



**ANNUAL
REPORT
2019-20**
WWW.APSEA.CA



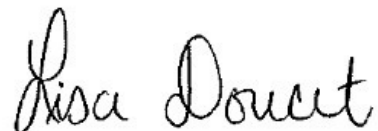
Atlantic Provinces
Special Education Authority



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 2020.

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa Doucet
Superintendent

ABOUT APSEA

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
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A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Hello Friends of APSEA,

The Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority has a long history of providing supports and services to children, youth, and families in the Atlantic provinces. This year has brought with it many achievements for APSEA as well as some unique challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. APSEA responded to these challenges by embracing the opportunities to connect virtually with children, youth, and families as well as our colleagues, community and education partners to ensure we continue to provide high quality, culturally responsive, and equitable supports and services to children youth and families.

I am proud to share the highlights of some of our work this year. We have an exceptional team who keep the supports and services for children, youth, and families at the center of their daily work. We continue to foster working relationships with our community and education partners to assist in this important work.



Thank you to the APSEA Board of Directors for your continued leadership. Thank you to the parents and volunteers for the work you do to support APSEA. Your hard work and dedication are genuinely appreciated.

As the 2017-2020 strategic plan is wrapping up, we have engaged in consultations with students, parents, staff, and community and education partners to identify priorities and areas of focus for our new 2021-2024 strategic plan. I look forward to sharing this plan and working with you to advance the initiatives set out to move the work of our organization forward.

Thank you,

Lisa Doucet, Superintendent

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

OVERVIEW BY REGION

Children and Youth on the APSEA Caseload (2019-2020)			
Provincial Totals			
	BVI	DHH	Total
New Brunswick	121	323	444
Newfoundland & Labrador	131	0*	131
Nova Scotia	269	661	930
Prince Edward Island	62	0*	62
Total	582	984	1,566

*In Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island Deaf or hard of hearing children receive support from individual school district staff/ public schools branch.

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 (DHH), blind or visually impaired (BVI) 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, caregivers and other support professionals to create a program plan for learning and skill development for each child, including transitioning children to school.



SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

APSEA provides students with diagnosed hearing loss or diagnosed vision loss with either consultative or direct service depending on the severity of the loss and the educational implications.

For all students, the itinerant teacher collaborates with APSEA staff to determine strategies and accommodations to maximize the student's environment.



ITINERANT TEACHERS

APSEA's itinerant teachers collaborate with school teams to support students in inclusive settings. Through these teams, itinerant teachers work and promote the various areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC). This collective approach supports the student's overall program and furthered development. The ECC's, one for BVI and one for DHH, each outline a specific curriculum for students who are blind or visually impaired or Deaf or hard of hearing that complements core curriculum and builds skills for students to further develop in all areas of their lives.



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 individualized and ability specific.



298%

VIRTUAL RESOURCES

There was a huge increase in demand for Autism in Education virtual resources during COVID-19 with 6,210 participants in 2020 vs. 2,079 in 2019. That's nearly 3 times the amount of participants!

AUTISM IN EDUCATION

The Autism in Education (AIE) Partnership works to promote and develop collaborative initiatives that support province-based services for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). They do this through dissemination of information and professional learning, training and capacity-building for educational personnel.

The closure of schools and the APSEA Centre due to COVID-19 in March 2020 brought with it an increase in requests from educators and partner professionals for virtual professional learning opportunities. This led to AIE increasing its virtual professional learning opportunities. In 2019-20, 3210 educators representing a wide range of roles across the Atlantic provinces completed the online ASD & Behavioural Interventions course. This is more than double the number from last year. AIE's Professional Webinar series was delivered seven times with more than 3,000 participants representing nearly every province in Canada.

COLLABORATIVE SUCCESS

GREAT STUDENTS + COMMITTED TEAM MEMBERS = LOTS OF SUCCESS!

The past year has looked different in a lot of ways, but one thing that remained consistent is that the students, families and team at APSEA work hard and have many successes worth highlighting.

APSEA staff throughout the provinces responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by working closely with provincial, regional and school teams to ensure the continued support of students on the APSEA caseload. This work varied; from tele-practice sessions with students and families, sharing of resources with school teams, and supportive strategies to ensure accessibility was at the forefront for all at-home learning situations.

This overview offers a snapshot of some of the many great things happening at APSEA across Atlantic Canada.

