

Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority Annual Report 2020-21





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 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Lisa Doucet
Superintendent

ABOUT APSEA

Mission

APSEA, in collaboration with our partners, provides culturally and linguistically responsive, inclusive, equitable, and accessible educational services and supports to children and youth who are blind or visually impaired and/ or Deaf or hard of hearing and their families.

Vision

The children and youth that we support reach their highest potential for an independent, self-sufficient, and fulfilling life.

Guiding Principles

APSEA is child-focused, family-centred, research-based, collaborative, and inclusive.



Message from the Superintendent



Hello Friends of APSEA,

It is with great pleasure that I share with you the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority's Annual Report 2020-21.

As the Covid-19 pandemic entered its second year and we navigated the uncertainty that it presented, student safety remained a top priority. We understood that a great amount of our work with the learners who receive services from APSEA and our teams would have to happen virtually. I am proud of how our committed employees across Atlantic Canada found creative ways to support each other, school teams and learners who receive services from APSEA and their families, keeping people learning and engaged. While we always look forward to when we can come together, we embraced our forced remoteness and, in many ways, we are growing our connectedness through technology and virtual learning. Learners and their families' commitment to their education in the past year reinforced the importance of the work we do and how much the learners who receive services from APSEA value it themselves.

Since 1975 APSEA has been operating as an inter-provincial co-operative agency by joint agreement among the Ministers of Education of New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Our work is about fostering relationships with our community and education partners, and I am proud to share some highlights of the past year.

Thank you to the APSEA Board of Directors for your continued leadership. Thank you to the employees, families, and volunteers for the work you do to support APSEA. I appreciate all you do every day.

In the past year we spent time consulting with learners who receive services from APSEA and their families, employees, and community and education partners which helped to identify priorities and areas of focus for our new [APSEA Strategic Plan 2021-2024](#). I am grateful to everyone who participated in this important process. Work has begun on the priority initiatives identified in the report and with the strong foundation we have and the energy we place into our work every day, I am optimistic about the future of APSEA and the positive impact it has on the learners on the APSEA caseload and their families.

My best to you all,

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

Lisa Doucet, Superintendent

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Children and Youth Who Receive APSEA Services (2020-2021) Provincial Totals

	BVI	DHH	Total
New Brunswick	175	293	468
Newfoundland and Labrador	45	17*	62
Nova Scotia	262	610	872
Prince Edward Island	57	6*	63
Total	539	926	1,465

Overview By Region

*In Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island children and youth who are Deaf or hard of hearing receive support from individual school district employees. These numbers reflect learners who participated in the APSEA Virtual Learning Series in 2020-2021 and Orientation and Mobility.

Preschool Children

APSEA's preschool/ parent education programming is designed to serve the individual needs of children who are Deaf, 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, care givers 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 who are Deaf, hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired with either consultative or direct service, depending on student and programming needs.

Itinerant Teachers

APSEA's itinerant teachers collaborate with school teams to support students in inclusive settings. The itinerant teacher collaborates with these teams to determine strategies and adaptations to maximize the student's learning environment and support the various transitions students experience throughout their educational career.

Itinerant teachers support the various areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) through individualized program planning with the school team. This collective approach supports the student's overall program and furthered development. The ECC, one for BVI and one for DHH, each outline specific areas of development 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 life.



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) through dissemination of information and professional learning, training, and capacity-building for educational professionals who support learners with ASD across Atlantic Canada.

Autism in Education had a busy and productive virtual year during the 2020-21 school year, interest and engagement in the ASD & Behavioural Interventions online course remained high in 2020-21, with nearly 1200 additional educational personnel participating in this professional learning opportunity.

Autism in Education's annual professional learning webinar series focused on two specific areas in 2020-21: 1) Leadership in consulting with and supporting school teams, and 2) Trauma-Informed Behaviour Support and Intervention.

Dr. Linda LeBlanc presented a three-part series on leadership and interdisciplinary collaboration, which included the following topics: The Role of Perspective-Taking in Leadership (126 participants); Planning and Leading Effective Team Meetings (167 participants); and A Structured Approach to Problem Solving (240 participants).

