



APSEA Accessibility Plan 2026-2029



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Our Land and People Acknowledgement

We at APSEA acknowledge that we live and work in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq People. We recognize the Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik, Peskotomuhkati Nations of the Wabanaki Confederacy, Innu, Inuit and Beothuk as Indigenous land keepers in Atlantic Canada, and their vital role in protecting and stewarding traditional territories. We recognize our shared responsibility as Treaty People.

We recognize African Nova Scotians as a distinct group and acknowledge that people of African descent have lived in the Atlantic region for over 400 years, contributing to the infrastructure and economic wealth of the towns and cities they helped to build, but from which they could not benefit. We honour and offer gratitude to those ancestors of African descent who came before us to this land.

We at APSEA are committed to reconciliation, respect, and justice for all communities. These principles guide all work we do.

About APSEA

The Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA) is a unique partnership among the four Atlantic provinces of New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. We provide specialized education services for children and youth who are blind, have low vision, and/or are Deaf, deaf, Hard of Hearing. Our team includes educators, specialists, and support staff who work together to support learner success.

Our Purpose

Mission

APSEA collaboratively provides responsive educational services that are accessible and inclusive for learners who are blind, have low vision, and/or are Deaf, deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Vision

The children and youth we support achieve individualized success in learning and life.

Core Values

Learners First: We focus on and prioritize each learner's unique strengths and needs, delivering personalized support to foster their growth and success.

Collaboration: We build strong partnerships and value diverse perspectives to support learner success.

Equity: We support equitable access, and responsive educational opportunities for learners.

Innovation: We embrace research-informed approaches to continuously improve how we meet the needs of learners.

Introduction

In accordance with the [Nova Scotia Accessibility Act](#), in 2022 APSEA formed an Accessibility Advisory Committee and developed its first [Accessibility Plan 2022-2025](#). As a prescribed public sector body (PPSB), APSEA is required to update its accessibility plan every three years.

Over the last three years, APSEA staff have worked to make progress on the action items we created in our Accessibility Plan 2022-2025.

This Accessibility Plan 2026-2029 is a continuation and expansion of the first plan. Here we outline the successes from the past three years and share what goals we have for the next three years to remove and reduce barriers at APSEA.

The updated plan reflects barriers identified by staff and families/learners through consultation. Our Key Areas of Focus are reflective of the accessibility standard priority areas identified in the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act. Our Accessibility Plan 2026-2029 is also designed to align with the [ASPEA Strategic Plan 2025-2029](#).

APSEA does not have control over the accessibility of public schools. Each Atlantic province has their own laws and rules about the accessibility of governments, schools and other public organizations. All public schools in Nova Scotia are prescribed public sector bodies and are required to have an accessibility plan.

Accessibility Legislation in Atlantic Canada

- Nova Scotia
 - [Nova Scotia Accessibility Act \(2017\)](#)
 - [Nova Scotia Built Environment Accessibility Standard Regulations](#)
- Atlantic Canada
 - [New Brunswick Accessibility Act \(2024\)](#)
 - [Newfound Land Accessibility Act \(2021\)](#)
 - [PEI Accessibility Act \(2021\)](#)

- Government Resources
 - [The Government of Nova Scotia's Accessibility Directorate](#)
 - [Accessibility in Nova Scotia](#)
 - [Accessibility Plans in Nova Scotia](#)
 - [Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board](#) (develop accessibility standards)

The Government of Nova Scotia is in the process of developing Accessibility Standards in the following areas: Education, Employment, Goods and Services, Information and Communication, and Public Transportation. As each standard is enacted, APSEA will comply with them in accordance with the law. The Nova Scotia [Built Environment Accessibility Standard Regulations](#) are law.

Notes on Language

Language about disability is complex, personal, and evolving. There are different ways people think and talk about disability. The social model of disability focuses on barriers in society such as access, attitudes, and systems, rather than on individuals.

These ideas influence language choices like person-first language (for example, person who is blind, low vision) and identity-first language (for example, Deaf person). All these approaches are valid. A person's language preferences may change over time or depending on the situation.

We recognize that language evolves as understanding grows. We aim to use respectful, inclusive language in our current materials and practices. Some documents APSEA created in the past reflect the terminology used at the time they were developed and may not reflect current language standards or best practices.

