Autism Speaks Canada through a Family Service Community Grant awarded to the Autism in Education Project in 2013.

The Autism in Education's mandate is to identify, advance and disseminate knowledge of autism spectrum disorders in the area of educational instruction and practices. The project enables the sharing of best practice, professional development, training, and resources that help ensure each province operates at the highest standard.

### Looking Ahead

The spring inservice takes place next week; I always look forward to re-connecting with colleagues from far and near, as we share opportunities to learn and laugh together!



Bertram Tulk, EdD  
Superintendent

## APSEA Calendar for 2013-2014

Monday <b>2 September 2013</b>	Labour Day
Tuesday <b>3 September 2013</b>	Organization Day for Teachers
Monday <b>14 October 2013</b>	Thanksgiving Day
Tuesday <b>22 October</b> to Thursday <b>24 October 2013</b>	APSEA Annual Inservice
Friday <b>25 October 2013</b>	NSTU Provincial Inservice
Monday <b>11 November 2013</b>	Remembrance Day
Friday <b>20 December 2013</b>	Last Working Day before Christmas
Monday <b>6 January 2014</b>	First Working Day after Christmas
Monday <b>3 March</b> to Friday <b>7 March 2014</b>	March Break – NB
Monday <b>10 March</b> to Friday <b>14 March 2014</b>	March Break – NS
Monday <b>17 March</b> to Friday <b>21 March 2014</b>	March Break – PEI
Thursday <b>17 April 2014</b>	NL - Last Day of School (Spring Break)
Monday <b>28 April 2014</b>	NL - School Reopens
Friday <b>18 April 2014</b>	Good Friday
Monday <b>21 April 2014</b>	Easter Monday
Sunday <b>4 May</b> to Wednesday <b>7 May 2014</b>	“Seeing Beyond the Horizon” 2014 Canadian Conference for Educators, Parents and Professionals
Monday <b>19 May 2014</b>	Victoria Day
Monday <b>30 June 2014</b>	Last Day of Classes