

ASHA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING REPORT

ASHA's Board of Directors (BOD) met on August 11–12, 2023. Following are highlights of the Board's discussions.

PRESIDENT'S OPENING REMARKS

ASHA President Robert (Bob) M. Augustine convened the virtual BOD meeting at 10:30 a.m. ET on August 11, 2023, and welcomed Board members to the third BOD meeting of the year.

CEO UPDATE

In addition to providing the written summary with the pre-meeting materials, Chief Executive Officer Vicki Deal-Williams shared the following:

Schools Connect

The ASHA Schools Connect conference returned in person for 2023 in Long Beach, California, July 13–15. ASHA President Robert M. Augustine and Chief Executive Officer Vicki Deal-Williams welcomed the more than 500 attendees to this event designed exclusively for SLPs working in schools. This year's theme focused on creating community and supporting students. Members took advantage of the sun, rich breadth of educational opportunities, and latest and greatest products and opportunities in the Exhibit Hall. Attendees raved about being in-person, awarding an outstanding average overall satisfaction rating of 4.7 out of 5.

Less than 2 weeks later, the ASHA Schools Connect experience continued online, July 26–August 7. The online conference welcomed more than 1,250 attendees to the same rich breadth of educational opportunities, including both live and on-demand sessions, and latest and greatest products and services in the online Exhibit Hall, all from the convenience of home, work, or wherever.

Thank you to the volunteers, speakers, exhibitors, sponsors, and staff who made both Schools Connect experiences incredibly successful!

Next year will be the 25th Anniversary of ASHA Schools Conference; it is being planned for Chicago in July.

New Name Announced for Better Hearing and Speech Month

National Speech-Language-Hearing Month (May) is the new name for *Better Hearing and Speech Month*. The renaming takes effect in 2024. It was announced July 19th by the National Association for Hearing and Speech Action (NAHSA), ASHA's consumer affiliate, which launched *Better Hearing and Speech Month* 50 years ago. The process to rename the observance month took more than a year. It included soliciting suggestions from ASHA members, and the new name aligns with member feedback. Read more about the [name change](#) on ASHA's website.

ASHA encourages members to use their networks to promote the coming of *National Speech-Language-Hearing Month* in May 2024.

2023 ASHA Convention

ASHA remains excited about the 2023 ASHA Convention in Boston this year, November 15–18, and are still hopeful to see numbers similar to 2018, which was the largest attendance ever.

There is a new designation for particular Convention sessions this year: *Changemaker Sessions*. This designation was created specifically for the 2023 ASHA Convention, in keeping with the theme of

“Igniting Innovation,” and recognizes presentations that are exceptional and promote or demonstrate innovation in one of the following ways:

- potential to make an important or significant positive change at the patient, systemic, or discipline level;
- compelling evidence that the work being presented has had a significant impact, or has the potential to, in provoking important change, at the individual, systemic, or discipline level; or
- transformative research or clinical work that has dramatically changed the practices or future research (e.g., contributes to new best practices).

There were many sessions that embraced the theme and were quite strong, highlighting notable examples of innovation in practice; 117 of the 2,926 total presentations were selected to receive this designation.

This year, from November 9th through the 29th, a modified virtual opportunity is being offered to expand the scope and availability of educational sessions. With this new Convention Virtual Extra, all virtual content on ASHA’s Convention website will be posted and anyone may view the sessions. Those opting to claim ASHA CEUs for the sessions must register for a \$99 Virtual Only registration. In addition to the 504 hours of learning that will be available through Convention Virtual Extra, the Opening General Session and the Awards Ceremony will be livestreamed. Like last year, any full in-person registrant will have access to the entire Convention Virtual Extra as well and may claim ASHA CEUs for those sessions.