Letter from Superintendent

It is with great pride and commitment that we present APSEA's 2026–2029 Accessibility Plan. This plan reflects our ongoing dedication to fostering an environment where every learner, family, and staff member can participate fully and equitably in our programs and services.

At APSEA, accessibility is a core value that guides our work. We recognize that removing barriers and creating inclusive spaces benefit everyone. This plan builds on the progress we have made, while setting clear goals for continued improvement in communication, service delivery, physical spaces, and technology.

Our approach is grounded in collaboration. We have listened to the voices of students, families, team members, and community partners, and their insights have shaped the priorities outlined in this plan. We will continue to engage with our partners throughout its implementation, ensuring that accessibility remains a shared responsibility and a collective achievement.

As we move forward, APSEA will remain steadfast in our mission to provide equitable access to education and support for learners who are blind, low vision, Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or DeafBlind. Together, we will continue to strengthen learning environments where everyone can thrive, contribute, and succeed.

I invite you to read through the plan and join us in advancing accessibility across our organization. Your feedback, ideas, and partnership are essential as we strive to make APSEA a model of inclusion for the communities we support and serve.



Melina Kennedy

Superintendent, APSEA

Review of Progress Made from APSEA 2023-2025 Accessibility Plan

2023-2025 Education Action Items

Item 1: Develop training modules for disability, accessibility, and inclusion and share with educational partners.

- Virtual training modules in Deaf Culture and Introduction to APSEA are being developed for APSEA staff. Modules will be shared with provincial and national educational partners.
- Ongoing diversity, equity and inclusion training opportunities are provided for staff.
- Accessible Word Document training was developed and made available to APSEA staff. This training was also recorded as part of the Autism in Education webinar series.

Item 2: Continue and enhance collaboration and sharing of resources with school boards, school districts and Regional Centres for Education.

- Enhanced learner support with the adoption of the Responsive Teaching and Learning (RTL) service delivery model.
- The RTL model provides a framework of three tiers of support APSEA teachers provide within the inclusive education systems across the Atlantic Provinces.

Item 3: Continue and enhance collaboration and partnerships with outside agencies and other companies from all four of the Atlantic Provinces.

- Partnerships with outside agencies and Regional Centres for Education have been ongoing. Valued partners include:

- Canadian National Institute for the Blind,
- Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia,
- Inclusion NB,
- New Brunswick Disability Executives Network,
- New Brunswick Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services,
- Newfoundland Association of the Deaf,
- Sign Language Institute Canada,
- Silent Voice Canada,
- Vision Loss Rehabilitation.

Item 4: Continue and enhance online and in-person opportunities for learners to access appropriate areas of APSEA programs and services.

- Growth of our Atlantic Provinces Connections departments (DHH and BLV), which includes more frontline staff with lived experience.
- Expanded and improved access to programs and services, such as APSEA connect, various in-person and virtual learning, and social opportunities for learners, families and school teams.
- Along with programming for learners, we offer programs for parents, school teams, or those working with DHH/BLV learners.

Item 5: Establish timelines for learners to receive assessments for access and ensure they are kept current, such as the functional vision learning media and functional listening evaluations supported by APSEA teachers.

- APSEA teachers provide necessary assessments within the first year of service, then on an as needed basis.
- Assessment data is recorded in learner service plans and revisited during re-evaluation periods.

Item 6: Develop and implement a process for research, evaluation and acquiring new evidenced-informed accessible technologies for populations who are BLV and DHH.

- Our approach to technology assessment and implementation is individualized and responsive to the needs of each learner.
- For learners who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, the educational audiologist leads the process for acquiring assistive technology in educational settings.
- Our BLV department has a workflow in place for research and evaluation of assistive technology and is currently working to formalize the process.
- Reestablished the APSEA Research Committee.

2023-2025 Employment Action Items

Item 1: Develop a plan to increase recruitment of employees with lived experience.

- APSEA's updated NSGEU collective agreement includes a provision to create opportunities each year for individuals with lived experience.
- APSEA has dedicated staff positions for people with lived experience.
- Members of APSEA's Human Resources team have taken part in Accessibility Confident Employer workshops developed by the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate.

Item 2: Ensure language does not create barriers.

