

Seen and Heard

Volume 1, Issue 2

February 2014

Superintendent's Corner

February means we are already into the second half of the school year! I invite you to "take a breather" and catch up on happenings around APSEA. This issue celebrates achievements by students and staff, gives helpful tips/information about the library and assistive technology, updates the strategic plan and the autism project, featuring an introduction to our new Coordinator.

Seen and Heard is one vehicle to improve communication within APSEA. Your feedback (particularly suggestions for improvement and topics/positions to be highlighted in upcoming issues) will be much appreciated. The next Seen and Heard is scheduled for late May. Please send your submissions to Pam at apsea@apsea.ca

Enjoy the rest of winter as we look forward to spring!



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Seeing Beyond the Horizon 2014

You may have heard the buzz or maybe you're fully engaged in the planning process for our upcoming conference from May 4 to 7. This year, APSEA and CNIB will be hosting a national, biennial conference for parents, educators, health professionals and community partners who work

with the students we serve. Formerly known as the Canadian Vision Teacher's Conference, our four-day event allows participants to network and share knowledge, expertise and experience within our field.

Visit our website at www.apsea.ca/pep2014

or click the logo on the APSEA home page, to learn more.

Registration is now open.



Salt Springs Elementary School has an award winning poet in their midst

- by Adam MacInnis—The News (published December 12, 2013)

This week Emily Horton, a Grade 4 student at the school, found out that she has won second place in a CNIB Braille Creative Writing Contest.

The contest was open to braille writers across Canada and Horton won in the poetry section. Horton says she started writing poetry in Grade 1.

"Sometimes if I'm sad, I'll write about rain or cloudy days or things that make people sad," she said. "When I'm happy I'll write about pizza."

But the prize-winning piece was about neither rain nor pizza. Instead it was about a turtle.

"We sat down and we talked about it and just thought it was a good idea to write about a turtle." Horton said she loves poetry because of the sound of it.

Horton has limited vision and started learning braille when she went to school. She works almost every day with Melanie Weir, APSEA Itinerant Teacher for Students who are Blind and Visually Impaired, who has taught her how to write braille to use in both math and writing.

"I'm very proud of her. She's a very hard worker and very dedicated," Weir said. "She's always excited to learn new things."

As they've worked together, Weir has had the chance to read a number of Horton's poems.

"She has a lot of good visualization in her writing – in her stories and her poetry," she said.

In addition to the award itself, Horton also won \$50. She said she'll save it and after Christmas decide what she wants to buy with it.

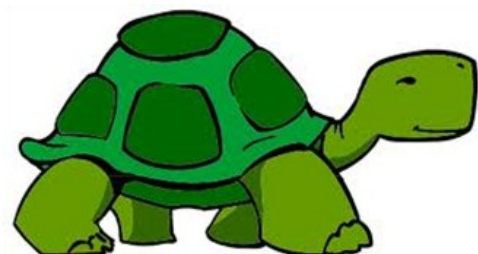
Horton said she plans to keep on writing poetry. She uses a computer-like device that allows her to type with braille to do it.

"When I'm happy I'll write about pizza."

- Emily Horton



Emily Horton uses a computer-like device to write poetry on. She recently won second place in a national poetry contest.



Online Conferencing: Tips for Presenters and Participants

- by Lynn Seymour Lalonde, Supervisor of Assistive Technology

Professional Development webinars, online meetings and job interviews reflect the increased presence of technology in our lives. Here are helpful strategies for both presenters and participants when interacting in online sessions:

Presenters:

1. An information-type presentation usually has limited time, so it is important to start and finish the meeting on time. If you want to allow questions include it in the schedule.
2. A webinar or presentation is for information sharing. Unless specified, participants will expect to receive information, and may not provide much feedback unless requested. With limited time, questions are often written in the “chat section” or scheduled for the end.
3. You can avoid being interrupted or side tracked by questions by pressing the mute button available in your online classroom. When you are ready for the “open” session you can turn off the mute button and participants can ask questions, or offer information.
4. For sessions that include audio feed by phone, ask participants to mute their phones so that school bells, announcements, side conversations or other background noises do not disrupt the session.
5. For online meetings, inform participants in advance what will be expected of them. Send documents ahead of time and let them know how they will be expected to participate.
6. Know the “room” or technology that you are using. Go through a test run. You need to know how to share your screen, adjust your audio, etc., ahead of time.
7. Ideally, have a colleague with you. The colleague can communicate with participants who are having difficulty with their reception, monitor the chat room, and help with any technical glitches you may have when presenting.
8. If you want an open discussion, ask a question related to the webinar to encourage participants to interact. The question may be as generic as asking them what they would like to learn in the session, or as specific as asking them to respond to a question they have received ahead of time.