Sekou Andrews will provide this year’s Keynote for the Opening General Session. Sekou Andrews is a two-time national poetry slam champion, musician, entrepreneur, and a former 5th grade teacher turned inspirational speaker. He was passionate about being a poet and began to pursue poetry as his primary endeavor, knowing that he could elevate the medium to create impact and reach audiences. Now, Sekou Andrews is a sought-after speaker who often gives keynotes at events ranging from leadership conferences to meetings of Fortune 500 companies. Mr. Andrews seamlessly fuses inspirational speaking with spoken word poetry to make messages more moving and memorable. He often speaks on topics such as “DIY innovation,” the ways that each of us have an innovator within us, and how that inspires outward innovation and happiness.

Additionally, there is a fun Innovation Assessment planned for this year. All attendees will be invited to take an innovation assessment that reveals an Innovation Archetype. ASHA has arranged for a special site and version of this assessment so that attendees can explore this concept and discover their own Innovation Archetypes.

CEO Live Chat: Open Forum

ASHA President Robert M. Augustine and ASHA Chief Executive Officer Vicki Deal-Williams held a [CEO Live Chat: Open Forum](#) via Zoom on Thursday July 27, 2023, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. ET. Close to 900 members welcomed the opportunity to participate, and they did so actively with over 350 questions submitted.

During the Open Forum, Ms. Deal-Williams and Dr. Augustine engaged directly with participants. Members welcomed the opportunity to ask questions live about ASHA's activities and provided their feedback on issues and challenges facing the professions. Ms. Deal-Williams, Dr. Augustine, and ASHA staff answered questions. The video recording and transcript are available on [ASHA’s website](#).

Information on future *CEO Live Chats* will be posted on ASHA’s website and social media channels. Members are encouraged to join these virtual events and take the opportunity to have their voice heard in shaping the future of our professions.

2023 Grant Program for Projects on Multicultural Activities

ASHA has had a long-standing commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and recognizes the importance of acknowledging and appropriately responding to cultural and linguistic influences across the discipline. The objective of the Grant Program for Projects on Multicultural Activities (see [Previously Funded Grant Projects on Multicultural Activities](#)) is to support the infusion of multiculturalism into our clinical, educational, and professional programs as well as throughout the discipline.

Project proposals are submitted for an annual competition and must address one or more of the following dimensions of diversity: age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, national origin (including language and dialect), race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. There is particular interest in proposals that result in increasing [cultural responsiveness, cultural competence, and/or cultural humility](#) on an individual or programmatic level.

Each winning project must

- be compatible with [ASHA's mission and vision](#);
- have a clear, high-quality plan for meeting its objectives;
- be completed within 15 months of initiation; and
- describe the future of the project after ASHA funding has ended.

The Review Panel has made their recommendations for the 2023 grant cycle. The project titles and principal investigators who will receive funding will be announced soon.

Assistants Certification Program

The ASHA Assistants Certification Program continues to grow, with a current total of 823 Certified Assistants to date. In addition, there are more than 200 applications in process, putting the Association on a positive trajectory to meet the goal of 1,000 ASHA-certified assistants by the end of 2023.

The “Assist” Mentoring Program launched its 2023 cohort in June, pairing speech-language pathology assistants with SLPs and audiology assistants with audiologists. Mentor–mentee matches have been made and pairs are now identifying their individual goals and mentorship plans.

Certification Administration

There has been an 18% increase in the number of applications received through the first 7 months of 2023 compared to 2022. This growth is attributed to additional utilization of the [new professional membership package](#) (NPMP), which began in 2022. Additionally, there have been fewer pandemic-related delays, which in recent years had interfered with coursework, practicum, graduations, and the clinical fellowship. Certificant retention for 2023 continues to be on par with previous years and should again be over 97%.

There continues to be steady growth within the Assistants Certification Program. In addition to more individuals receiving the C-AA or C-SLPA daily, there are now 14 states that align with or recognize the C-SLPA certification/certification standards as a part of their license or registration requirements for SLP assistants.