- During the pre-employment process we:
 - Invite candidates to request accommodation for interviews.
 - Provide ASL-English interpreters for interviews.
 - Provide alternative formats of interview materials upon request.
- Throughout the employment cycle, we continue to provide written English communications with ASL translation or alternative formats where possible.
- The APSEA and NSGEU Collective Agreement 2022-2026 is currently being translated into ASL.

Item 3: Provide all new employees with information and education on respectful considerations and best practices when interacting with individuals who are BLV and DHH as part of onboarding process.

- Virtual training modules on Deaf Culture and an Introduction to APSEA have been developed in partnership with Silent Voice Canada.
- Our Orientation and Mobility department is available to provide training on sighted guide techniques, and other considerations when working with colleagues who are blind, low vision.

Item 4: Ensure APSEA professional learning opportunities are accessible (Example: ASL interpreter and CART services available/ Alternate Format available).

- All APSEA professional learning opportunities provide ASL-English interpretation. CART services, alternative formats, and other accommodations are available upon request.

Item 5: When working with external service providers, make every effort to ensure accessible options are provided and selected.

- APSEA is committed to collaborating with external service providers to ensure the accessibility needs of our staff are met when participating in training or professional learning.

Item 6: Ensure there are employment resources within the organization responsible for upholding accessibility commitments and standards.

- Accessible hiring resources:
 - Job postings in accessible formats.
 - Access to ASL-English Interpretation and/or CART (Communication Access Real Time) services for job interviews.
 - Interview materials and other accommodations available upon request.
 - Dedicated positions for people with lived experience.

- Accessibility Services Team, comprised of the Supervisor of Accessibility Services, ASL-English Staff Interpreters, and ASL Translation Lead.
 - ASL-English interpreting services available to all staff.
 - ASL translations of important written English content.
 - ASL classes for staff.
 - Coordinate and book CART services.
 - Coordinate and book interpreters for other spoken languages.
- APSEA Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Consultant position and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee.
- Training available to staff on topics of accessibility.
- Assistive technologies available as needed (e.g., speech to text, screen reader, etc.).
- Some adaptable workspaces at APSEA Central Office (sit-stand desks, adjustable lighting, painted walls for visual access).
- Policies and procedures continue to be revised and developed as needed.
 - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework,
 - Workplace Accommodations policy,
 - Respectful workplace policy.
- Continue to offer flexible working arrangements, including remote and hybrid options for staff.

2023-2025 Information and Communication Action Items

Item 1: Make training available to all APSEA employees so that they are equipped to create accessible materials as appropriate for the intended audience and/ or they have access to supports needed.

- Training on creating accessible source documents in MS Word was developed and first delivered as a pilot in January 2023 to some APSEA administrative staff, and then to APSEA employees in June 2024. It was delivered to a broader audience of partners through the Autism in Education webinar series in December 2024. Additional training sessions are available both virtually and in-person and have been pre-recorded for on-demand viewing.

- Written step-by-step guidelines on creating accessible materials are available on the APSEA website.
- Support for creating accessible materials is available through collaboration with the Supervisor of Accessibility Services.

Item 2: Provide clear guidelines to APSEA employees on how to create accessible materials, detailing the necessary steps and checkpoints to ensure accessibility requirements are met before distribution and that all audience needs are understood.

- Accessible Word Document training is available for staff.
- Guidelines for creating accessible documents are available on the APSEA website.

Item 3: APSEA employees will ensure current accessibility standards for videoconferencing, website, and accessible electronic materials are met and maintained.

- A baseline of videoconferencing considerations for meeting organizers, participants, and ASL interpreters, is available on the APSEA website.
- ASL Translations of important employee documents and materials.

Item 4: APSEA website will continue to adhere to accessibility standards and ensure it is kept up to date. The website will incorporate a strong understanding of the digital behaviour and accessibility needs of our audience.

- Launched Website Development Committee in 2025 to support the work of creating a new APSEA website.
- APSEA's website development team is knowledgeable in international Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and understand the accessibility needs of our website audience.

- We ensure written website content is accessible for screen reading technology.
- ASL Translations for some website content have been created.

Item 5: Incorporate integrated described video into APSEA created content.

- APSEA strives to follow best practices in creating accessible video media where possible.

Item 6: Review internal storage systems (such as databases, financial systems, human resource systems) to ensure APSEA is using the most accessible technology solution available.

