



APSEA

Atlantic Provinces
Special Education Authority

**ATLANTIC PROVINCES SPECIAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY
2018-19 ANNUAL REPORT
WWW.APSEA.CA**

OUR MISSION, VISION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Mission

To provide educational services, in collaboration with our partners, to support children and youth from birth to 21 who are blind or visually impaired (BVI) and deaf or hard of hearing (DHH).

Vision

To support families and the public school system in the education of children and youth from birth to 21 who are blind or visually impaired (BVI) and/ or deaf or hard of hearing (DHH). Our professional commitment focuses on providing comprehensive educational opportunities, which lead to the highest potential for independence, self-sufficiency and productive, fulfilling lives.

Guiding Principles

- Child-focused
- Family centred
- Collaborative
- Independence
- Self-advocacy
- Equality of educational opportunity
- Research & evidence-based
- Accountable
- Future-oriented
- Flexible
- Led by provincial policies, procedures & guidelines
- Innovative





Chair and Board of Directors
Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority

In accordance with Regulation 43 of the APSEA Act, I submit herewith this report on the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA) for the school year ending 31 July 2019.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Lisa Doucet'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lisa Doucet
Superintendent

MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT & BOARD CHAIR

Hello Friends of APSEA,

This year has seen APSEA continue to provide important work across all areas of our organization which supports children, youth and families throughout Atlantic Canada.

Throughout the year members of the Senior Leadership Team had the opportunity to travel within the four Atlantic Provinces to meet with staff of the various Departments of Education and Early Childhood Development, Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, as well as District and Regional Staff. These visits have provided further opportunities to collaborate with our educational partners, as well as make important connections with APSEA staff and see firsthand the work they are doing to support children, youth and families. It is truly remarkable, the amount of people we have working together with our students to achieve APSEA's vision of providing comprehensive educational opportunities, which lead to the highest potential for independence, self-sufficiency and productive, fulfilling lives.

As the 2017-2020 strategic plan is coming to an end, we continue our work in the focus areas: creating a safe and inclusive culture, enhancing service delivery, and communication.

This report includes highlights from across the organization and I am proud of the



exceptional work we do and pleased to share it with you.

It is an honour to be your Superintendent and to work with an amazing team of true professionals. Thank you to the Board of Directors (<https://www.apsea.ca/about-us/board.html>) for your continued leadership. Thank you to parents and volunteers for working with us to support children and youth. Together we are positioned to do even better in the coming year.

Thank you,

Lisa Doucet
Superintendent

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Preschool Children

APSEA's preschool/ parent education programming in all four Atlantic provinces is designed to serve the individual needs of children who are deaf or hard of hearing (<https://www.apsea.ca/families-students/deaf-hard-hearing/preschool/>), blind or visually impaired (<https://www.apsea.ca/families-students/blind-visually-impaired/preschool.html>) and their families during the critical development years of birth to age five.

Through regular home visits and support in preschool settings, APSEA teachers work with family members, care givers and other support professionals to create a program plan for learning and skill development for each child, including transitioning children to school.

2018-19 Statistics*:

- In New Brunswick 20 BVI and 23 DHH preschool children were served by APSEA
- In Newfoundland and Labrador 15 BVI were served by APSEA
- In Nova Scotia 50 BVI and 80 DHH children were served by APSEA
- In Prince Edward Island 9 BVI were served by APSEA

*In Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island DHH children receive support from individual school district staff.



School-Age Children

APSEA provides students with a diagnosed hearing loss (<https://www.apsea.ca/families-students/deaf-hard-hearing/school-age/>) or diagnosed vision loss (<https://www.apsea.ca/families-students/blind-visually-impaired/school-age.html>) with either consultative or direct service, depending on the severity of loss and the educational implications. For all students, the itinerant teachers collaborate with the school teams to determine strategies and accommodations to maximize the student's environment.

