

JUNE IS

National Indigenous History Month and Pride Month

The ATA has resources. [Page 13](#)



ARA 2024 | Highlighted resolutions [Page 8-9](#)

ATA NEWS

May 28, 2024 | Volume 58, Number 14

News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association

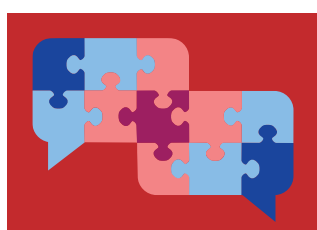


CORY HARE

Stephani Clements, president of Calgary Public Teachers Local No. 38, is projected onto a large screen while addressing delegates of the Annual Representative Assembly (ARA) held in Calgary over the May long weekend.



- Editorial: Successful ARA showcases member resolve | [Page 2](#)
- Be a voice for public education, award recipient urges | [Page 4](#)
- Elder receives Public Education Award | [Page 4](#)
- Diversity and funding: The focus of ARA 2024 | [Page 5](#)
- ATA president chastises government for underfunding | [Page 5](#)
- Executive secretary reaffirms ATA's core values | [Page 6](#)
- Diversity initiatives in the works as budget passes | [Page 6](#)
- Off Script: We are strong when we stand together | [Page 7](#)
- Courtesy motions a long-standing ARA tradition | [Page 16](#)



Bargaining 2024

Initial proposals exchanged in central table bargaining [See story on page 7.](#)

Funding cuts

Some boards will see their funding shrink next year. [See story on page 7.](#)

Successful ARA showcases member resolve



EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Did we pass a budget? Did members leave united?

This was the two-part test that former ATA executive secretary Gordon Thomas had for a successful Annual Representative Assembly (ARA). By that test, I can declare ARA 2024 a success.

Taking place every May long weekend, ARA is the ATA's version of an annual general meeting. Involving more than 450 members from all over the province, ARA is a democratic, parliamentary-style meeting that sets ATA policy. The event always runs from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Saturday and 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Sunday. By that point, if items remain on the agenda, the proceedings continue for up to half a day on Monday.

This year, as ARA unfolded in Calgary, it looked like the first part of Gordon's test was in jeopardy. For the first time in my 20-year memory, the budget was still being debated on

Monday morning. The second part of the test was evidenced throughout the weekend from start to finish.

The very first resolution to be debated, 3-45, was ultimately passed unanimously. It took aim at years of inadequate government funding in education.

"Be it resolved that Alberta's students deserve better than to have the lowest-funded public education system in Canada," it read. "Therefore, the Association urge(s) the Government of Alberta to immediately restore per-student funding to the national average as a first step toward re-establishing this province as a leader in resourcing and supporting public education."

ATA vice-president Peter MacKay kicked off the debate, which was followed by nearly an hour-and-a-half of sometimes gut-wrenching stories from teachers about how underfunding is affecting their students and their classrooms.

"The premier just this week was crowing on X about how we will lead the country in economic growth," said MacKay. "Why is it so important to be the leader in this one area while we remain in the bottom on another area that matters so much? I say stop the excuses!"

"In the year ahead, we will need to take a stand for better," said Mackay who also serves as the ATA's bargaining chair. "We will take a stand at the bargaining table."

"And we may need to take a stand in the streets," he said to the crowd of teachers, which replied with applause and audible hoots and hollers.

"All of the resolutions passed with a highly unified assembly and strong votes of support."

By the end of the meeting, the assembly passed motions related to cellphone usage in schools, recent student protests on Alberta post-secondary campuses, attacks on educational institutions during global hostilities, the freedom for teachers to display Pride materials in class, and other matters. All of the resolutions passed with a highly unified assembly and strong votes of support.

The meeting ended with another bang that demonstrated the unity of the crowd.

In an impromptu speech closing the weekend, president Jason Schilling encouraged teachers to complete a Stop the Excuses testimonial video.

"So, when we say to the government you need to stop the excuses of the underfunding of public education in this province ... we have got video evidence that tells them exactly what their ineptitude is doing to our classrooms and our schools in this province."

"So, I encourage you to speak up, to get loud and do the work that we need to do to move this forward."

The crowd responded with a long, sustained, enthusiastic standing ovation.

It was the perfect ending for the ATA's premier meeting going into this important next year for the profession.