- We select the most accessible technology where possible during procurement, while ensuring systems meet operational demand and comply with Canadian privacy and digital resource standards.
- Rolled out a new Human Resources Information system, Employment Hero (formerly Humi).

Additional Successes

- Updated our language to reflect current best practices in inclusive language based on lived experience for describing disabilities (blind, low vision, and Deaf, Hard of Hearing).
- Revival of the APSEA Newsletter (internal communications document).
- Colleague Connections Lunch and Learn series is designed to help employees learn more about other roles and departments at APSEA. The pilot of this initiative was so successful that we have doubled the number of sessions (bi-weekly to weekly) for the 2025-2026 school year due to the high number of APSEA employees volunteering to participate.
- Informal virtual drop-in sessions held for staff and families with members of APSEA Senior Leadership (Coffee Chats).

2023-2025 Built Environment Action Items

In late 2024 we moved from the APSEA Centre (school) on South Street in Halifax, Nova Scotia to a new office, the APSEA Central Office located on Bayers Road in Halifax. While our action items remain the same, the scope and timelines on work have changed.

Item 1: Continue to use Rick Hansen Certification standards as a guide in built environment accessibility.

- Information from the Rick Hansen Foundation, along with other relevant accessibility standards, were used to identify key accessibility focus areas for the new APSEA Central Office at Bayers Road.
- The APSEA Central Office is a one-level office with direct access from the parking lot to all areas of the office space.
- Many office walls are painted to increase access for signing employees.
- Visual fire alarms are installed throughout the office.
- Dimmer switches are installed in some areas.
- Mirrored domes are installed in corners and at the end of many hallways.
- Video intercom system installed at the office entrance.
- Emergency Management Plan created for the APSEA Central Office with accompanying visuals and videos to ensure material is presented in multiple formats.
- Mandatory on-site safety tours were conducted for all staff who regularly visit the APSEA Central Office.

Item 2: Work with an accessibility consultant who is Rick Hansen certified to ensure APSEA buildings are reaching their full potential in terms of accessibility.

- APSEA's Supervisor of Accessibility Services is a registered RHFAC Professional.

- Accessibility was considered when selecting the location of the new APSEA Central Office. The new APSEA Central Office has not undergone an RHFAC rating to become RHFAC Certified at this time.

Item 3: Ensure signage in APSEA buildings is accessible to all users of the facility.

- In the process of securing a vendor for signage and wayfinding for the APSEA Central Office.

Engagement

Overview

Engagement for the accessibility plan was conducted directly through two surveys: the APSEA Accessibility Survey for Families and Learners and the APSEA Accessibility Survey for APSEA Staff. Consultation took place in the winter of 2026. The two surveys were designed to collect feedback from APSEA employees and from families and learners, with questions focused on participants' experiences of accessibility at APSEA.

Consultations also happened indirectly, by using the data collected by other large-scale consultations conducted by APSEA during our strategic planning process (late autumn 2024 through winter of 2025), as well as the data collected during APSEA's Employee Engagement Survey (November 2025).

Families and Learners Survey Feedback

While the response rate from families and learners was limited, the feedback offered meaningful insight into lived experiences from individuals highlighting key accessibility considerations.

Strengths

Families consistently praise Education Support Teachers, Educational Interpreters, and frontline staff working directly with learners. They also noted core supports they receive, like interpreters, translation and Braille services, equipment provision, and virtual programming opportunities.

Staff Capacity and Service Frequency

Some families cited gaps in staffing capacity and service inconsistency, especially for those who live in rural areas. Large caseloads for staff in Mentor and ASL Specialist roles make it hard for learners to access services at their desired frequency to support language development. Other families stated infrequent

contact with their child’s Education Support Teacher, or their child not having an interpreter present for support.

Barriers to Information and Communication

The most notable barrier reported is accessing information and communication with families. Some families report missing events due to lack of timely or clear information and communication.

They report difficulty finding clear, centralized information about:

- services available to their child,
- events (dates, locations, eligibility, accessibility details),
- registration processes,
- travel assistance options.

Communications are described as:

- vague, inconsistent, or incomplete,
- reliant on “self-navigation”,
- spread across multiple platforms (email, website, Facebook).

Gaps in Accessibility and Inclusion Beyond DHH and BLV

Accessibility considerations for learners with access needs outside of DHH and BLV are lacking, resulting in barriers for learners with higher support needs. A broader understanding of accessibility is needed in planning services and events for learners with co-occurring disabilities, especially those with physical or mobility disabilities and medical needs.