2018-19 Statistics:

- In New Brunswick 92 BVI and 286 DHH school-aged children were served by APSEA
- In Newfoundland & Labrador* 110 BVI children were served by APSEA
- In Nova Scotia 212 BVI and 569 DHH school-aged children were served by APSEA
- In Prince Edward Island 51 BVI were served by APSEA
- A total of 1,517 students in Atlantic Canada were served by APSEA (559 BVI and 958 DHH)
- In Atlantic Canada, 185 students were added to the APSEA registry by referrals for service through schools or health agencies this year. (NB- 20 BVI, 27 DHH; NL- 21 BVI; NS-36 BVI, 76 DHH; PE-5 BVI)

*Many of the services provided by APSEA (Orientation and Mobility, Assistive Technology, Short Term Programs and Assessment) are accessed by students who are Blind or Visually Impaired in Newfoundland and Labrador. Most services to these students are provided by the local itinerant teachers who are staff of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District.



DHH Itinerant Teachers

APSEA direct service itinerant teachers collaborate with school teams to provide service to students in inclusive settings to promote language/communications development; auditory-verbal communication skills; critical thinking skills; academic skill building strategies; social and/or emotional development; and self-advocacy skills.

APSEA consultation service itinerant teachers consult with school teams on a variety of issues. These may include determining the provision of information about program modifications; review of and suggestions to improve the acoustic environment of classrooms; and teaching techniques to use with students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

BVI Itinerant Teachers

An APSEA itinerant teacher (direct service) is a member of the school-based team and works in collaboration with the appropriate individuals to establish the necessary adaptations or strategies ensuring students can participate in all aspects of the Core Curriculum.

APSEA itinerant teachers (consultation service) provide support to school teams to ensure the appropriate accommodations and adaptations are in place for students. They may work with parents, guardians, school teams and other service providers to share information about the child's visual impairment, availability of specialized services and implement strategies to support outcomes and ways to prepare children to live more independently.

Transition Services

APSEA continues to offer transition support to students as they move from school to community. Transition consultation and planning for DHH and BVI students begins in grade 9 and is highly individualized and ability specific.

In 2018-19:

- In New Brunswick, APSEA transition planning facilitators worked with 48 students (27 BVI & 21 DHH)
- In Nova Scotia, APSEA transition planning facilitators worked with 66 students (68 BVI & 0 DHH)
- In Prince Edward Island, APSEA transition planning facilitators worked with 4 students (4 BVI & N/A DHH)

Autism in Education

The Autism in Education (AIE) Partnership facilitates the advancement and dissemination of knowledge of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the area of educational instruction and practices among educational personnel and partner professionals across the Atlantic region. AIE supports provincial Departments of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, along with school boards, districts, and regions to enhance access to best ASD practices and to optimize effectiveness in serving learners with ASD, their families, and school teams.

In 2018-19:

- 1,575 educators, representing a wide range of roles (teachers, educational support staff, administrators, consultants, itinerants, student support services, etc.) across the Atlantic Provinces completed the 10-module ASD & Behavioural Interventions: An Introduction for School Personnel online professional learning sequence.
- 127 ASD specialists and partner professionals attended the 2019 AIE Professional Learning Symposium, focused on Making the Most of Technology to Support Learners with ASD and Diverse Needs.
- AIE's Annual Professional Webinar series drew 377 participants representing 7 provinces across Canada. (<https://autismineducation.ca/webinars-presentations/>)

IN 2018-19 APSEA REMAINED STRATEGICALLY FOCUSED BY...

Promoting A Culture Which Is Safe and Socially-Just with a Focus on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Michelle Taylor, APSEA DHH Director of Programs, and Lisa Weir, APSEA NB DHH Provincial Supervisor took APSEA's commitment to culturally responsive professional development on the road. The pair presented at the 2019 Languages Without Borders (LWB) conference, which is a national conference for Second Language Educators. Their session focused on newcomer students learning English who are deaf or hard of hearing and what can be learned from this unique population. It was a great opportunity to showcase APSEA's leadership in serving newcomer populations and share professional learning with peers from across Canada.