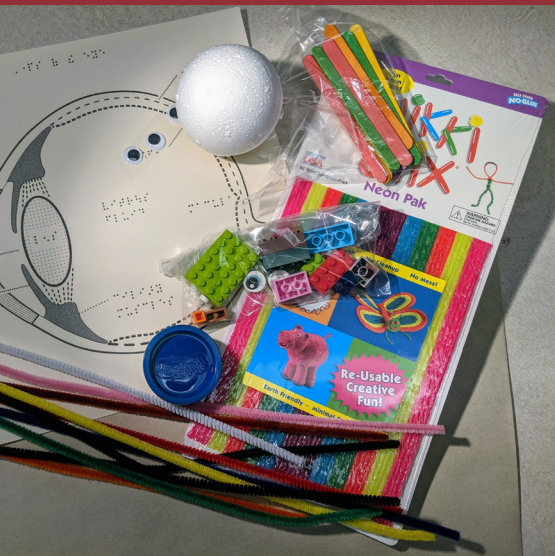
Dr. (Teresa) Camille Kolu presented a two-part series, entitled "Adapting Our Practice to New Needs: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Supporting Individuals after Trauma in Educational Settings. Part 1 of the series included 232 participants, and Part 2 included 250 participants.

Continuing with the focus on supporting ASD Consultants / Specialists to build leadership skills and con-

fidence to support school-based teams in their work with learners with ASD, an exciting collaborative initiative between AIE and the provinces and boards/districts/regions was the creation of professional learning communities for Deliberate Coaching. This work was initially launched as a series of book studies focused on the books **Deliberate Coaching: A Toolbox for Accelerating Teacher Performance** by Paul Gavoni & Nicholas Weatherly, and **QUICK Wins: Accelerating School Transformation through Science, Engagement, and Leadership** by Paul Gavoni and Manuel Rodriguez.

The initial launch of the Deliberate Coaching PLCs involved 55 professionals from across the Atlantic Provinces, divided among four book study groups. Participants were primarily provincial, board, district, and region ASD consultants/specialists; however, school-based resource / learning centre teachers and administrators were also among the participants.

As an extension of that work in the fall and winter, AIE and the Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE) collaborated to bring the Deliberate Coaching approach to the HRCE Student Services Facilitators and Specialists from April to June 2021. In total, 36 members of the HRCE Student Services team actively took on this work, participating in the book studies and PLC discussions, incorporating the Deliberate Coaching model into their daily professional practice, and building a system to support this approach within the region, including supporting processes and documents. The initial work was supported by Dr. Paul Gavoni, the creator of the Deliberate Coaching model, and the AIE Coordinator; however, several members of the HRCE team have now taken on leadership roles in expanding the work throughout the Region by facilitating and supporting additional PLCs among their colleagues.



VIRTUAL LEARNING SERIES & APSEA CONNECT

With culturally and linguistically responsive, inclusive, equitable, and accessible programs designed to target areas of the DHH and BVI Expanded Core Curriculums, Virtual Learning Series (VLS) reached students of all ages across all four Atlantic provinces in the 2020 - 2021 school year. Programs covered a wide range of topics from preschool education to book clubs to transition planning, and everything in between, and were offered in both ASL and English. Rethinking the learning environment and moving to an online platform has allowed a breakdown of urban and rural divides to bring peer connections and the best expertise to students regardless of their geographic location.

APSEA Connect is an online resource for families, APSEA employees, educational and community partners. Such participants were invited to join online presentations, discussion and forums introducing professional and community agencies, as well as highlights of supports available to children and youth who receive APSEA services. Developed in response to feedback from families and information gathered from the APSEA Strategic Plan, APSEA Connect virtually welcomed attendees from across the Atlantic Provinces.

PRODUCTION & LIBRARY SERVICES

Production and Library Services (PALS) support the instructional needs of learners who receive services from APSEA on the APSEA caseload by providing curriculum material in accessible formats. They also maintain a collection of professional resources available to APSEA employees. Through our continued professional learning on anti-Black Racism, APSEA has purchased several books related to the subject and in building our library in this important area we are working directly with publishers to have these titles available in alternate format.



BRIGADOON VILLAGE

Brigadoon Village once again hosted Camp See-Ya and Camp Whatcha Say in 2021. During these one-week camps, campers took part in a wide range of activities (which are adapted to be accessible to them and ensure they can be successful). During their time at Brigadoon, campers make meaningful connections with others and build valuable skills that will help them be successful outside of the camp environment. Working within Covid restrictions, campers from Nova Scotia were able to attend in person this year, with the hopes that children ages 9-18 from across all Atlantic provinces will be able to return next year.