For the first time since November 2019, the Mutual Recognition Program partners from ASHA, Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom will be meeting in late August to confirm continued substantial equivalence between certification programs, discuss opportunities for growth (with two new countries/organizations seeking to join), and create a universal application and data system.

STRATEGIC PATHWAY UPDATE

Vice President for Planning Akilah Heggs, Chief Executive Officer Vicki Deal-Williams, and ASHA's Senior Director, Office of Business Excellence, Rozsa Felix provided an update on ASHA's Strategic Pathway to Excellence. The update had three segments.

The first segment focused on the review of the Strategic Objectives' Annual Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The KPIs are short-term performance metrics that track, monitor, and assess the success of a major objective/focus area for the year. The Strategic Objective Owners identified KPIs for 2023 and the statuses of these KPIs at the end of Q2 2023 were reported to the Board.

In the second segment of the update, a new Performance Measure was proposed for Strategic Objective #1. Performance Measures exist for all the Strategic Objectives to track, monitor, and assess the success of the Strategic Objective and show progress over time, starting from a baseline and measured each year toward approved targets. The existing Performance Measures for Strategic Objective #1 are focused on NOMS (National Outcomes Measurement System); the new Performance Measure will capture the transformational work that is being done outside of NOMS.

In the third and final segment of the update, major accomplishments and changes were reported for several Strategic Objectives. Information about the work underway and a more detailed description of all accomplishments to date can be found on ASHA.org's [Strategic Pathway to Excellence: Strategic Objective Highlights](#), which is updated biannually.

REQUEST TO DEVELOP NEW SLP CERTIFICATION PROGRAM FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DEAF

The BOD continued its discussion begun in the June meeting related to a request that ASHA consider providing a path for individuals who are fluent in American Sign Language and who are Deaf to become ASHA-certified SLPs. The BOD broadened the discussion to consider the larger purpose of certification and how individuals with different abilities can be included. The BOD discussed a number of issues that need to be explored further and the need to solicit member input as a part of their decision-making, as well as the need to respond to the original request.

SURVEY ON MEMBER INTEREST IN SPECIALTY CERTIFICATION

Vice President for Standards and Ethics in Audiology Valeria Matlock and Vice President for Standards and Ethics in Speech-Language Pathology Carol Dudding presented the BOD with a draft of a survey that will go out to ASHA certified members regarding specialty certification to gauge members' knowledge of and interest in specialty certification. The BOD did not have any questions or issues with the survey, and it will thus be sent out in coordination with the CFCC in the coming weeks.

SOCIAL JUSTICE FRAMEWORK PROCESS DEBRIEFING

Chief Executive Officer Vicki Deal-Williams facilitated a discussion to evaluate the decision-making tool currently being piloted to determine whether and how to address social justice issues. The framework considers the extent to which an issue relates to the Association's mission, vision, and values, impacts members' ability to deliver services, impacts members or staff, and the extent to which ASHA can influence or enact change. The BOD discussed what's working well and considered modifications to increase the effectiveness of the process. Once finalized, the process will be shared with ASHA members to increase transparency and potentially expand its use.

BOARD ACTIVITIES AT CONVENTION

Board of Directors Manager Marty Moore reviewed the BOD's schedule for the 2023 ASHA Convention in Boston this November. BOD involvement is expected in various activities beginning on Tuesday and ending on Saturday. BOD members will also be attending a variety of sessions and activities as presenters, participants, and active supporters and will be available at the ASHA Leadership Q&A: A Membership Chat with the Board on Friday, November 17, from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m.

MEMBER VALUE STATEMENT, MEMBER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY, AND CONTENT STRATEGY

Over the past months, ASHA has been conducting two transformational projects focused on developing a clear and updated member value statement, member engagement strategy, and a content strategy. Brief project overviews are provided below. The next step is to prioritize the recommendations from both strategies and determine how they will be implemented.