Improving Delivery of and Access to Services

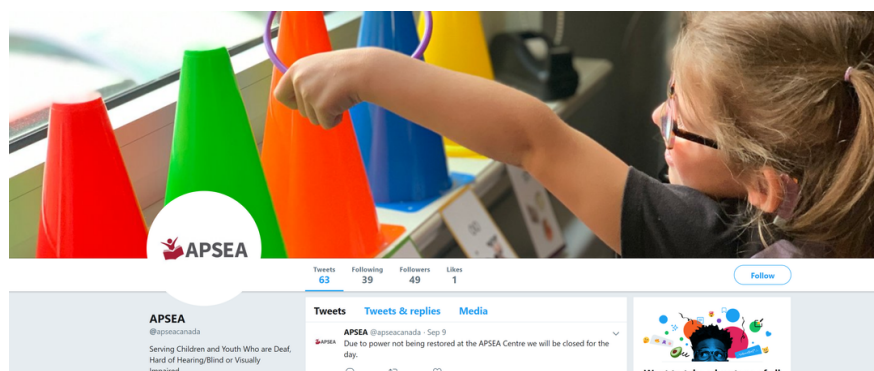
From January-June 2019, APSEA's Autism in Education Partnership, with support from New Brunswick's Autism Learning Partnership, sought to enhance the existing interprovincial ASD & Behavioural Interventions online training by piloting a more advanced level of professional learning for Board, District and Region ASD consultants, itinerants, specialists and school-based resource/learning centre teachers.



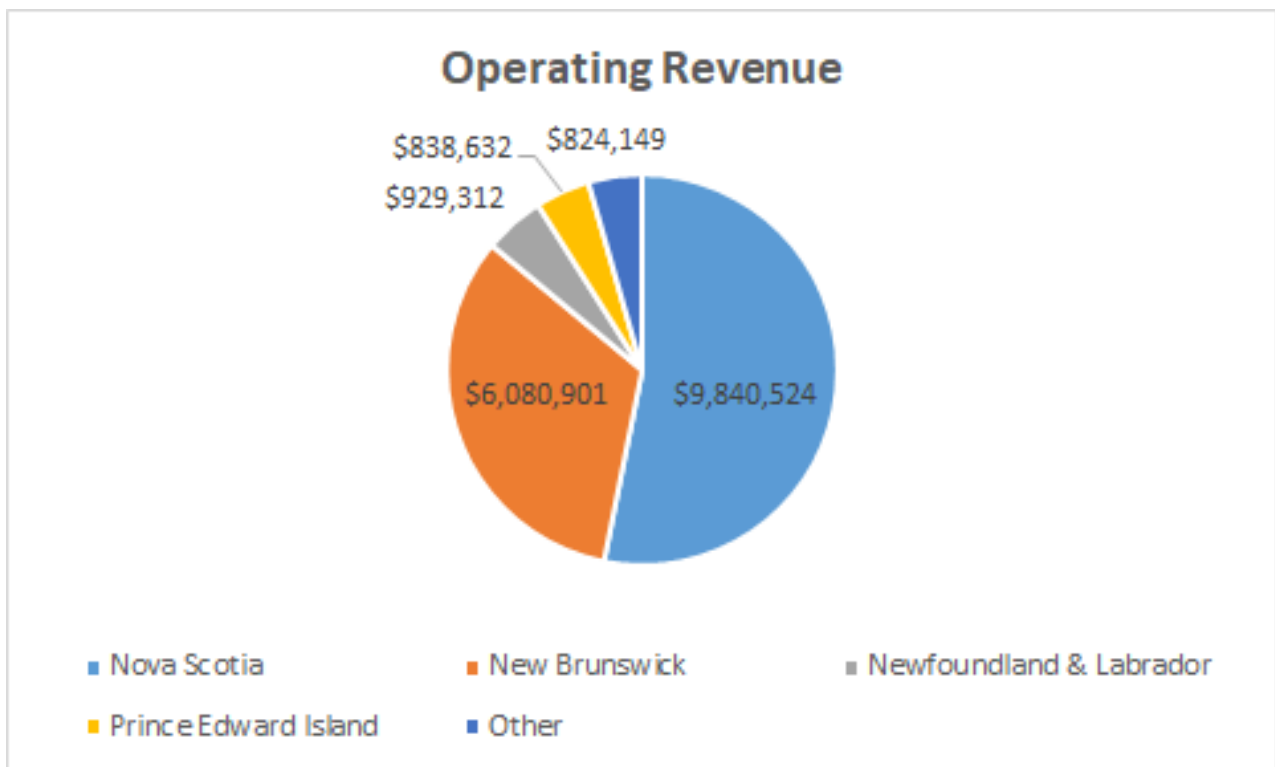
One pilot team each in Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island participated in an intensive professional learning program that included online learning, face-to-face workshops, and on-the-job coaching and mentoring. All teams involved reported improvements in their knowledge, skills, and confidence to address challenging behaviour and to coach and support school teams to carry out evidence-based and function-based intervention plans.