Participants:

1. Be on time. If you connect late, or need to leave early, do it quietly. You can send an email to the presenter before or after the meeting if you feel you need to let them know.
2. Make sure that you have muted your phone or your computer.
3. If you are on the webcam, remember people (including the presenter) are watching you. Moving around, chatting, adjusting your makeup, or cleaning your nails may cause other participants to attend to you rather than the presenter.



Online Conferencing: Tips for Presenters and Participants (continued)

4. If the meeting is not interactive, save your questions until the end, or post them in the chat room. If your specific question is not answered, remember you can always email the presenter afterward.
5. Come prepared. If information has been received in advance, read it, and bring it with you as a reference.

If we use these strategies, our online meeting experiences should be more effective, efficient ... and enjoyable!

***Please send articles to
apsea@apsea.ca***

Strategic Plan 2013+ Update

The previous issue of Seen and Heard noted the Strategic Plan (SP) was the focus of fall meetings of the Program and Financial Advisory Committees in preparation for the November 22nd meeting of the APSEA Board of Directors. The core elements of the Plan, an amalgam of the prior SP and the Review, had already been shared with staff.

The Board approved the SP in which strategic organizational priorities would be at the core of the Plan; other areas remaining from the prior SP and/or raised by the Review would be addressed as part of “regular operational business”. The latter, although important, would be incorporated into our day-to-day work, while the

former would have specific outcomes, time frames and reports to the Board.

Although the SP is subject to further annual adjustments, the priorities for the current school year are unlikely to change.

The APSEA SP for 2013-16 can be accessed on the website under Main Page, General Information or (http://www.apsea.ca/MainPage/APSEA_Strategic_Plan_2013-2016.pdf)

The APSEA Leadership Team (Supervisors, Directors and Superintendent) have initiated steps to implement the new SP as per the actions and time frames noted. More news to come as the process unfolds!

Operation Stocking Stuffers

- by Sheila Jamieson, Supervisor, Residential, Weekend & Summer Programs

The students worked hard and had fun in the APSEA Residence this last semester. They were building their skills with braille, O&M, assistive technology, augmentative communication and much more. December 2-6 was an exceptional week for students.

A large group of DHH students were on-campus participating in a career exploration short-term program. In the residence the students had a major project called "Operation Stocking Stuffers" (a fundraiser for Phoenix House). During lunch hour and after school the students went around campus collecting donations for their project,

thus supporting their outcomes for self-advocacy and language development.

After receiving over \$150 the students decided to go shopping!!!! However they weren't just shopping for shoes... they bought a boatload of goodies including items like deodorant, toothpaste, shampoo, soap, candy canes, chocolates and school supplies.

The following day included a stroll to Phoenix House on Coburg Road to drop off the donations. The staff at Phoenix House was very accepting and thankful and the

residence staff was proud to see the students complete their project goals.

A little bit of effort goes a long way during the Holiday Season. Thanks to everyone who made a donation and thanks to all the students who participated in this worthwhile project.



Ordering Magnifiers & Monoculars

As some of you may already know, there has been a change in the procedure for ordering magnifiers and monoculars. *Ordering magnifiers is no longer done through the supply list.* You are now able to request magnifiers on the database the same way you order other library materials. Magnifiers and monoculars can be easily searched on the database by inserting the words '**magnifier**' and '**monocular**' into the *subject* field. This search will produce a complete list of all the magnifiers we currently stock. Once you have found the magnifier your student requires you can request it as you would any other library material and it will appear in their library loans list. The return date for these items will be 12/31/2050 which means we do not expect them to be returned and you will not receive an overdue return request for them.

The addition of magnifiers to the library database has allowed us to create more detailed records containing important information about the various models and their functions. We hope the enhanced details contained in these records give you the information you need to select the appropriate vision aid for your students. If you have any questions, or don't see the magnifier or monocular you are looking for in the database, please contact the Library.