So, Gordon, if you are reading, I am confident that ARA 2024 was a success. We got a budget, and the membership is most definitely united. ■

I welcome your comments. Contact me at jonathan.teghtmeyer@ata.ab.ca.

International conflicts are beyond the ATA's purview



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive Secretary

Question: Why isn't the Association speaking out on what's taking place in Gaza?

Answer: Like many of you, I have watched with horror coverage of the vicious attack launched by Hamas on October 6, 2023, which claimed the lives of 1,143 men, women and children in southern Israel, of whom 766 were civilians, and of the subsequent Israeli invasion of Gaza that to date has resulted in the deaths of over 35,000 Palestinians, at least half of whom are children and women. Over the last several months, Israeli forces have systematically destroyed housing and infrastructure serving the 2.14 million inhabitants of the narrow strip of land bordered by Israel, Egypt and the Mediterranean. At the same time, Hamas and allied groups have continued to launch rockets into Israel.

Many Alberta Teachers' Association members have voiced their deeply felt desire that the ATA should take a public stance on the situation in Gaza, noting the deaths of students and teachers and the destruction of schools

and universities. Others are concerned that such statements would be one-sided and contribute to increasingly frequent and troubling expressions of antisemitism, citing the long history of hatred and persecution of Jews. To be clear, positions regarding the conflict do not break neatly on religious or national or partisan lines. Like the conflict itself, the questions, reactions and sentiments it raises are complex.

And this is a good place to start. Provincial Executive Council considered whether it should weigh in on the matter and determined, after careful thought and discussion, that it should not. The rationale for that decision begins with the fact that the Association has no particular expertise, standing or influence with respect to the Gaza conflict, and that members hold diverse views on the subject.

Furthermore, articulating a position with respect to a specific geopolitical issue, with no apparent impact on Alberta teachers or public education, falls outside the legislated objects of the Association as set out in the *Teaching Profession Act*. These objects include advancing and promoting the cause of education in Alberta, improving the teaching profession, arousing and increasing public interest in education and cooperating with other organizations with similar goals in Canada and elsewhere. (More about that last one in a moment).

This is one reason why the Association has very rarely made policy statements respecting external events and is generally reluctant to weigh in on such matters, except to the extent that they have local implications. For example, the Association has made no comment on the Russian attack upon Ukraine or the civil war in Syria. In both instances, however, the Association called upon the provincial government to support schools to welcome refugee students and has developed materials to assist teachers in responding to the complex needs of children who have escaped war zones.

There is also the matter of consistency. If the Association were to take a position with respect to one conflict, it takes on a moral obligation to treat similar situations similarly. Currently, the highly respected International Rescue Committee identifies, in addition to the war in the occupied Palestinian territory, 19 other ongoing conflicts on its 2024 Emergency Watchlist. It is not clear why the Association would choose only to comment on one of these and on none of the others. In the absence of clear and objective criteria to determine which conflicts the Association should address, it simply makes sense not to wade in at all. Frankly, it is not as if our comments would have material effect.

All that said, the Association, like

its members, is not indifferent to events going on in the world and does act through the Canadian Teachers' Federation and Education International to provide financial and moral assistance to teachers who have been affected by conflict and natural disasters. These national and international organizations to which the ATA, consistent with its fourth object, belong, do have the necessary mandates, expertise and capacity to take positive action.

Indeed, the recent Annual Representative Assembly leveraged this relationship, passing a resolution calling upon Education International to work in conjunction with the International Committee of the Red Cross and other international bodies to extend to schools and educational institutions the same protected status provided to hospitals under international humanitarian law. This would make the destruction of schools, their misuse for military purposes and the targeting of teachers and students, in and of themselves, crimes against humanity, punishable by individual states and by the International Criminal Court. ■

Questions for consideration in this column are welcome. Please address them to Dennis Theobald at dennis.theobald@ata.ab.ca.



YOUR VIEWS

From the Annual Representative Assembly

X Huberdoh! @robhlope
Forty-three per cent of teachers are now leaving the profession in the first five years. Can't believe how many people are leaving the profession. My friends and colleagues have simply had enough.

X Dave Krawchuk @MrKrawchuk
Around 10 teachers at my junior high of approximately 580 could be hired if we were funded at the national average. The government needs to #stoptheexcuses.