Advancing Internal and External Communication

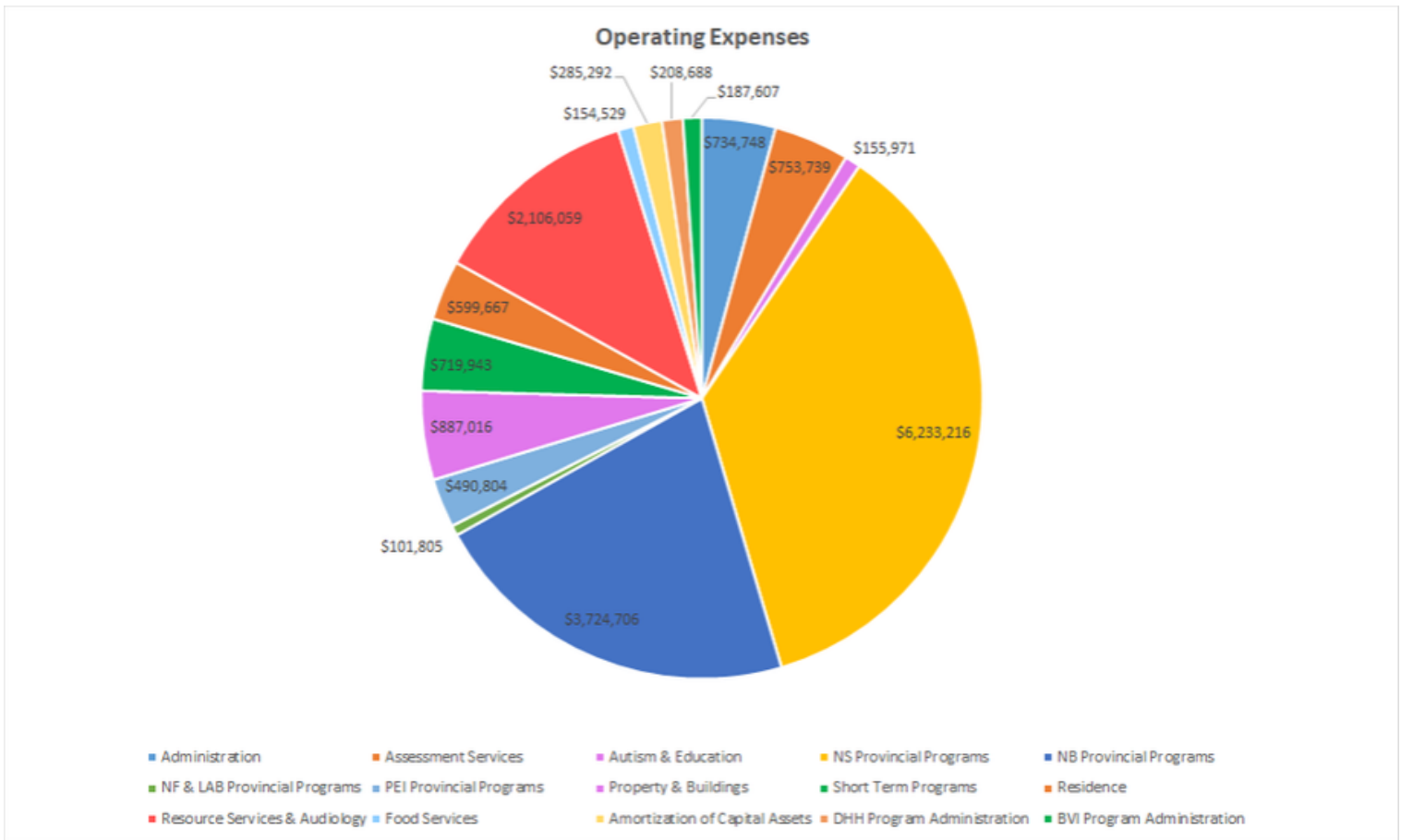
To improve communications and promote collaboration, APSEA has developed a social media policy and guidelines and is ready to take an active presence on social media. This move forward will give APSEA an opportunity to promote the many bright spots that happen internally with an external audience. APSEA is ready to share the inspiring stories, hard work and dedication of staff, students and families. Find us on Twitter and Facebook @apseacanada and join the conversation.