02/24/2022

SOCIAL MEDIA

APSEA's social media channels continue to be an active community where families, employees, key stakeholders, and the public regularly engage with posts and follow for information that may be of interest to them. APSEA utilizes Facebook and Twitter and can be found @APSEACANADA. Our community continues to grow, and it is a great way to promote what is happening across the organization bringing attention to virtual learning opportunities and aiding in recruitment of employees with job postings and sharing stakeholder information that is of interest to our community. Over the past year, APSEA has reached people over **39,395** times on Facebook and **57,030** times on Twitter (which is awesome!) We've connected with people **5,628** times on Facebook and **1,752** times on Twitter for an overall engagement rate of **14.28%** and **3.07%** respectively. That is well above the industry standards of **0.27%** (Facebook) and **0.06%** (Twitter).



RETIREMENT & LONG-TERM SERVICE

In June, APSEA held its annual retirement and long-term service celebration. APSEA employees from across Atlantic Canada gathered virtually to congratulate and acknowledge the honourees on great service and wonderful careers.

2021 retirees are: Shelley Cue, Norma MacDonald and Cindy Millar. Twenty-five-year employees are Nova Herring, Joanne Hodgins, Andrew McCara, Kate McCara, Sandra Mihan, Cindy Millar, Lisa Norwood-Smith and Susan Saulnier.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

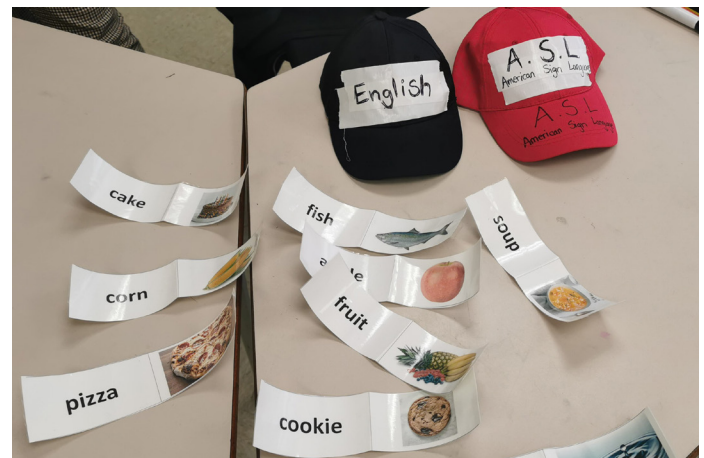
While the pandemic has changed the way we come together, the students, families, and APSEA employees continued their hard work and remained creative and consistent in the way they learn, support, and teach. There are achievements and growth occurring every day and this overview offers a small sample of the many great things happening at APSEA across Atlantic Canada.

- APSEA employees, Debbie Foran, Dana MacLeod, Peter Parsons and Brian Yee were recipients NS Provincial Education Week Awards in 2021.



- Several DHH teachers throughout New Brunswick and Nova Scotia began to use the Bedrock Literacy Curriculum. This curriculum is designed to support students who use American Sign Language (ASL) to develop literacy skills. The Bedrock Curriculum is designed for students who do not have access to phonology to acquire literacy skills. The program uses visually based strategies that are grounded in building concepts first and applying language second. The implementation work was supported by the school team, educational interpreters, educational Deaf interpreters, and the ASL Specialists. One of the core activities around reading involves students reading a sentence to themselves in English while standing on their "English" mat (or wearing their "English" hat). They then move over to the "ASL" mat to explain, in

ASL, what the meaning of the sentence is. APSEA employees, school-based teams, and students themselves are excited about the curriculum, its activities, and the focus on teaching English literacy using methods that lead to enhanced skill development in learners who are Deaf. Teams plan on expanding the use of this resource with other students in the coming school year.