HOME LEARNING RESOURCES

APSEA staff across Atlantic Canada worked together to develop home learning resources, addressing the various areas of the BVI & DHH Expanded Core Curriculum. The resources recognize the many opportunities for learning within everyday routines that happen in and around the home. This includes opportunities to practice and work on skills that students who are Deaf or hard of hearing, and/or blind or visually impaired learn in addition to the provincial curriculum. These Home Learning Resources (<https://apsea.ca/home-learning/>) are intended to support families while building these skills with their child.

SHORT TERM PROGRAMS AND ASSESSMENT

Short term programs give students an opportunity to come together to learn expanded core curriculum (ECC) outcomes in a group setting with peers.

Short term programs provide students an opportunity to spend the week together practicing their social skills, learning from each other, building lifelong friendships. They have an opportunity to participate in experiential learning, whether that is volunteering their time, job shadowing, running their own business or hosting fundraisers. These opportunities have allowed students to



advocate for their own access within their own community. These skills are addressed through learning opportunities in the areas of functional living skills, orientation and mobility and career education among others.

The closure of the APSEA centre due to the pandemic saw short term programming move to virtual delivery.

Assessments at APSEA are tailored to the specific needs of each student. Areas include audiology, cognition, memory, linguistic development and academic skills. In addition, the team is also able to provide assessment of developmental levels, vestibular function, motor skills, career and augmentative and alternate communication when these are requested by a school team.

Throughout the assessment process, the team members take great care to ensure each student feels comfortable and breaks are given as needed. Detailed reports, complete with customized recommendations, are provided to parents and school teams.

Assessments for students with additional exceptionalities require extensive collaboration with families, educators and other professionals, to effectively support student programming. These assessments include: extended up-front planning and follow-up; collaborative efforts aimed at gaining a holistic picture of the student, within their local context; and an integrated report to provide targeted programming suggestions. Further support for community-based schools is also provided on a consultative basis as determined in collaboration with the school team.

Most students who participated in short-term programs remained on campus and participated in evening programming in residence. "9-9 programming" is a collaborative process which extends the learning hours into the evening in the residence to make the most efficient use of time and reinforce outcomes taught during the school day.



PRODUCTION AND LIBRARY SERVICES

Production and Library Services (PALS) support the instructional needs of students on the APSEA caseload by providing curriculum material in accessible formats. They also maintain a collection of professional resources available to all APSEA staff as needed.

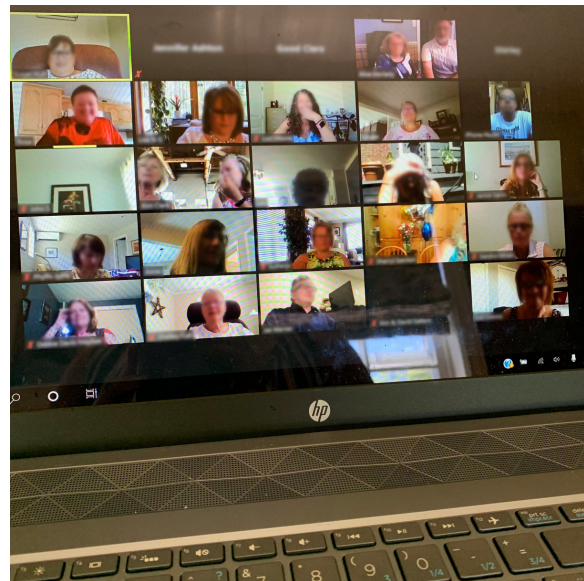
The PALS team remain committed to professional development with individuals completing course work in Online Accessible Documents, Unified English Braille Technical Extension Course and CNIB's Unified English Braille Technical certification and examination. Members of this team also participate in national initiatives that support the development of alternate format materials.



RETIREMENT & LONG-TERM SERVICE

In June, ASPEA held a virtual retirement and long-term service celebration. APSEA staff and friends and family of the honourees logged-on to offer congratulations and best wishes to our retiring and 25-year staff members. Speeches were given, lots of great memories shared, it was a nice opportunity to come together to celebrate wonderful careers.

Retirees are Anne Auby, Residence Counsellor (APSEA Centre), Phyllis Anne Blanche, DHH Itinerant Teacher (NS), Sherryl Eatmon, DHH Itinerant Teacher (NB), Reg Dunphy, Educational Audiologist (APSEA Centre), Rose Gallant, Custodian (APSEA Centre), Sue Purney, DHH Itinerant Teacher (NB), Betty Strugnell, BVI Transition Planning Facilitator (NS). Twenty-Five-year employees are Pearl Gallant & Harry Purney.