Autism in Education Update



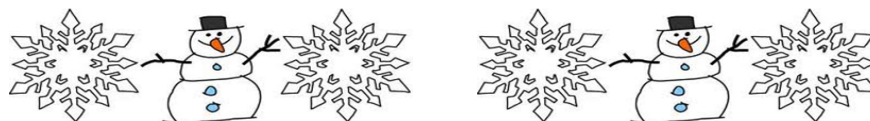
Under the leadership of Sheila Bulmer, the Autism in Education Project grew and thrived over the first three years of its mandate to promote and disseminate evidence-based practices for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) across the Atlantic Provinces. Through Sheila's work, the project established an online community of practice (the Autism in Education website) which provides information and resources to professionals across Atlantic Canada and beyond; produced and distributed three (3) information papers on issues of emerging importance to Atlantic educators; and opened lines of communication and networking opportunities to those who support children and youth with ASD. The project has facilitated collaboration and teamwork and has increased the focus on evidence-based

intervention approaches, as the provincial autism consultants and advisory group have worked toward consistent and common goals in support of students with ASD and the professionals who serve them. Sheila's decision to retire in August 2013 brought a change in the leadership of the project; with Shelley McLean becoming the project coordinator, however, the effort and expertise Sheila brought to the initiative laid the foundation for a seamless transition and continued success of the Autism in Education initiative. The work being done by educational personnel across the region is truly changing the lives of learners with ASD and their families.

The Autism in Education Advisory Committee will continue to work toward the advancement and dissemination of research-based intervention approaches for individuals with ASD through the Autism in Education website (www.apsea.ca/aie) and the development and sharing of information papers, intended to support educators and other professionals to make research-based decisions by presenting and summarizing current research and highlighting the associated impli-

cations for practice. Efforts will also continue to build skills and knowledge among educators across Atlantic Canada by providing professional learning opportunities in the form of online webinars, as well as a professional learning forum for board/district-level ASD consultants this spring.

A recent, exciting development for the Autism in Education group is the announcement by the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET) of "an interprovincial partnership on autism training for teachers, resource teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators" (January 30, 2014). The vision is for educators and support staff to have the requisite skills and knowledge to implement evidence-based teaching and learning strategies for learners with ASD and other developmental disabilities. This interprovincial partnership has the potential to position the Atlantic Provinces as world-leaders with respect to providing a system-wide, regional approach to staff training and service delivery to individuals with ASD and their families.



Staff Profile—Shelley McLean

Shelley McLean accepted the position of Autism in Education Project Coordinator in September, 2013. Prior to moving to APSEA, Shelley served as the Learning Specialist for Autism and Complex Cases with the New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. In that role, she coordinated and supported provincial initiatives around training and service delivery related to Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), provided consultation around students with complex needs and complex behaviours, and engaged in supervision of BCBA candi-

dates as they completed their field work experience.

Before working at the Department level, Shelley served New Brunswick students as a classroom teacher, guidance counsellor, school administrator, and district-based itinerant resource teacher for autism. She brings with her 15 years' experience working with students of all ages in an inclusive education context. She holds Bachelor degrees in Arts and Education and a Master of Education degree in Counseling Psychology from the University of New Brunswick. Shelley has

also completed a Graduate Academic Certificate in Applied Behavior Analysis from the University of North Texas and is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA).

Shelley participated on the Autism in Education Advisory Committee as the New Brunswick representative over the past three years and is eager to provide leadership to the committee as they continue exciting and ground-breaking work to build capacity among educators throughout Atlantic Canada toward evidence-based practices for individuals with ASD.



Shelley McLean
Autism in
Education Project
Coordinator

Check This Out!

Did you know there are default specifications APSEA uses for producing Braille?

Did you know you have options available when requesting Braille production?

The Library webpage has a "Braille Production" guide to help you!

When Did You Last Visit Your Community Library?

- by Christine Purcell, Provincial Supervisor (BVI- NB)

In the past, severe visual impairment meant limited access to print—this certainly included limited access to your neighborhood public library. Today the New Brunswick Public Library Service is increasing access to children & adults with print related difficulties. The ***New 'Vision' Library Catalogue*** allows for 'advanced search' where users can search by format including Braille and large print, as well as a variety of audio and various other electronic file formats. Users can further refine their search by audience (age groups). Did you know or can you even imagine that the NB library system has over 6500 Braille books? ... that over 700 are children's books? all of which can be interlibrary loaned to your local library?

A grade 6 student recently moved to the town of St Stephen, NB. Having recently mastered the English Braille Code, this student is now able to readily fully contracted Braille books – right off the shelf. (Children learning the English Braille Code learn numerous symbols and shortened forms of words to decrease the size & weight of the text. Until this code is mastered most reading materials are custom made to the child's level of skill—making it challenging to read books right off the public shelf.)