X Mrs. Keay @MrsKeay
My favourite quote from day one of ARA: "only teachers should be doing the work of teachers."

f Karen Green
I taught kindergarten in Alberta for 15 years and my class sizes ranged up to 29. You feel every additional kid after 21 in the stress of managing the class, in prep, in what activities you can manage alone as the class gets bigger, in keeping the students' attention, and in giving the students attention. There was no magical age when classes were enormous, and everything went wonderfully. There were, perhaps superhuman teachers in some cases. And at some point, they probably burned out and ended up on leave.

f Danica White
I have a split Grade 1/2. I have kids working below kindergarten and some above and some surprisingly challenging behaviours. Split classes need a complexity cap as well as a size cap. It is difficult enough to teach a split without having to deal with so many extra complexities. The cuts are destroying education and forcing teachers and students into impossible situations where no one can do their job properly.

f Nicole Sommerfeld
We have classes of 36 or 37 5th Graders. They ended up making another class, but the building is so overcrowded their classroom is the staff room.

f Michele Meijer
Teaching 27 (my current number of Grade 1-2 kiddos) is wild. I feel like I am herding cats not teaching.

Non-teachers show support

@_district_
So many parents across Alberta are with you and want to advocate for public education please know you are not alone, and you are deeply appreciated.

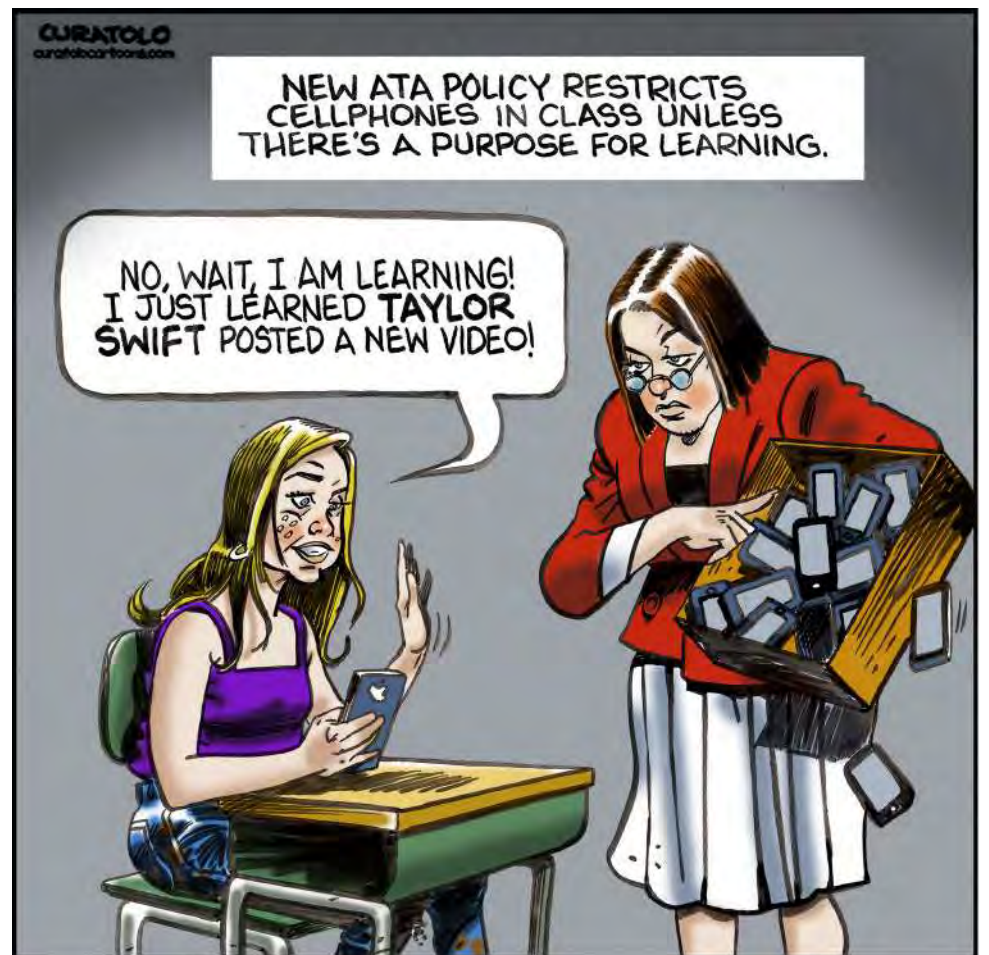
@candace.brown7
Go teachers! I keep waiting for a big strike. I grew up in BC, and teachers were constantly on strike but now they have small class sizes and tons of EAs, so it was clearly worth it.