"It was super fun and I met some new friends!"

"My son had never been to a Brigadoon camp and now he would like to go next year - in whatever form it is. The virtual village gave him the confidence to be willing to try an away from home camp next year, which I think is great and I don't know if it would have happened. He also said that it gave him his best week since the COVID-19 shut down - so thank you!"

BRIGADOON VILLAGE

Brigadoon Village in Nova Scotia is a special place to many students on the APSEA case load. It offers a variety of camp programs that are designed to accommodate a health condition or other life challenge. APSEA has partnered with Brigadoon to offer to special camps, Camp See-Ya is for individuals who are blind or visually impaired and Camp Whatcha Say is for individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

It is no surprise that Brigadoon Village in Nova Scotia had to change the way it operated in 2020. Due to the global pandemic, bringing campers together in person was not possible. The dedicated staff were determined to give campers a reason to come together, so they created Virtual Village. Virtual Village gave campers the opportunity to engage with each other over the summer, giving them the chance to try new things and learn new skills and most of all make friends and have fun.



SOCIAL MEDIA

This year APSEA officially launched its Twitter and Facebook channels (@apseacanada). This has proven to be a great way to connect with families, former students, staff and stakeholders in the “social-sphere”. Over the past year, APSEA has reached people over 43,429 times on Facebook and 65,582 times on Twitter (which is awesome!) We’ve connected with people 8,808 times on Facebook and 2,448 times on Twitter for an overall engagement rate of 20.28% and 3.73%. That is well above industry standard at 1% and 0.045%.



APSEA
@apseacanada Follows you

Serving Children and Youth Who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing/Blind or Visually Impaired.
[#apseacanada](#)

Halifax, Nova Scotia [apsea.ca](#) Joined October 2016

132 Following 168 Followers

Followed by Sara Napier, Steve Ashton, and 6 others you follow

Tweets Tweets & replies Media Likes

APSEA @apseacanada · Nov 23
Bravo! Emma is a grade 12 student in Nova Scotia. Watch her read music in [#Braille](#) and play the piano. [#MusicalMonday](#) [#apseacanada](#) [#accessibility](#)



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- The ASL specialist supported students in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. This focus on ASL development and student needs was a welcomed addition to school teams across the regions.
- With the changes that COVID-19 brought this spring, supervisors, teachers, Language Acquisition Support Workers, the ASL Specialist and STP staff all collaborated to plan and deliver online ASL activities for our students, giving the children another avenue to practice and grow communication skills virtually.
- Expanded use of the New Mexico Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Inventory (<http://www.nmsbvi.k12.nm.us/ominventory.html>) was implemented. This evaluation tool tracks student progress through a categorized scoring system and quantified overview of O&M programming.
- Orientation & Mobility Delivery Guidelines were developed to provide guidance as to what skills and concepts can be taught by a team member and which must be taught by a fully trained O&M specialist with the goal of maintaining best standards of O&M practice.



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- Two students in New Brunswick have been active advocates for youth living with sight loss in Canada. As members of the CNIB National Youth Council they have had the opportunity to share their opinions on the challenges facing young people in Canada with sight loss and help make these issues broadly known. This opportunity will also allow them to continue to be advocates in their own local community.

- The ability to work with community partners to support the skill development of students who are blind or visually impaired provides the opportunity to reinforce the mastery of these skills. In Prince Edward Island, the collaboration between APSEA and CNIB Vision Loss Rehabilitation resulted in a successful transition for students transitioning from high school to a post secondary facility. This ensured the students had the skills necessary to travel within post secondary campus safely and independently at the start of the school year.