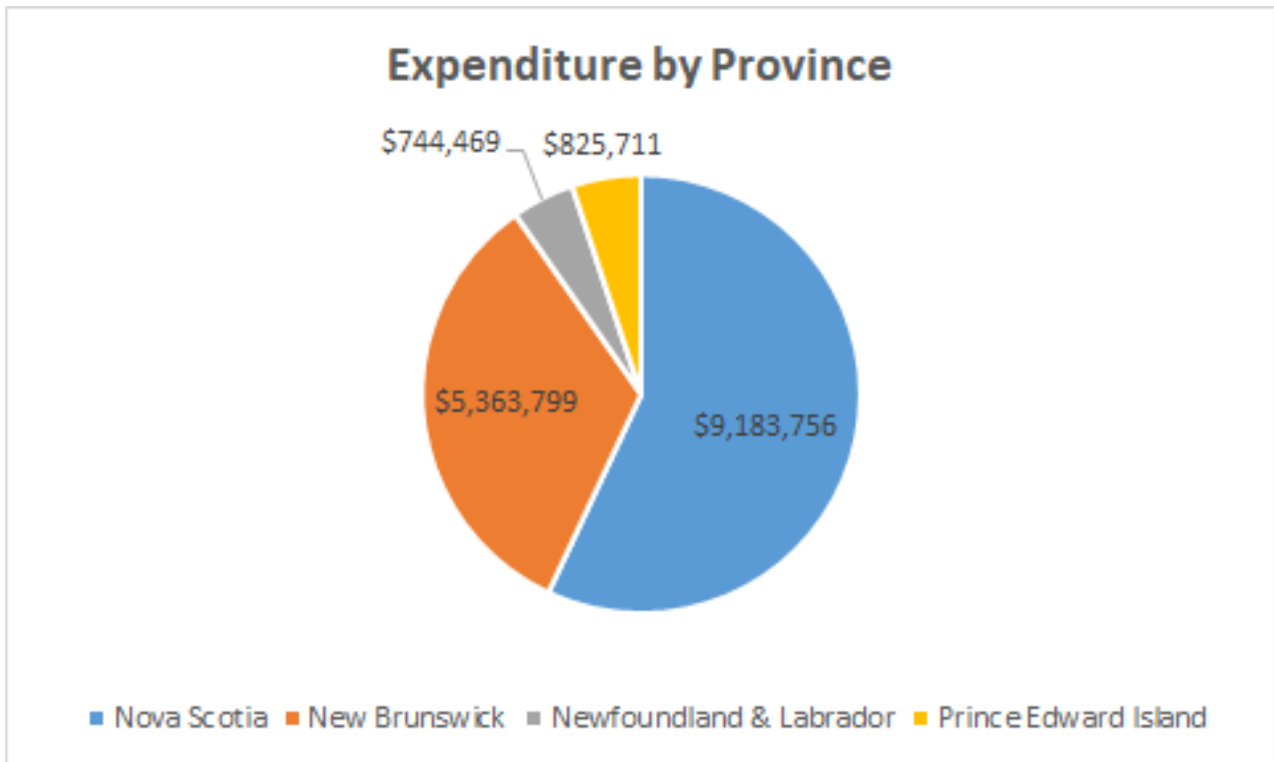
REVENUE & EXPENDITURE



Total: \$18,513,518



Total: \$17,343,790



Total: \$16,117,735

HIGHLIGHTS

Assistive Technology (AT) / Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC)