Accessibility considerations beyond disability also need to be considered and planned for to ensure all learners can participate. Some examples of other barriers to participation are lack of reliable internet connection in rural areas, and the economic burden for families required to travel to attend in-person events or take work off so their child can participate.

Other Barriers Noted

- Virtual programming is not always accessible for learners using ASL or who are BLV, and some lecture-style programs could be more engaging with a more interactive delivery model.
- Some families noted a gap between APSEA's mission/values and their personal experiences of accessibility.

Staff Survey Feedback

Strengths

- Commitment to learners.
- APSEA provides ASL-English Interpreters and ASL classes for staff.
- Supportive supervisors.
- Flexibility for staff.
- Growing awareness of accessibility.

Key Themes

- Access to ASL and interpreters is the most pressing and frequently cited barrier by staff. Some staff expressed appreciation for this service. However, many feel the demand for interpreters is much higher than we currently have capacity to meet.
- Information and documents are hard to find, scattered across multiple platforms and often not in accessible formats, or the platforms are a barrier. One person explained how time-consuming it can be searching for a document they need, because they are stored in so many different locations.
- Physical and virtual environments (APSEA Central Office, virtual meetings, virtual learning) create ongoing barriers for both staff and learners.
- Training and onboarding around accessibility and accessible documents are inconsistent.

- Culture of inclusion is mixed; many staff praise their direct supervisors and colleagues but describe systemic ableism/audism and burnout from advocating for access.
- The overall sentiment of staff experiences with accessibility at APSEA is mixed to negative for staff with access needs (disabled staff) and mixed to positive for staff without identified disabilities. Staff who self-identified as having disabilities reported:
 - Appreciation for interpreters and ASL initiatives, but frustration with delays, cancellations, English-first culture, and lack of ASL-first content.
 - Praise for some tech and accommodations, but concerns about signage, wayfinding, document accessibility, and physical space.
 - Feeling supported individually by supervisors but experiencing systemic barriers.

Areas of Focus for 2026-2029

In addition to our ongoing work to make accessibility improvements in the focus areas and goals outlined in our first accessibility plan, we have updated our commitments and developed several new goals for each focus area.

Education

Our Commitment

APSEA collaboratively provides individualized responsive educational services that are accessible and inclusive for learners who are blind, have low vision, and/or are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and their families.

Educational support exists in a variety of forms and environments including in the learner's school, community, and virtually.

APSEA is committed to building capacity amongst its staff by providing regular opportunities for professional learning.

Our commitment is to be a leader in developing and designing lived experience lead inclusive education and accessible responsive teaching and learning for all learners.

Policies

Government and APSEA's policies and plans steer our work. These documents will be used to inform accessibility decision making across APSEA.

- [APSEA Strategic Plan 2025-2029](#)
- Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, [Inclusive Schools](#)
- Government of Prince Edward Island, [Inclusive Education](#)
- [New Brunswick/Nouveau Brunswick Inclusive Education Policy 322 \(2013\)](#)
- [Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy \(2019\)](#)
- PEI Public Schools Branch Operational Policy, [Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights in Learning \(2019\)](#)

Goals

- Strengthen our Responsive Teaching and Learning model of service delivery.
- Enhance supports for learners who are DeafBlind, improving how we deliver services to dual service learners.
- Facilitate more opportunities for connections among learners and families.
- Create efficient and consistent operational processes to support APSEA's programs and services.
- Create more opportunities for staff to learn about disability and accessibility.
- Enhance learning opportunities for frontline staff supporting learners with additional and/or complex access needs.
- Enhance feedback mechanisms for families and learners.

Employment

Our Commitment

APSEA is committed to reducing and removing barriers throughout the employment cycle for all employees. We will continue to focus on reducing barriers to employment for those with lived experience who are blind, low vision, and Deaf, Hard of Hearing.

Policies

Government and APSEA Policies steer our work. These policy statements will be used to inform accessibility decision making across APSEA.