Letters to the editor: We welcome letters to the editor. Please limit your submission to 300 words. Only letters bearing a first and last name, address and daytime telephone number will be considered for publication. Teachers are also asked to indicate where and what they teach. All letters are subject to editing for length, clarity, punctuation, spelling and grammar. Email managing editor Cory Hare: cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

FOR THE RECORD

“ Education is the great equalizer. I say that frequently. I say that randomly, and I rage that into the abyss that is Alberta Education. ”

– Brandi Rai, past president of the Alberta School Councils' Association, speaking at the ATA's 2024 Annual Representative Assembly



We must resist attacks on inclusion



VIEWPOINTS

Rin Lawrence
Chair, ATAGSA

Gender diverse people in Alberta are under attack. Ever since Jan. 31, when Premier Danielle Smith posted a video promising new legislation to protect gender diverse youth, gender diverse students have found themselves the targets of rising hate speech in their school hallways, mocked for their gender expression or labeled as too disgusting to be in physical contact with their peers.

These acts, to name a few, are becoming commonplace, as are attacks on teachers. 2SLGBTQIA+ teachers are being discouraged from mentioning their partners or families or identifying their own pronouns. They are being directed to remove safe space or rainbow visuals from their classrooms. Even ally teachers receive many of these directives.

Sexual and gender diverse students and teachers are witnessing their own classmates, community members and relatives stand up and walk out, or engage in active protests, at the mere mention of our existence, lives and identities.

In the wake of all these experiences, school staff are afraid to mention these topics for fear that they will become targets. This results in the reduction in representation of 2SLGBTQIA+ identities in our schools. Should reduced representation continue and the proposed legislation come into effect, the erasure of an entire group of people is imminent.

Accepting these prejudices within our school communities violates human rights. When we overlook homophobia and transphobia while condemning other forms of oppression, we contradict the principles of inclusivity. We should condemn all oppression.

Cultural clashes, wherein one group states that

another group's existence infringes on their beliefs, are also escalating exponentially. Demands for the inclusion of some groups at the expense of others creates further division instead of unity. This situation transcends differences in opinion; it is an issue of fundamental human rights. While everyone is entitled to their own beliefs, these should not infringe on the rights, dignity and lives of others. Nor should one group's beliefs dictate the mere existence of another.

In the face of escalating challenges over the past year, the Alberta Teachers' Association Gender and Sexuality Alliance (ATAGSA) has continued to be a beacon of connection and solidarity for individuals who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ and their allies. The ATAGSA has become a crucial forum where teachers can gather,

“ While everyone is entitled to their own beliefs, these should not infringe on the rights, dignity and lives of others. ”

discuss and navigate the dreadful changes in Alberta. It provides a safety net for 2SLGBTQIA+ teachers and their allies, offering a venue for individuals to meet and find solace amidst oppression. The group facilitates sharing experiences, fostering solidarity and active listening among its members. Together, members develop strategies to address interpersonal and political challenges and mobilize efforts to create impactful change through grassroots organizing.

In addition, the ATAGSA plays a vital role in gathering and analyzing data on looming laws and policies that threaten to roll back rights. The ATAGSA centralizes crucial information and connects members with legal experts, policymakers and other professionals.

The ATAGSA's commitment to dissecting policies, cross-referencing them with academic research and examining them from several angles ensures that members are well-informed and equipped to advocate effectively.

By holding members to professional standards and promoting activism, the ATAGSA combats isolation and imposter syndrome, providing an antidote through community support. Further, we remind each other that it is through community that we build a safer world. By utilizing our collective strengths and acting together, we can achieve a more equitable world.

The ATA's role in supporting diversity has never been more crucial than in this era marked by rising opposition to inclusivity. As members, you can take several actions to support this vital cause. Equip yourself with talking points to challenge discriminatory behaviour and discourse, sign petitions, donate to human rights organizations and write letters to your MLA. Raise your voice against the anti-2SLGBTQIA+ movement and advocate for the people you care about and love.

Cultural clashes only divide us instead of pulling all identities forward together. Instead of fighting each other, we need to stand together. Be visible in your support for targeted groups and remember that being an ally is an active role.