Member Value Statement and Member Engagement Strategy

The member value statement serves as a guide for ASHA to enhance member engagement. The Association works alongside and on behalf of members to champion their success throughout their professional journey. Member value is achieved through ASHA's advocacy and awareness-building activities, and by connecting members to content and community. Recommendations for amplifying member engagement opportunities were presented by Long—Dash, the consulting firm engaged with on these projects, for BOD discussion.

Content Strategy

To meet members' evolving content needs and to address how members consume information most effectively, ASHA has been investigating what types of content members need and how the Association can deliver the content through the programs, products, and services offered. The initiative also seeks to identify how best to present customized content aligned with each member's professional circumstances. The BOD reviewed recommendations on how ASHA can approach content creation and dissemination to align with the member value statement.

AUDIOLOGY SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The BOD Audiology Subcommittee met on August 11, 2023, as a part of the August BOD meeting with Board Member At Large for Audiology Elizabeth Walker facilitating. The following topics were discussed.

Coding and Reimbursement: Director of Health Care and Education Policy Neela Swanson provided an update related to coding and reimbursement of services provided by audiologists as detailed in the 2024 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) Rule released on July 13 (for which comments can be submitted to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services [CMS] until September 11):

- CMS has projected across-the-board decreases to Medicare reimbursement of 3.36%. CMS has also projected that audiology will see a 2% decrease; however, the amount will vary depending on audiological services that are provided and geographic locations. Additional decreases may occur related to federally mandated decreases such as PayGo and sequestration. ASHA is supporting legislation that will strengthen the Medicare program to avoid these yearly pay cuts in the future.
- There are two new Medicare billing codes that will be effective January 2024 for auditory osseointegrated devices (AODs). These codes are modeled after cochlear implant codes and can be used for programming of AODs.
- Audiologists may recall that in the 2023 MPFS, CMS allowed Medicare beneficiaries access to covered audiology services without a physician referral once per calendar year through the use of an AB modifier code. ASHA staff had hoped that the 2024 MPFS would address some

of the problems that have occurred in the use of this AB modifier code, but it turns out this was not directly addressed in the 2024 MPFS.

- Telehealth services for audiologists continue to be covered under Medicare, as part of a congressional act to extend these services through 2024.

State Outreach Initiative: Director of State Affairs Doanne Ward-Williams provided an update on the State Outreach Initiative for BOD members to present at state association meetings.

- Potential topics of interest include leadership and advocacy, diversity/equity/inclusion, and supervision. Learning outcomes and slide decks for the various topics are currently being updated and will be available to BOD members by next week on their community site.
- When BOD members present at a state convention, they will receive a legislative brief specific to that state 2 weeks prior to their presentation.

Audiology Advocacy: Director of Federal Affairs, Health Care, Josh Krantz provided an update related to ongoing audiology advocacy, particularly focusing on the Medicare Audiology Access Improvement Act (MAAIA)

- This bill was reintroduced in the Senate last month with stronger support than in previous years—9 Senators co-sponsored the legislation. The House bill is going through the process of being reintroduced. A House Republican and Democrat have agreed to co-sponsor the legislation.

Vice President for Audiology Practice Janice Trent will be participating in a media tour on behalf of ASHA this fall for the one-year anniversary of the introduction of OTC hearing aids to the market. The committee discussed the impact OTCs have had on audiological services over the past year.

SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The BOD Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) Subcommittee convened on August 11, 2023, to discuss and deliberate on key matters pertinent to the field of speech-language pathology. Board Member At Large in Speech-Language Pathology Treasyri Williams Wood facilitated the session by outlining the subcommittee's purpose, functions, and procedural guidelines. A notable highlight was the recognition of recent advocacy and educational endeavors undertaken by the Board Member at Large in Speech-Language Pathology, underscoring the commitment to promoting the profession's growth and impact.