- Government
 - [New Brunswick Human Rights Act](#)
 - [Nova Scotia Human Rights Act](#)
 - [Prince Edward Island Human Rights Act](#)
- APSEA
 - [APSEA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy](#)
 - [APSEA Employee Professional Growth and Development Policy](#)

- [APSEA Fair Hiring Policy](#)
- [APSEA Occupational Health and Safety Policy](#)
- [APSEA Remote Work Arrangement Policy](#)
- [APSEA Respectful Workplace Policy](#)
- [APSEA Whistleblowing: Employee Disclosure of Wrongdoing Policy](#)
- [APSEA Workplace Accommodation Policy](#)

Goals

- Enhance and implement accessibility training for all staff.
- Complete an organizational alignment review to clarify roles and responsibilities for improved collaboration and accountability.
- Create a professional development plan for staff and enhance leadership growth process.
- Enhance and standardize onboarding for staff.
- Streamline ASL-English interpreting services for staff.
- Enhance feedback mechanisms for staff to share their experiences of accessibility at APSEA.

Information and Communication

Our Commitment

APSEA is committed to reducing and removing barriers to information and communication internally for our staff, and externally for our learners and families, and valued partners and collaborators. We will improve communication and make information easier to find and use.

Policies

Government and APSEA Policies steer our work. We also use resources created by other trusted organizations on topics of accessibility as it relates to information and communication to help guide our work. These policy statements and resources will be used to inform accessibility decision making across APSEA.

- [APSEA Brand Policy](#)

- [APSEA Media Relations Policy](#)
- [APSEA Social Media Policy](#)
- [APSEA Technology Resource Policy](#)

Resources

- [CAN-ASC-3.1:2025 – Plain Language](#)
- [CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024 Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services](#)
- [CNIB Clear Print Guidelines](#)
- [How to Meet WCAG \(Quick Reference\)](#)
- [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.2](#)

Goals

- Upgrade our Student Information System.
- Upgrade the APSEA website. We will strive for WCAG 2.2 AA, meaning our website will be usable and understandable for most people (with or without disabilities).
- Develop targeted accessible communication strategies for staff, families, and community partners and collaborators.
- Monitor and update accessibility guidelines for creating content (documents, emails, forms, etc.) and provide training to staff to build capacity.
- Communications will be created using plain language. We will strive to follow the Government of Canada’s standard [CAN-ASC-3.1:2025 – Plain Language](#).
- Develop guidelines to support staff planning accessible programs and events.
- Information will be available in accessible formats within a reasonable timeframe to ensure all families and learners, and staff have the information they need.
- Enhance systems for staff and families to easily give feedback.

Built Environment

Our Commitment

In accordance with the Nova Scotia Built Environment Accessibility Standard Regulations, APSEA commits to making accessibility improvements to the APSEA Central Office to enhance the user experience for everyone, especially for those with lived experience who are blind, low vision, and Deaf, Hard of Hearing.

Policies

Government and APSEA's policies and plans steer our work. We also use resources created by other trusted organizations on topics of accessibility as it relates to the built environment help guide our work. These documents will be used to inform accessibility decision making across APSEA.

- APSEA Emergency Management Plan
- [CNIB Clearing Our Path Version 2.0, Creating accessible environments for people impacted by blindness](#)
- [CSA/ASC B651:23 National Standard of Canada, Accessible design for the built environment](#)
- [Gallaudet University DeafSpace](#)
- [Nova Scotia Building Code Regulations](#)
- [Nova Scotia Built Environment Accessibility Standard Regulations](#)

Goals

- Install signage and wayfinding at the APSEA Central Office.
- Enhance and update office sign-in and sign-out procedure to make it more accessible for all staff and office visitors.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Meet regularly with the APSEA Accessibility Advisory Committee to review progress, reflect on any challenges or newly identified barriers, and discuss possible solutions and improvements.
 - There will be six (6) meetings a year. All meetings will happen during the school year (September – June).
- Meet regularly with APSEA Senior Leadership to ensure actions to ensure the accessibility plan and actions align with APSEA’s strategic goals. These meetings will also be used to provide input, discuss challenges, and promote accountability.
 - There will be two (2) meetings a year. All meetings will happen during the school year (September – June).
- Meet regularly with team supervisors and managers to track progress and any address challenges.
 - There will be two (2) meetings a year (September – August).
- Collect feedback from staff and families/learners on accessibility at APSEA. Feedback will be used to assess our progress and help guide accessibility improvements.