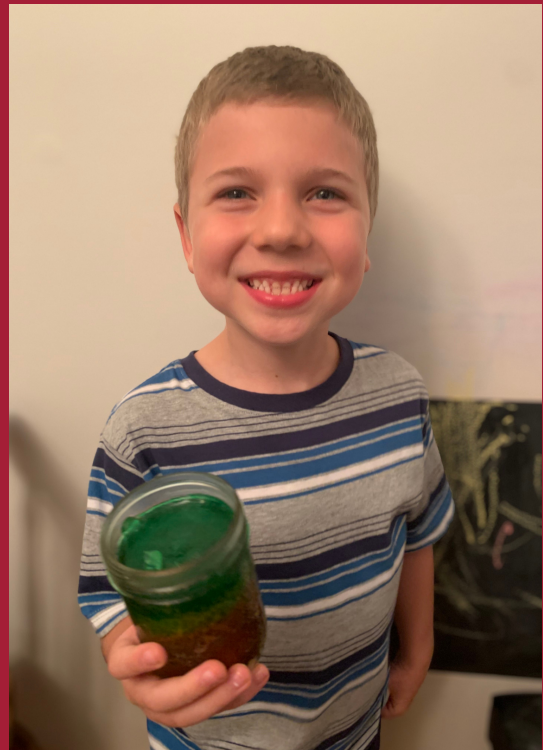


- Sharing experiences and supporting each other is a great reason to get together. A NS student and itinerant teacher organized an opportunity for students across the Atlantic provinces to connect and talk about their shared experiences of living with the same eye condition. The opportunity to meet virtually was a great way to connect peers in several different provinces.

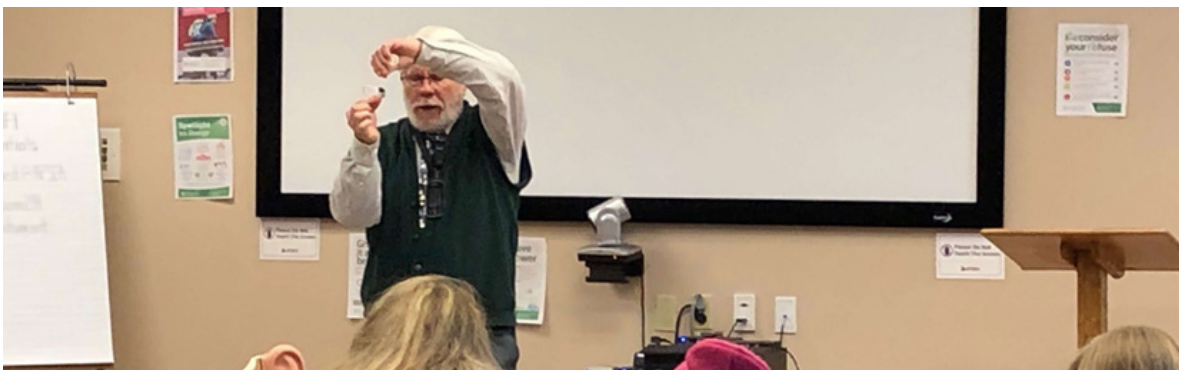


- APSEA Counsellors organized opportunities for families to connect. Initially held in person, these opportunities allowed parents to connect with each other. By the end of the school year, parents throughout Nova Scotia had the opportunity to come together virtually. The sessions provided an opportunity to share experiences and knowledge to support transitions in life. Families learned about self-advocacy in helping their child toward active participation in their home and community.
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- APSEA welcomed two classes of Bachelor of Education students from Mount Saint Vincent in Halifax, NS. While completing a Technology in Education course, these students were introduced to assistive technology that is available for students who are Deaf or hard of hearing and/or blind or visually impaired. The opportunity to use these devices enabled them to build a better understanding of the level of access these devices can provide to students.
 - APSEA's ASL Specialist hosted online activity time for DHH youth throughout the summer. Two groups of “campers” (2-5-year-old and 6-9-year-old) met twice a week for an hour and participated in games, stories, crafts, and rhythmic activities in American Sign Language. Parents and guardians supported their children during the sessions. This was a great way to stay connected and keep youth engaged during the summer.
 - The Assistive Technology department, along with members of the APSEA BVI Assessment team and provincial supervisors, participated in an online workshop that discussed the features of eye-gaze technology, the use of this technology in assessment and in promoting communication skills. Four devices were sent to the APSEA Centre, giving staff the opportunity to trial and operate the devices.
 - Educational Interpreting Services Department had members complete professional learning in Betty Colonomos Foundations I and II training in Windsor, Ontario; and Interpreters and LASWs participated in an advanced ASL professional development opportunity with Paul LeDrew.