World Health Organization Rehabilitation Priorities: ASHA Chief Staff Officer for Speech-Language Pathology Lemmieta McNeilly presented an overview of the World Health Organization's Rehabilitation 2030 and World Rehabilitation Alliance meetings in July. Rehab 2030, which was launched in 2017, prioritizes the need to include rehabilitation in universal health coverage and has tools and resources that can be used in different countries. In May, the World Health Assembly passed a landmark resolution on strengthening rehabilitation in health systems. The professions of speech-language pathology and audiology were explicitly acknowledged and included as necessary and integral to rehabilitation. This recognition helps ensure that individuals with communication disorders, including in the areas of cognition and dysphagia, will be included in rehabilitation across the globe. Advocacy will address primary care, workforce preparation, emergency preparedness, research, and external relations.

U.S. Preventative Services Task Force (USPSTF) Recommendations: ASHA has reviewed the USPSTF draft recommendations regarding Speech and Language Delay and Disorders in Children: Screening, and 2023 ASHA President Robert M. Augustine has submitted comments and suggested edits on behalf of the Association.

Equitable Reimbursement and Access in California: The subcommittee received a progress update on ongoing efforts toward achieving more equitable reimbursement and improved access to early intervention services within the state of California. Steps are being taken to ensure that individuals in need of speech-language pathology services receive fair compensation and timely intervention.

Addressing School-Based SLP Shortages: An important focus of the meeting was the persistent shortage of school-based SLPs. The subcommittee recognized the gravity of this issue and aligned with the School Issues Advisory Board to explore strategies aimed at ameliorating persistent personnel shortages and ensuring quality speech and language services within educational settings.

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and SLP Scope of Practice: The subcommittee reflected on inquiries regarding potential conflicts between Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) practice and the scope of practice for speech-language pathology. The subcommittee reviewed ASHA's advocacy efforts to establish recognition for SLPs as experts in communication disorders. Information on ASHA's website highlights their commitment to positioning SLPs as authoritative figures in this domain.

In conclusion, the August 11, 2023, meeting of the SLP Subcommittee served as a platform for in-depth discussions on critical matters affecting speech-language pathology. The subcommittee remains dedicated to fostering the growth and recognition of the profession.

GENERATIVE DISCUSSION; ALGORITHMS AND RIGHTS

ASHA's BOD conducts generative discussions at each BOD meeting. These discussions are intended to engage the Board in deliberations that inform their decision-making and help to define issues and frame challenges. At this meeting, Chief Staff Officer for Speech-Language-Pathology Lemmietta McNeilly facilitated a generative discussion on the topic of Algorithms and Rights. As algorithmic systems spread, they may reveal high levels of bias in current systems and "fair" algorithmic systems might collide with existing systems that are considered meritocratic. Concerns are growing regarding algorithms' lack of transparency and accountability. The BOD discussed potential unintended consequences of using algorithms, and ways to account for and offset bias in datasets related to CSD.

STRATEGIC VISIONING AND PLANNING

ASHA's current strategic plan ([Strategic Pathway to Excellence](#) [PDF]) is coming to an end in 2025. Since earlier this year, the Board of Directors has been working to create the new iteration of the Strategic Pathway. Between March and July 2023, the consultants conducted a thorough environmental scan and worked with the Board to develop and finalize an envisioned future and review and update ASHA's core ideology (vision, mission, and core values). The Board continued to engage in an exercise to determine key areas of focus for the Association over the next few years, and how the Board will prioritize that work (goals and objectives).

The strategic planning activities are expected to continue throughout the remainder of the year.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Vice President for Finance Lawrence (Larry) Molt presented ASHA's financial report. He reported on the second quarter, June 30, 2023, report, which showed total operating revenue of \$37,156,254 and total operating expenses of \$30,504,757, equating to preliminary net revenue (revenue minus expenses) of \$6,651,497 to date. As always, the BOD will receive updated information on the Association's financial status over the course of the year.