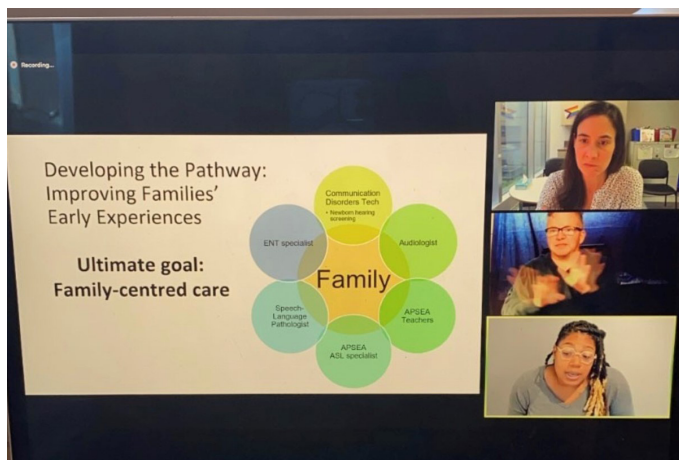
- Ensuring our future and current workforce is important to the team at APSEA. Several Nova Scotia itinerant teachers participated in a mentorship program to support their work as new teachers in the field.



- APSEA employees formerly known as Language Acquisition Support Workers (LASW) are now called Educational Deaf Interpreters, which is a more accurate reflection of their work they do. In alignment with Canadian Association of Sign Language Interpreters (CASLI) Deaf Interpreter standards, this change brings forward more opportunities for training and collaboration which directly impacts student learning and development.
- APSEA Educational Interpreters worked on updating their Educational Interpreting Performance Assessments (EIPA) to have current screening results for both elementary and secondary levels; this is one step in the process of ensuring that the quality of interpretation in the educational setting is as high as possible.
- Nova Scotia BVI and DHH team members from across the province participated in professional development, learning themes included Assistive Technology, well-being, Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and Equity in Education to support implementation of inclusive education principles.
- APSEA Audiology supports student access by providing over 400 Digital Modulation (DM) and wireless systems across Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. These systems are used in classrooms to overcome the effects of distance and competing noise by bringing teacher and classmate voices directly to the student.
- Nova Scotia BVI team members participated in a Professional Learning Community to enhance their teaching and assessment practices.
- The APSEA BVI and DHH counselling services team provided a variety of opportunities to students, families, and educational teams. There were monthly opportunities for family members to connect and learn more about supporting children and youth through transitions, and students met together through the VLS program to form a peer group where they discussed topics such as career education, strategies to support transitions and change, and self-advocacy skills.
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion are priorities for APSEA. We are very fortunate to have Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard helping guide our work in anti-Black racism. Dr. Thomas Bernard is an advocate and champion for this important work from a community, education, and committee perspective. She has facilitated sessions and courageous conversations for APSEA employees and has suggested books to help us continue the work through reflective journaling and conversations as colleagues. Dr. Thomas Bernard has guided us to keep thinking and reflecting in our everyday work and lives about the commitment we all need to make to impact systemic change. We thank Dr. Thomas Bernard for her guidance as we continue this important work.
- New Brunswick BVI team works with a variety of community partners to meet the specific individual needs of students. Supporting newcomer students at Moncton High School, the team collaborated with school staff, APSEA teacher, Counsellor and Orientation and Mobility Specialist, Vision Loss Rehabilitation/CNIB NB and Multicultural Association of the greater Moncton Area (MAGMA).



- APSEA team member, Jax Warner (ASL Specialist) and Shae Chapman-Doucet (Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia) had the opportunity to share their expertise at *The Language First Conference*. The conference brings together professionals working in deaf education to learn best practices for working with Deaf and hard of hearing children using an ASL-English bilingual approach. Jax and Shae presented the work of the Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) and APSEA task force which has produced *Pathways for Communication* document. The task force is a joint program which brings together APSEA itinerant teachers, ASL specialists, HSNS Speech Language Pathologists and audiologist to collaborate on providing services to preschool children.