APSEA participated as a satellite host site for the renowned AAC by the Bay Conference hosted by The Bridge School in San Jose, California. Members of APSEA staff and community SLPs attended the two-day event.

A lunchtime Tech Club was created which saw three NS students meet bi-weekly with the AT Resource Teacher (NS) over Zoom. Students shared information about technology they used regularly, tried new apps, and shared information and strategies.

Students and educational teams participated in customized online lessons for technology training or assistive technology support. This has broadened the type of service delivery that is available to remote areas of the Atlantic Provinces, and has facilitated service delivery to large and diverse educational teams in all geographic locations.

The APSEA AT/AAC team presented three short webinars over Zoom.

Orientation and Mobility

Over the past two years the O&M department has used the APSEA Severity Rating Scale to objectively quantify the amount of recommended programming for O&M students throughout Atlantic Canada. O&M students from across the region have been evaluated using this rating scale, which produces a scoring (0-36) for each O&M student and a recommendation regarding the frequency of programming, as delivery across their O&M team.

In April 2019 the Atlantic Canada O&M (ACOM) conference was held at the Vision Loss Rehabilitation/CNIB office in Halifax. The theme of the 2019 conference was O&M and Technology. APSEA will host in 2020.

APSEA has partnered with Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada/CNIB, the Ministère de l'Éducation et du Développement de la petite enfance Province du Nouveau-Brunswick and University of British Columbia (UBC) in a collaborative project aimed to build O&M professional capacity across the country. In 2020, UBC's O&M graduate certificate program will for the first time include a training cohort in Atlantic Canada.

Production and Library Services (PALS)

Alternate Format Production and the Library were amalgamated into a single department over the summer of 2018. The combined department is now known as Production and Library Services (PALS).

APSEA's Supervisor of Production and Library Services attended a two-day EPUB Accessibility Workshop in March 2019. This was an opportunity to explore the accessibility options that EPUB digital books offer to students with print disabilities. In addition, the Production and Library Services Department continued to utilize its 3D printer in an effort to explore possible applications for students who are blind or visually impaired.

Staff were provided with the appropriate tools to complete a Functional Vision Learning Media Assessment during the 2018-2019 school year. The Library Technicians initiated a project to catalogue these tools while establishing a system that enables staff to request replacements as necessary.

BVI Short Term Programs and Assessment

Career /transition week programs saw students learning about not-for-profit organizations within the community. This allowed them to find out about their services, participate in a fundraiser by either donating their time, materials, or funds raised. Students were able to build a connection with these organizations, have exposure and engagement with individuals using these services, and reflect on ways that they could participate in volunteering in their home communities with the skills they have developed.

As part of APSEA's ongoing commitment to involve school teams in short-term program placements, a number of individuals who support students as part of their student learning teams, including: resource teachers, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, guidance teachers, itinerant teachers, educational assistants and parents participated in some aspect of on-site programming. This enhances student independence and further expands upon the interconnectedness of services between community and centre-based services. It also provides a valuable opportunity for questioning, modeling, and building rapport between APSEA and school-based supports.

Supporting educational opportunities is important to APSEA. In the past year, we welcomed several individuals completing post-secondary education practicums. This included occupational therapy, orientation & mobility specialists, and Bachelor of Education



students. Engaging in these types of placements gives these practicum students a valuable experience with a low-incidence population, and, also provides opportunities to highlight the abilities of the students we serve.