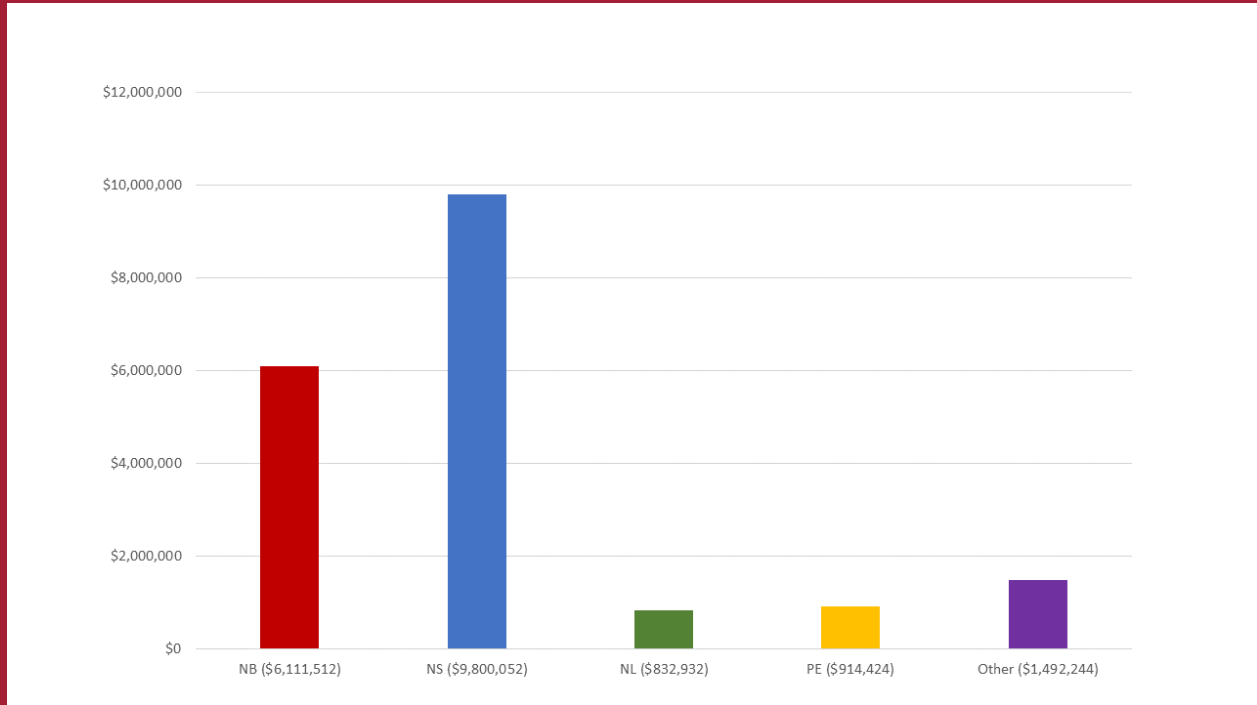


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- Opportunities to promote digital literacy skills for students who are blind or visually impaired supports the ability to build their skill level in technology. These skills also build problem-solving, critical thinking and sequencing skills. The Assistive Technology/Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ACC) Team created accessible kits to support the development of coding skills for students who are blind or visually impaired. There was opportunity for the students to use the kits during the school year and because they were accessible, there was success in building these skills.
 - The audiology department provided information to APSEA Itinerant Teachers (DHH) on new technology for the remote microphone systems that are provided by APSEA to children and youth on the APSEA caseload.
 - APSEA's occupational therapist, supervisor of assessment and short-term programs and audiologist continued their involvement in the vestibular-working group, joining audiologists from Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech, physiotherapists and occupational therapists from the IWK Health Centre and other provincial centres. The group is focused vestibular challenges that children who are Deaf or hard of hearing may experience. The goal of the group was to select a screening tool to identify those children who are deaf or hard of hearing who are also experiencing balance disturbances related to their hearing loss.