Conclusion

APSEA is committed to identifying, removing and preventing barriers for people with disabilities. We will continue to meet provincial accessibility standards and regulations as they are enacted. This updated Accessibility Plan reflects our shared commitment to accessible, inclusive and learner-focused education. We also strive to create an inclusive and accessible place of work for all employees.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the creation of APSEA's updated Accessibility Plan 2026-2029.

Accessibility Advisory Committee

- Brian Foran, Supervisor of Educational Interpreting Services, APSEA
- Chrissy McNeil, Deaf/Hard of Hearing Mentor, APSEA
- Holly MacLellan, Supervisor of Accessibility Services, APSEA
- Jennie Bovard, Education Support Specialist Mentor (Blind, Low Vision), APSEA
- Jeremy Foster, Web Application Developer, APSEA
- Krysta Hartlen Côté, ASL-English Staff Interpreter, APSEA
- Laura Bain, Community member and past APSEA student, CNIB
- Mutaz Ayyash, Education Support Specialist Deaf/Hard of Hearing Mentor, APSEA
- Peter Parsons, Education Support Specialist Orientation and Mobility, APSEA
- Sue-Jean Seidel, Administrative Assistant, APSEA
- Tobie Gegan, ASL Translation Lead, APSEA

Past Members from 2023-2025

- Bev Buchanan, NSCC
- Jennifer Hurren, Supervisor of Programs (Blind, Low Vision), APSEA
- Meg Stewart, Education Support Specialist Deaf/Hard of Hearing Mentor, APSEA
- Michelle Zou, Educational Audiologist, APSEA
- Sarah Laird, Junior Alternate Format Technician, APSEA
- Shelley Adams, CNIB

Glossary of Terms

Ableism: Discrimination of and social prejudice against persons with disabilities based on the belief that persons with typical abilities are better. It includes harmful stereotypes, misconceptions, and generalizations of persons with disabilities (Government of Nova Scotia, 2025-2028 Accessibility Plan).

Accessibility: is when our environments, services and products and policies are proactively designed and constructed so that people with disabilities can fully and equally participate. It also means being flexible and responsive when people with disabilities tell us something isn't accessible and removing barriers to make sure they can fully participate (Nova Scotia Accessibility Advisory Board).

Accessibility Act (Nova Scotia): In 2017, the Government of Nova Scotia passed the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act (law). It outlines the steps the province will make sure every Nova Scotian can fully participate in our society. The Accessibility Act aligns with the 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which recognizes accessibility as a human right (Government of Nova Scotia).

Accessibility Standards: The Accessibility Act allows the Government of Nova Scotia to develop laws to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility. Standards are a set of rules that government, the public sector, and other organizations like businesses must follow (Government of Nova Scotia, 2025-2028 Accessibility Plan).

Accommodation: Changes to the work environment or the terms and conditions of employment that, due to barriers faced by persons with disabilities, including Deaf and neurodivergent persons, will allow them to perform their job.

Employers have a duty to accommodate. We have a legal obligation to adjust rules, policies, or practices for all staff who fall under the prohibited grounds within the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act, to participate fully. The duty to accommodate means that people with disabilities are given appropriate supports

to perform their job effectively (Accessible Standards Canada, Canadian Association for Supportive Employment).

ASL (American Sign Language): A visual language used by members of the North American Deaf community. ASL has its own unique rules of grammar and syntax. The shape, placement, and movement of the hands, as well as facial expressions and body movement, all play an important role in conveying information. ASL is not a universal language; similar to spoken languages, signed languages develop naturally in their own regions or countries (Gallaudet University, 2026).

- **Note:** In Canada there are two main sign languages, American Sign Language (ASL) and la langue des signes québécoise (LSQ). The Atlantic provinces have a regional language, Maritime Sign Language (MSL). However, due to the increased use of ASL, the language is endangered (most MSL users are older, and the language is not being passed down from generation to generation).

ASL-English Interpreter: Facilitates real-time communication between users of ASL (often Deaf, Hard of Hearing) and speakers of English (often hearing).

ASL Translation: An ASL Translator works with non-live content. ASL translation means converting written English text or recorded English audio/video into ASL video.