Provincial Programs: Nova Scotia

In partnership with NSCC, APSEA provided professional development to the Achieve Program to enhance understanding of how to support students having vision loss. PD sessions were also delivered to pre-service educators at MSVU and NSCECE.

New this year, counselling services joined preschool team members when meeting families for the first time. This collaborative approach enhanced APSEA's positive initial connection.

The Canadian National Blind Hockey and the See Kings Blind Hockey teams partnered together so that children/youth with visual impairments in Nova Scotia could try skating and play hockey.

Provincial Programs: New Brunswick

In NB, many of the most profoundly visually impaired students have additional disabilities, such as sensory disorder or autism. Sometimes blindness can create increased confusion, behavioural difficulties and delays. Introducing new activities can be challenging; this year students participated in full body yoga poses, their receptiveness to learning new poses and their eagerness to participate was inspiring. This was an empowering opportunity for children who have limited opportunities.

The high school youth group initiated by the Counselor/Transition Specialist created a video conferencing opportunity for students with vision loss in New Brunswick who can feel isolated from others who are similarly challenged. The video conferencing allowed them to meet as a group, with student led decisions which lead to building relationships and a decreased feeling of isolation as these students plan for post-secondary.

This year saw continued improvements in building teacher competencies, in areas such as performing and reporting on assessments, program delivery and overall reporting. With such a diverse group of student needs and a varied skill set of basic skills required, competencies in all areas is challenging.

Provincial Programs: Prince Edward Island

Through our partnership with CNIB, some of our students visited with the CNIB low vision specialist. Christine Arsenault (APSEA & CNIB staff member) continues to work toward her Vision Rehabilitation Certification.

Our team continues to work with the Public Schools Branch (PSB) members, pre-school staff interventionists and other medical specialists.

Many of our students enjoy participating in extra-curricular activities (swimming, karate, horseback-riding, music lessons, etc.) and can do so through the generosity of PEI Parasport, CNIB, and the APSEA trust fund.

DHH Assessments

APSEA provides comprehensive psycho-educational and career assessments; our assessment team strives to be culturally responsive in providing access to families of various backgrounds.

In addition to sign language interpreters, we have employed Cantonese, Mandarin, and Farsi interpreters to give parents an understanding of assessment procedures and results. Sign language interpreters have specialized training to provide appropriate interpretation for our students who communicate using American Sign Language.

DHH Short Term Programs

One of the greatest benefits of the short-term programs is the creation of friendships that last a lifetime. Personal development, learning and growth come from the wide range of relationships and opportunities the programs provide. Young students worked on developing language and literacy through drama and children's literature utilizing spoken English and American Sign Language. High school students gained experience with various technologies which may improve access as they move to post-secondary education. Residence staff continue to see students independently using self-advocacy and communication skills that had been practiced in previous short-term placements in the Residence Program. An example of this is two of our students who are deaf, used their cell phones to type notes to communicate with canteen staff at St. Mary's University during a university hockey game.

In APSEA's 9-9 programming, residence staff support STPs by providing activities to reinforce program outcomes after school and in the evenings. This year, students had the opportunity to participate in activities such as swimming, going to the movies, planting, a trip to the Oval, a climbing gym and a visit to the Discovery Centre. Through each of these



activities the students used different skills such as planning a route, working cooperatively, making small purchases, using technology to communicate with venue staff to request closed caption devices, and self-advocacy by describing their impairment and accommodations needed.

Therapy dog students practiced ways to access presenter information, practice explaining their hearing/vision loss, use assistive technology and other supports to read a story to the dog, which builds self-determination and literacy skills.

Short term programs saw parents learning together. While their children attended class, parents had an opportunity to support each other through learning and sharing their experiences during a session facilitated by our ASL specialist.

Provincial Programs: Nova Scotia

Several DHH itinerants in the Halifax region host a monthly infant/toddler and parent group at the APSEA Centre. The speech/language pathologist from the IWK cochlear implant team also participates. Each session includes a discussion on helping the children acquire language, managing amplification equipment, or any other topic the parents suggest. The parents enjoy learning and sharing experiences while the children play. Parents of newly diagnosed children are also invited to participate.