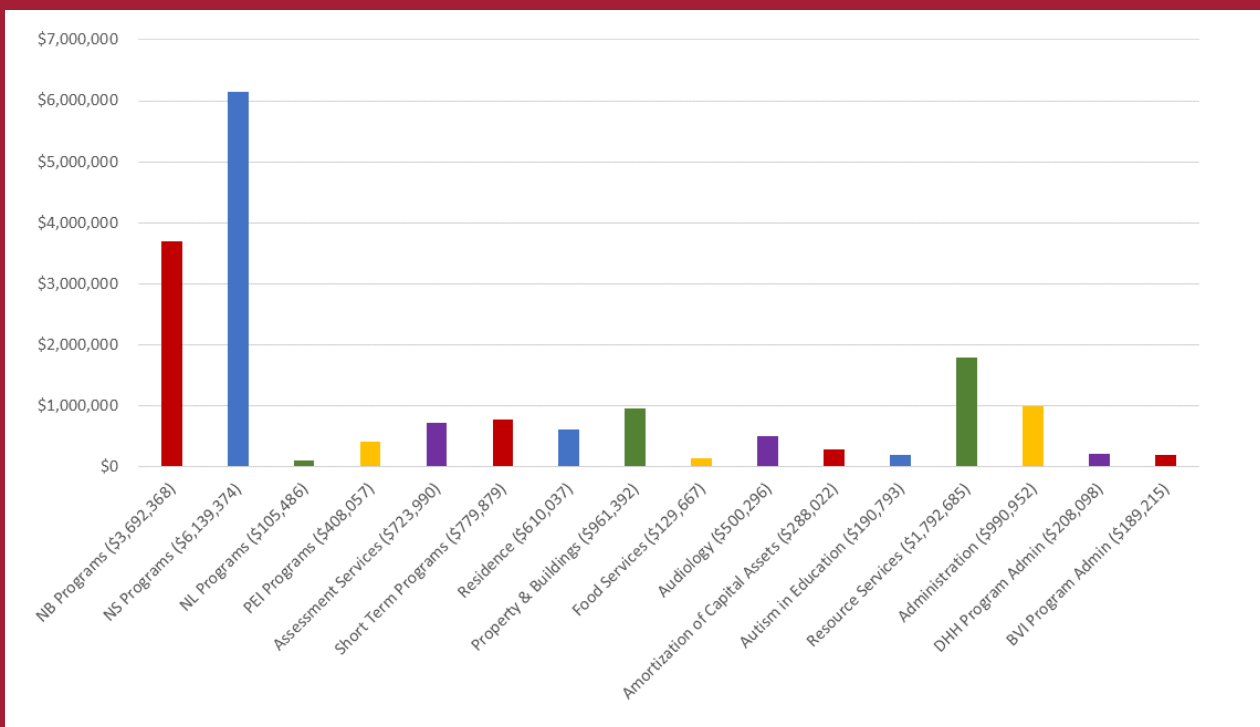


REVENUE & EXPENDITURE

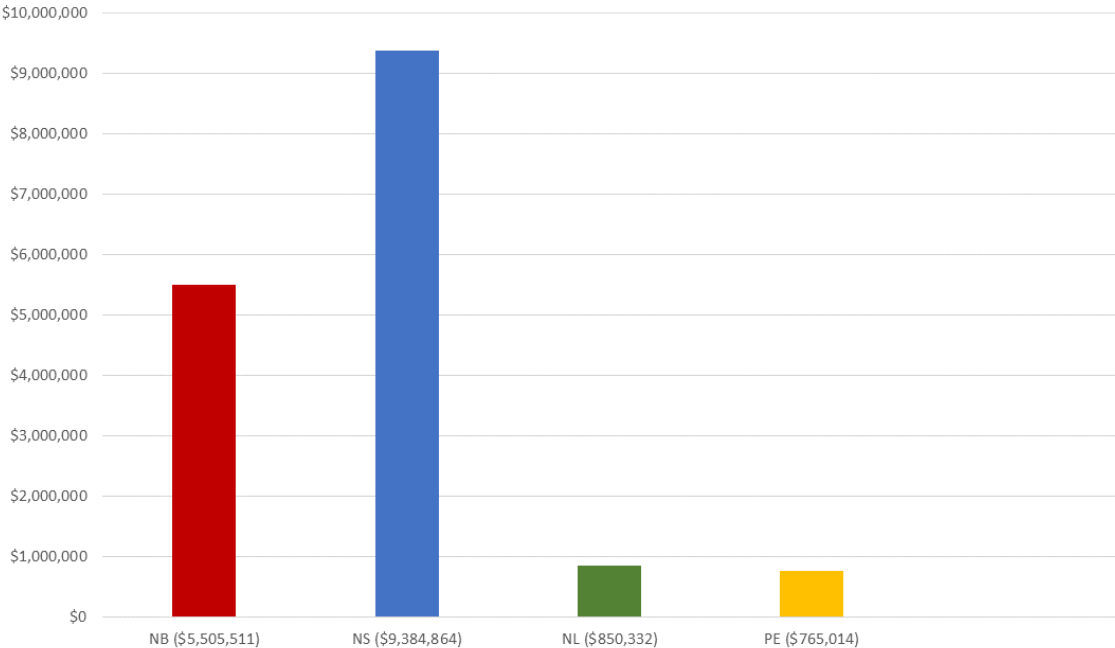
OPERATING REVENUE



OPERATING EXPENSES



EXPENDITURE BY PROVINCE



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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