Assistive Technology: Assistive technology is an umbrella term for assistive products and their related systems and services. Assistive products help maintain or improve an individual's functioning related to cognition, communication, hearing, mobility, self-care and vision, thus enabling their health, well-being, inclusion and participation. It can include tools people use themselves (like screen readers) and features built into devices, operating systems and websites (like captioning). People with and without disabilities may use assistive technology (World Health Organization, Province of British Columbia).

Audism: Discrimination or prejudice against individuals who are Deaf, deaf, Hard of Hearing.

Barrier: Anything that hinders or challenges the full and effective participation in society of people with disabilities. Barriers may be systemic, structural and individual. They can take the form of physical barriers, architecture, information, communications, attitudes, technology, policies, or practices.

Blind, low vision: Blind covers a broad spectrum of visual disability, from when your sight is impacted enough to interfere with daily activities like reading, cooking or driving, up to total blindness. Each person's experience of blindness is unique. Blindness has many causes, and each affects eyesight differently.

Legal blindness is a level of blindness that has been defined by law to limit some activities for safety reason, such as driving, or to determine eligibility for disability-related government programs and benefits. Someone is considered legally blind when: visual acuity is 20/200 (or 6/60) or less in both eyes after correction, and/or a visual field of 20 degrees or narrower (CNIB).

Build Capacity: The process of developing an organization's strength and potential. This goes beyond carrying out tasks to changing mindsets and attitudes (Government of Nova Scotia, 2025-2028 Accessibility Plan).

Disability: A physical, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual's full and effective participation in society (Nova Scotia Accessibility Act).

DeafBlind: A person experiences a loss of both sight and hearing. DeafBlind is **unique and separate** from being Deaf, deaf, Hard of Hearing or being blind, low vision. An individual who is DeafBlind require specialized services including adapted communication methods. Most people who are DeafBlind have some vision and some hearing. It is rare that a person who is DeafBlind has no vision and no hearing. (Canadian Helen Keller Centre, National Family Association for DeafBlind).

Deaf: a sociological term referring to those individuals who are medically deaf or Hard of Hearing, who identify with and participate in the culture, society, and language of Deaf people, which is based on Sign language.

Deaf Culture: A key part of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing (DHH) community. It is defined by shared language (for example, ASL, MSL, LSQ, etc.), history, and values. Deaf culture centers on belonging and communication, **not** hearing level. Communication varies; some people use sign language, some people use spoken language, and others use a combination. Deafness is a natural part of human diversity. Every person's experience is unique. Language, communication, and connection shape how each person builds identity and community. Some identify strongly with Deaf culture while others may not. All identities are valid.

Developmental Skills Inventory (DSI): A resource for staff to support Learners who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing that represents content areas that identify skill areas and targets that are unique needs of learners who are DHH.

Hard of Hearing: People with hearing loss. Some Hard of Hearing people use spoken language, some use sign language, some use a combination. Some Hard of Hearing people are members of the Deaf community and Deaf culture, and some are not. Each person's experience and identity is unique to them.

Inclusive: Inclusive spaces commit to valuing diversity and to dismantling the systemic barriers preventing a diversity of learners from full participation in their learning communities. They prioritize the well-being and achievement of all learners, are culturally, physically and emotionally safe, utilize principles of universal design for learning, prioritize first voice, and are culturally and racially responsive (Nova Scotia Education Standard Development Committee).

Lived Experience: The knowledge from any individual or group of people whose lived experience gives them expertise in that area (their knowledge of barriers to access and inclusion result from having experienced it personally).

Prescribed Public Sector Bodies (PPSB): Organizations that are required through the Accessibility Act to develop and update accessibility plans and have accessibility advisory committees. APSEA is a PPSB (Government of Nova Scotia, 2025-2028 Accessibility Plan).

Plain Language: Communication designed to make sure the intended audience can easily find what they need, understand what they find, and use that information (Government of Nova Scotia, 2025-2028 Accessibility Plan).

Responsive Teaching and Learning Model (RTL Model): An approach to education that emphasizes social-emotional and academic learning in a safe, healthy and inclusive school environment. This approach uses the collaborative inquiry model, which is evidence based and focuses on:

- gathering and analyzing teaching and learning data (identifying what students have learned and what needs to occur for learning to continue);
- reflecting on student progress and teacher practice (adapting teaching practices to support student learning);
- planning for improvement (setting clear goals for teaching and learning); and
- implementing and monitoring the plan.

(Responsive Teaching and Learning Policy, Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, November 2023).