The Social Inclusion Project has seen the NS DHH Counsellor organize three regional programs targeting social/emotional skill development for middle school students. The programs are comprised of a series of half-day sessions running in Yarmouth, Bridgewater, and Sydney. Additional programs are planned for Dartmouth, Truro and the Valley regions. These may involve joining small groups from each location via Zoom to connect students in the various regions. The program focuses specifically on building self-awareness and self-management skills for students, while also promoting the use of appropriate conversational skills.

A collaborative partnership with NSCC has been formed to offer beginner and intermediate level ASL courses in Halifax, with further plans to offer similar courses online. These courses were developed to support both APSEA staff and families to further their own ASL learning.

Provincial Programs: New Brunswick

In the spring, Fredericton DHH itinerant teacher Jacalyn Saunders organized and hosted a preschool language, literacy and learning playgroup with several families attending from various parts of New Brunswick. A great time was had by all! She also organized a playdate for some of the families on her caseload so both parents and children could connect and share with each other. (Story on website with photo at: <https://apsea.ca/news-events/making-friends-playplace.html>)

In the fall of 2018, seven of our DHH teachers from NB and NS attended the Clarke Mainstream Conference in Massachusetts for a wonderful professional learning opportunity geared specifically toward itinerant teachers for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Brigadoon Village

Brigadoon Village in Nova Scotia offers fourteen camp programs that are designed to accommodate a health condition or other life challenge. APSEA is grateful to have partnered with Brigadoon to offer two special camp experiences to our amazing students.

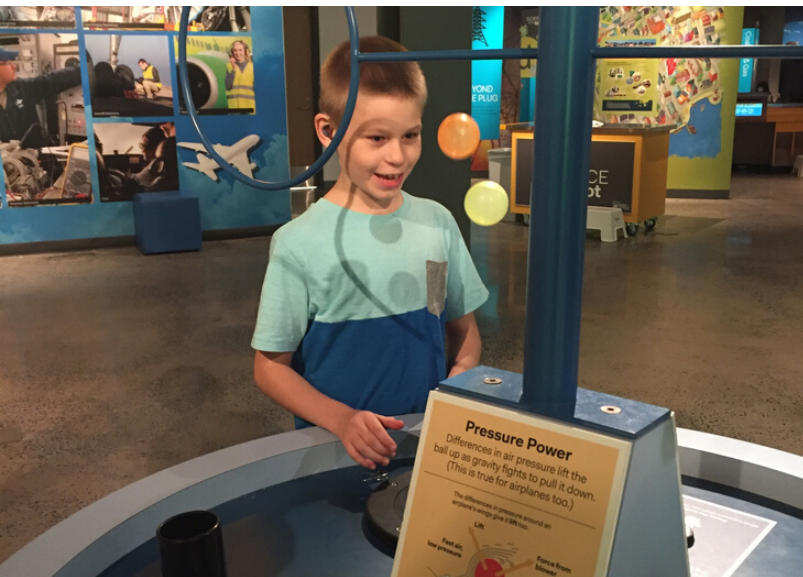
Camp See-Ya is for individuals who are blind or visually impaired and is filled with a variety of activities which reinforce development of many skills that support functional living. The camp provided endless amounts of fun to the 31 campers and an incredible opportunity for those with vision loss to interact with their peers.

For the first time in summer 2019, Camp Brigadoon partnered with APSEA to host its first DHH Camp in August. Thirty-three campers from NB & NS attended this fun-filled week. It is Camp Brigadoon's tradition that campers of the inaugural week vote on the future name of their camp. Stay tuned for DHH Camp's new name in 2020!





Atlantic Provinces
Special Education Authority



**ATLANTIC PROVINCES SPECIAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY
5940 SOUTH STREET
HALIFAX, NS
B3H 1S6**

PHONE: (902) 424-8500 (VOICE/TTY)

FAX: (902) 423-8700

WWW.APSEA.CA

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