BOD SELF-ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

The BOD engaged in their biennial (conducted in the odd-numbered years) self-assessment exercise in May 2023. Each BOD member also completed an individual BOD self-assessment that identified areas of strength as well as growth opportunities. At this meeting, ASHA President Robert M. Augustine provided background, reported the results of the assessment, and facilitated a discussion of the key findings. From this discussion, the BOD concluded that the overall assessment findings were positive and that a subcommittee of BOD members would be appointed to establish new BOD goals that will be brought to the October BOD meeting. These goals will be in effect until the next assessment, which is scheduled for 2025.

BOD GROWTH GOALS

Based on the 2021 BOD self-assessment results, ASHA President Robert M. Augustine led a discussion about the impact the current BOD growth goals have had on their BOD service.

Q&A SESSION

The following topics were posted prior to the BOD meeting for review by each BOD member, with the opportunity to provide feedback or have questions answered during the BOD meeting.

InTouch Report

[InTouch Forms](#) and member feedback are summarized monthly and reviewed with the BOD at Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Subcommittee meetings and at each BOD meeting. InTouch Forms received from members since the last BOD meeting, along with a cumulative summary of the messages, were shared prior to the meeting. Chief Staff Officer for Communications Selena A. Ramkeesoon answered BOD members' questions regarding topics covered in the InTouch forms. Emerging issues and trends that require consideration by the BOD or select Committees, Boards, or Councils were also reviewed.

IALP Voting Process

Chief Executive Officer Vicki Deal-Williams explained the balloting and voting processes for the International Association of Logopedics and Phoniatrics (IALP). As an affiliated society of the IALP, ASHA can participate in that organization's General Assembly to select IALP Officers for the 2023–2026 term and weigh in on other important issues on their ballot. Affiliated societies are assigned a specific number of votes based on the size of the organization, and voting takes place electronically. The Board discussed the process for casting ASHA's votes by the deadline.

Activities of the Committee on Nominations and Elections (CNE), Ad Hoc Committee on Leadership Strategy, and Committee on Honors (COH)

Past President Judy Rich reviewed the work of the CNE, Ad Hoc Committee on Leadership Strategy, and the COH. She noted that a CNE subcommittee has drafted a BOD outreach plan as the committee is responsible for identifying, cultivating, and recruiting members for open BOD positions. This plan includes information that BOD members can share with state associations on the nominations and elections process to encourage nominations.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Leadership Strategies was created by the BOD to develop a leadership strategy for the Association and the discipline and to make recommendations on how to implement the strategy. They will be issuing their report to the BOD by year end.

Also, the COH was mentioned with the effort made to develop awards for clinical providers and the challenge of receiving nominations for these awards. The BOD was asked to help spread the word and encourage service providers to submit nominations.

NSSLHA Update

National Student Speech Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA) National Advisor Belinda Daugherty provided updates on National NSSLHA governance, activities, and upcoming programs for students.

- **Student Volunteer Leaders:** As of July 1, six students began their 2-year terms on the National NSSLHA Executive Council. Each NSSLHA Councilor is paired with an ASHA BOD member and expectations of the mentor–mentee pairs are reiterated. More information about student leader and volunteer opportunities is available on the [National NSSLHA website](#).
- In regard to the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*, National NSSLHA responded through social media channels and created an [advocacy guide for students](#) to take action. The National NSSLHA Executive Council also took a number of steps to reinforce their commitment to building a strong and diverse membership community, championing diversity, equity, and inclusion, and advocating for opportunities for all students.
- **Upcoming Student Opportunities:** The [National NSSLHA Undergrad Scholarship](#) application cycle will open September 1 and will close December 30. Six \$1,000 scholarships for undergraduate juniors and four \$500 scholarships for undergraduate sophomores are available. National NSSLHA also provided a preview of their fall virtual events and their events at ASHA Convention. More information about upcoming [virtual events](#) and [NSSLHA events at ASHA Convention](#) are now available on the National NSSLHA website.

The Board of Directors meeting was adjourned on August 12 at 5:45 p.m. ET.