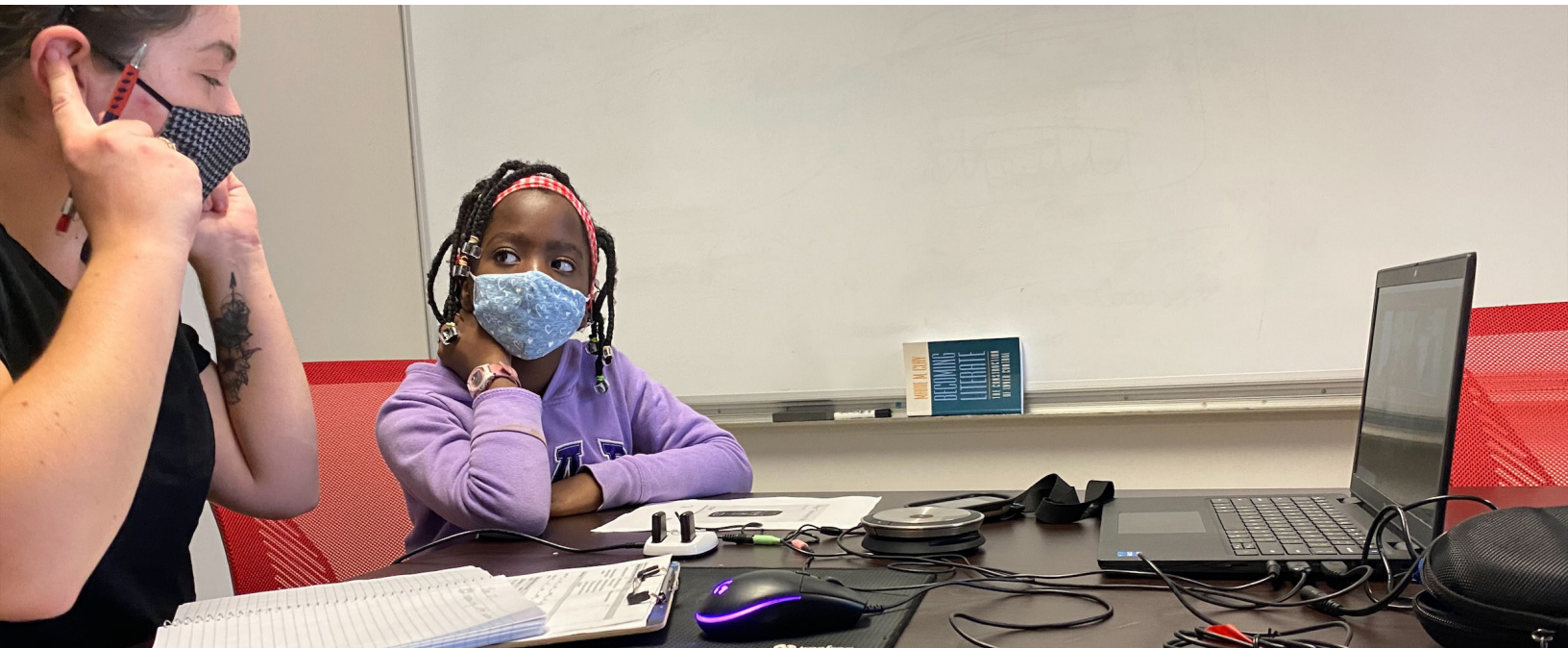
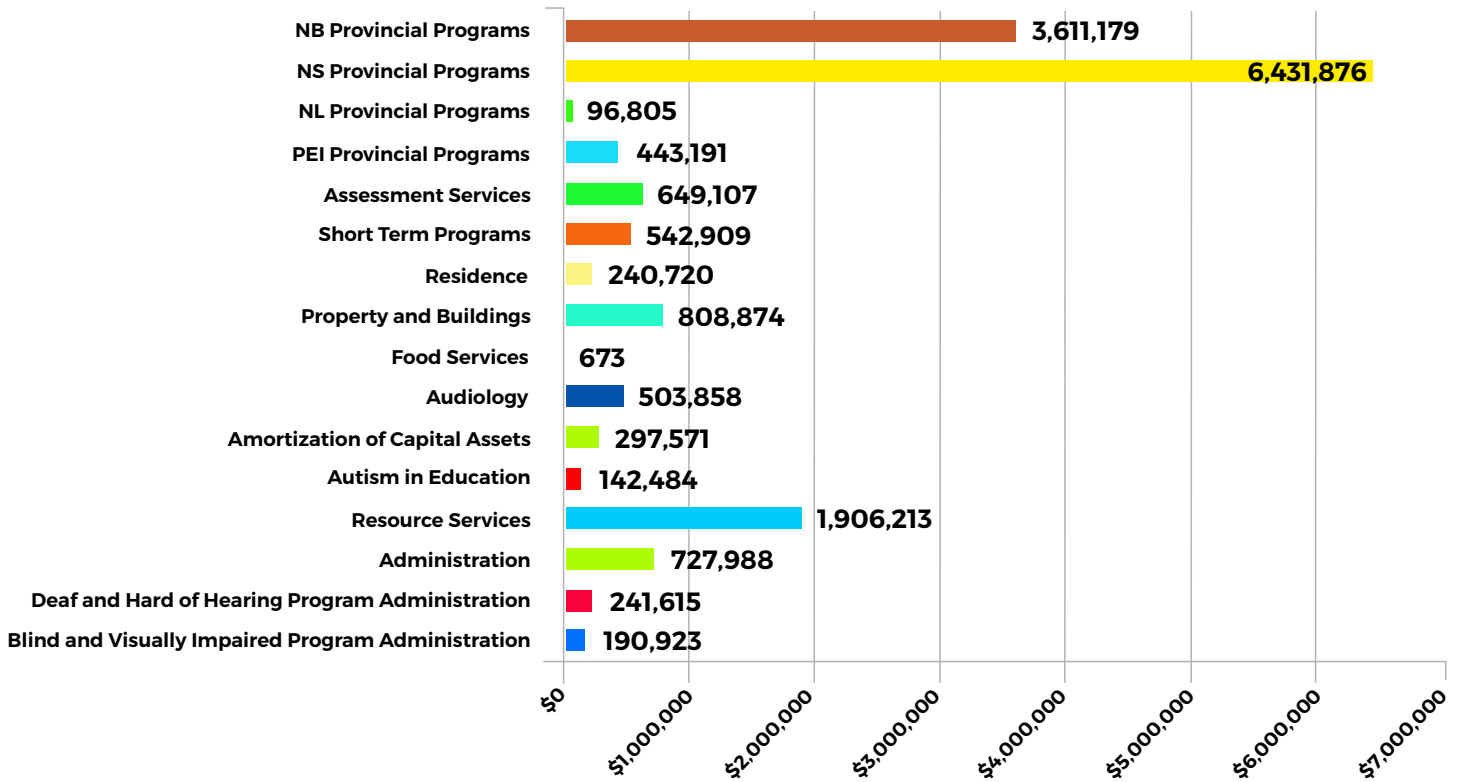
- Many APSEA employees adapted to the ever-changing learning environment throughout the pandemic. Tools such as green screens, online games and materials allowed learners and families the ability to focus on communication strategies, early language concepts and vocabulary, braille, self-determination and Orientation and Mobility goals.
- APSEA held an online Family Focused Sign Language Summer Immersion program, four instructors all based in Newfoundland and Labrador led the sessions. The program had 38 participants representing family, service providers and educators. Designed

