

## Executive Director's Report 2019-2020

This year marks the third anniversary of Strategic Alliance for Alberta Students with Learning Challenges.

We are still advocating for the same three initiatives of:

- Mandatory early screening for learning and developmental challenges
- Enhanced teacher training for all learning challenges
- Class size and composition must be considered to properly resource a classroom with the appropriate supports to enable all learners to be successful.

We had the opportunity to meet with Education Minister, Adrianna LaGrange at the Alberta Legislature to discuss our three initiatives, and how important it is for students to have the proper supports in the classroom so they can be successful. We advised we were part of the new curriculum stakeholder meetings and felt the new curriculum that was developed would benefit children with learning challenges because it teaches the outcomes over multiple grades and multiple subjects giving students more time to learn them.

We met with the Executive Director of ASCA, Wendy Keiver and Vice-President of ASCA, Brandi Rai to see if we could partner to enhance parent involvement and student learning in Alberta.

We met with NDP MLA and Education Critic, Sarah Hoffman to discuss our society's progress since we met with her two years ago and the need to properly fund education so all students can reach their full potential.

It was great to meet with Toby Rabinovitz from LDAA to hear what initiatives they are working on to see if we could collaborate on any shared initiatives.

We were honoured to participate in the Learning for Change initiative for The Learning Centre led by Kim Armstrong which was funded through a grant from the Edmonton Community Foundation. The Learning for Change initiative is a comprehensive city wide, community wide and community-based adult learning needs assessment for underprivileged or marginalized citizens. This initiative was conducted through the lens of Alberta's changing employment and socio-economic landscape as it relates to present and future adult learning needs. The focus was on numeracy and literacy and their relation to economic opportunities, health outcomes, levels of political engagement and the degree to which people feel integrated into or isolated from society. Our lens in the project was on the beginning of a person's educational journey and what would have made a difference.

Our director, Kristi Rouse, spoke at an Edmonton Public School Board meeting on September 24, 2019 with regards to seclusion rooms and the impact they have on students with learning challenges.

We held a fundraiser at Christopher's Pub on October 19, 2019 called the Pub Olympics which raised just over \$2200 of much-needed funds for operating expenses like insurance and web hosting. Thank you to everyone that purchased a ticket and bid on a silent auction item.

A partnership with Victoria School of Arts almost brought the internationally known inclusion advocate, Shelley Moore, from BC until the COVID-19 pandemic hit Canada. Unfortunately, we have not been able to reschedule this event due to the uncertainty of gatherings and the ongoing concerns with the virus.

Lastly, we sent out our very first survey to find out how students with learning challenges were managing with the new education delivery model of distance learning. The survey was called COVID-19 Inclusive Education Snapshot.

[http://www.strategicalliance4abkids.ca/uploads/1/1/8/7/118765590/covid-19\\_inclusive\\_education\\_snapshot\\_report.pdf](http://www.strategicalliance4abkids.ca/uploads/1/1/8/7/118765590/covid-19_inclusive_education_snapshot_report.pdf)

We asked parents and caregivers about the challenges their children have had learning from home. We heard that this learning style, with little to no supports, was having a huge impact on families and children.

Overall, the respondents felt they could not access adequate supports for their child or children at home. Many parents feel ill-equipped to deal with the complexity of their child's needs. With the added challenge of self-isolation, many parents are struggling to balance work and support learning at home. Parents and children alike were frustrated, lost, overwhelmed, and exhausted.

We will be releasing another survey in June 2020 to check in on how families are doing to wrap up the school year. We hope we can reach even more than the 240 people in 66 different school divisions, private schools and home schooling that responded to our last survey.

Strategic Alliance for Alberta Students with Learning Challenges will continue to advocate on behalf of all students with learning challenges so that every child can reach their full potential. We greatly appreciate all the support and feedback we receive from our followers on Facebook and our educational partners. We hope that one day our advocacy efforts will bring about lasting changes within our education system.

Sincerely,  
Greta Gerstner  
Executive Director