APSEA Supervisor, Christine Purcell, and Jacqueline Cormier, Itinerant Teacher, working with Heather McKend, Children's Librarian at the Saint John Free Public Library, and Elva Hatt, Library Manger at the St Croix Public Library in St Stephen, have cooperated to transfer a significant number of books of interest to enable this student to *browse* in person.

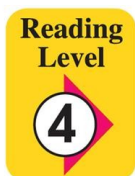
Are you, your children or your students accessing your public library?

Public Libraries are a community resource for all! Check them out in person or start with the On-Line Catalogue in the comfort of your own home. Thank you NB Public Library Service for providing books in various and multiple formats! Your ever growing electronic collection is also providing increased access for a wider variety of users including those using a braille format.



Elva Hatt and Jacquelyn Cormier, making things happen in Charlotte County, NB.

Need Help Finding Guided Readers?



The Guided Reading section of the Library is organized by reading level **number**. Numbers were used as they were the most consistent identifier across multiple publishers. We understand this organizational scheme can be a challenge for teachers who are used to identifying leveled readers by grade or alphabet according to Fountas & Pinnell.

Whenever possible, we have used correlation charts and information provided by the individual publishers to include grade level, Fountas & Pinnell level, DRA levels and Early Intervention Level. Correlation charts can be found on the internet and they *roughly* illustrate how levels correlate to each other and to school grade levels. A Google search for “**reading level correlation charts**” may assist you in using the number system to correlate with the leveling system you are familiar with.

For instance, if a student needs Level F, we would provide you with reading level 10 material.

Use the **Library search tab** and:

Enter *guided reading* into the **subject search** box **OR** into the **find subject** box and click subject search

Enter *Leveled reader* into the **subject search** box

Enter *Level #* into the **description** search box

You can also limit the above search by format. We have catalogued guided readers in the following formats:

Braille

Braille files

Large print

Large print colour

PDF

Print

Twin vision

Requests for books can be made via the database, email or by phoning the library. As always, if you have any questions please don't hesitate to ask. We also welcome your feedback!

BANA Braille Excellence Award

Congratulations to members of the CBA-BANA (Canadian Braille Authority – Braille Authority of North America) Joint Committee on Tactile Graphics as recipients of the BANA Braille Excellence Award! Members of this committee from APSEA are Janet Milbury, Tactile Illustrator, and John McConnell, former Director of Programs (BVI).

This award was started by BANA several years ago to honor individuals and groups who

have made significant contributions to braille, braille codes, and production.

The BANA Braille Excellence Award was given for the first time in 2009 to commemorate the bicentenary of the birth of Louis Braille. Dr. Abraham Nemeth was the first recipient and Joseph Sullivan was the second recipient in 2011. The CBA-BANA Joint Committee on Tactile Graphics is the third recipient of this prestigious award.

The award was presented at the Getting in Touch with Literacy conference held December 4-7 in Providence, Rhode Island.

Glenda Parsons, Director of Programs (BVI), attended this conference and collected the certificate on Janet's behalf. Glenda and Norma MacDonald, Braille Supervisor, presented it to Janet during the Christmas lunch for staff at APSEA on December 17.



(L-R) Janet Milbury, Norma MacDonald and Glenda Parsons.

Exploring the Potential for an Interprovincial Training Initiative



Atlantic Provincial Autism Consultants Participate in Launch of NB Advanced ASD Training

In April 2013, the Council of Atlantic Deputy Ministers of Education and Training (CADMET) recommended that the provinces explore the possibility of an inter-provincial ASD training initiative. On January 28 and 29, a group of provincial ASD Consultants representing NL, NS, and PE took a huge step toward a collaborative project as they joined the New Brunswick provincial team for an extraordinary professional learning opportunity in Fredericton. The launch of the New Brunswick Provincial Autism Training Framework began with training on the Comprehensive Assessment for Learning and Independence (CALI), a NB-developed assessment tool designed with the help of international experts in the field of evidence-based practices for individuals with ASD to assess the social, communication, and readiness skills for learners with ASD. Participants had the opportunity to network with colleagues as they had the opportunity to explore the potential of this new tool that will assist professionals in assessing the skill areas that represent the most significant challenges for learners with ASD from diagnosis through high school graduation.



New Brunswick's Deputy Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development John McLaughlin welcomed participants at the CALI training in Fredericton, explaining how this new training model will build capacity among professionals throughout the province and will lead to improved educational programs and services for individuals with ASD.

NB Team – (back) DM John McLaughlin, Sheri Gallant, Brian Kelly
(front) Jen Campbell, Monette Leblanc-Priemer, Sylvie Hache, Verna O'Coin, Isabelle Cowan