with interaction in mind, it allowed for specialized lessons tailored to individual needs and provided interactive opportunities between participants and instructors. Each afternoon participants were able to attend panel discussions and presentations.

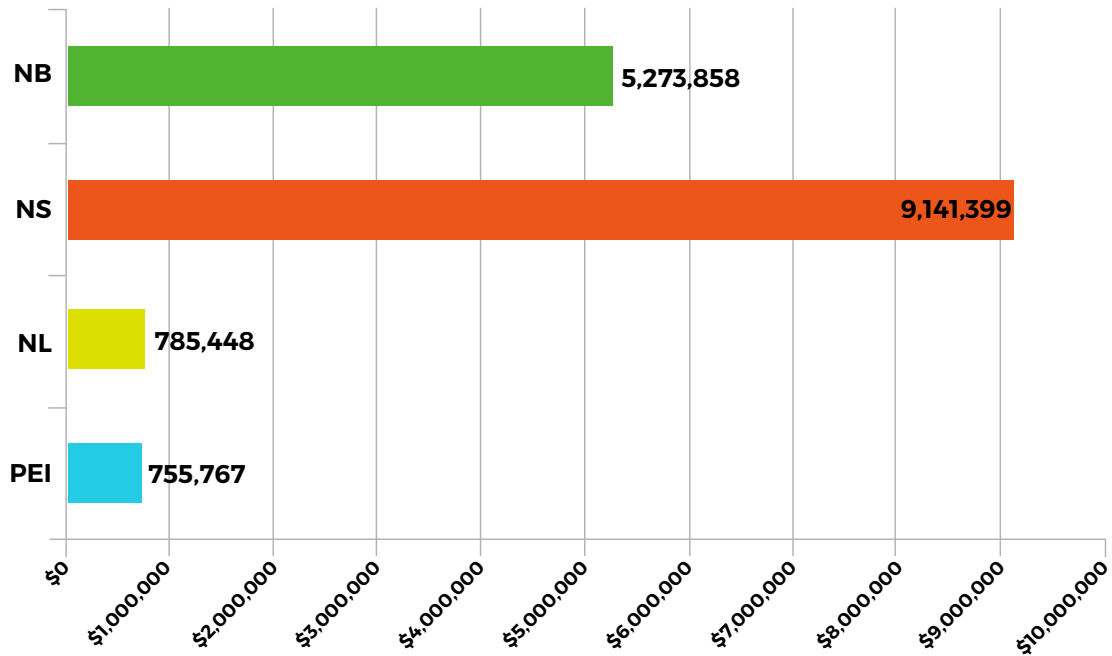
- Prince Edward Island itinerant teachers continued to work closely with many school-aged and preschool specialist team members. A presentation on Growth and Motor Development in Young Children was provided through Zoom by a Prince Edward Island pediatric physiotherapist; many APSEA staff across NS, NB, PEI participated.
- Parasport and Recreation PEI and APSEA work closely to promote and provide opportunities for children and youth to learn about various sports and recreational activities. Learning to skate and developing water literacy skills have been particularly popular in the kindergarten-grade 6 age group.
- APSEA, in partnership with Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada and the Ministère de l'Éducation et du Développement de la petite enfance Province du Nouveau-Brunswick, coordinated a conference workshop on the theme of 'Orientation & Mobility for Wheelchair Users'. The workshop included online demonstrations and training instruction interspersed with corresponding practice sessions where participants were gathered in person in small groups (Moncton, Halifax and St. John's). The workshop was facilitated online by Scott Crawford, an O&M Specialist with the Affiliated Blind of Louisiana, with assistance from Claire Blanchard.
- Assistive Technology collaborates! The AT resource teacher and O&M instructor have partnered to provide online Virtual Learning classes to students who are using Google Maps with VoiceOver. The students work with the instructors in groups or one on one to improve their travel skills and opportunities within their local communities.

REVENUE & EXPENDITURE

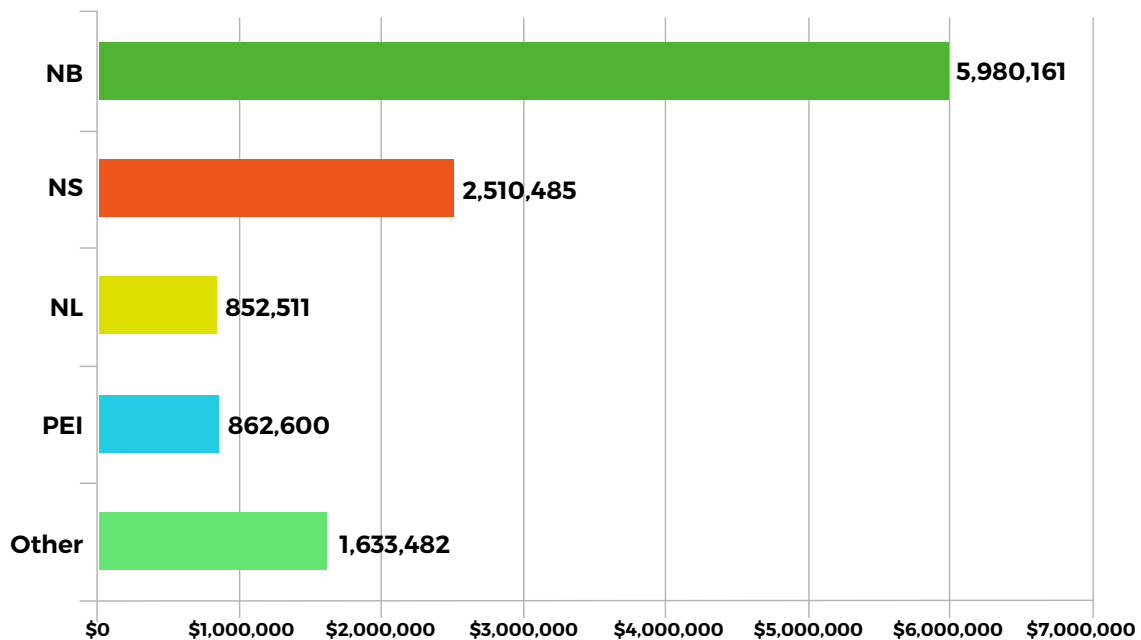
Operating Expenses



Expenditure by Province



Operating Revenue



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