As Pride Month dawns, let us all reaffirm our commitment to inclusivity and human rights. The ATAGSA's work exemplifies the power of collective action and the importance of standing together against discrimination. By supporting diversity and equity networks like the ATAGSA and taking individual action, we can help create a more inclusive and equitable society for all. ■

Rin Lawrence is a teacher and diversity consultant for Edmonton Public Schools and chair of the Alberta Teachers' Association Gender and Sexuality Alliance (ATAGSA).



CORY HARE

Honorary Membership Award winner Calvin Fraser is a former ATA staff officer and program area coordinator who went on to serve as secretary general of the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

Teachers are the right people in the right place

Award recipient urges members to be a voice for public education

Mark Milne
ATA News Staff

Public education has seen many changes since the 1970s and 80s, and often at the expense of student-centred teaching, former ATA staff officer Calvin Fraser told delegates at the 2024 Annual Representative Assembly (ARA).

Fraser received the ATA's Honorary Membership Award in recognition of his dedication to the profession, through his work with the ATA and the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

In his acceptance speech, Fraser related how, throughout his career, he has witnessed public education move from a philosophy of meeting the individual student's needs to a system that now seems focused on producing workers to join the workforce.

"As a teacher of the seventies and eighties, I was able to see myself as a true professional in teaching my students, not on behalf of their parents, but as a complement to the parents, with the focus on the children's needs in what was then a child-centred education program," said Fraser. "But the conservative caucus of that day found (this approach) inconsistent with the ethical base of the educational philosophy of a conservative party."

Fraser said he saw a new tradition evolve in education, with basic knowledge and skills being put ahead of developing individual foresight and planning skills.

"I truly did have the glory years of teaching where the focus was on individual potential," Fraser said. "You don't have that anymore. You don't have the resources for that anymore.

You don't have the support for that anymore."

Beginning in 1972, Fraser spent 18 years teaching in public schools while serving in numerous volunteer roles with the ATA. He joined the ATA as a staff officer in 1990 and was named coordinator of MS (now known as Teacher Employment Services [TES]) in 1997. After working for the ATA for 17 years, Fraser became secretary general of the Canadian Teachers' Federation, serving in that role for eight years before retiring.

Fraser told delegates that they are the collective voice of teachers in an increasingly individualistic society. He said debate regarding public education should not be about conservative or liberal boundaries but should be on how society values and treats their children and teachers.

"You are an important voice in that

debate. Others continue to define you and your role — but I've never let others define me or my role and I'm putting my faith in you as the right people to define your own roles."

Fraser, a staunch supporter and advocate for the ATA, remembers his initial misgivings about joining staff at the main office in Edmonton. As a young teacher, he said, he questioned many things — a trait he still is proud to possess. He said he had concerns about the structure of the organization until a fellow teacher imparted some valuable advice that he believes holds true to this day.

"A wise teacher said to me, 'Calvin, if you have the right people, with the right goals, any structure will do.' An essential truth! And I've tried to be one of those right people working with the right people ever since." ■

Elder receives education award

ATA News Staff

A woman known for her dedication to advocating for Indigenous students is the recipient of the

ATA's 2024 Public Education Award. Wanda First Rider, an Elder representing Treaty 7 from the Blackfoot Confederacy, earned the award in recognition of her contributions to Indigenous education and her ability

to strengthen relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

A residential school Survivor, First Rider accepted the award at the 2024 Annual Representative Assembly, sharing her personal journey and the legacy of residential schools that affected her family for generations.

"I am proud to say that I'm the first generation of many of our communities who can now say that I'm raising my own children, an opportunity that was taken away from us through colonization," she said.

First Rider stressed the ongoing challenges in Indigenous education and the need for educators' support.

"Education is our tool, but we can't do it alone," she said.

First Rider urged educators to understand and support Indigenous students, especially in their early years, to prevent another generation from being left behind.

"If these students are not reading by the time they're in Grade 3, we've lost another generation," she said. "And we can't let that happen again." ■



CORY HARE

Elder Wanda First Rider shares her perspective upon accepting the ATA's Public Education Award.

Ticket for two



CORY HARE

Lisa Fletcher, a member of Chinook's Edge Local No. 17, accepts a draw prize from Jeff Bennett, senior business consultant with the Alberta Motor Association (AMA). Fletcher won two passes that will enable her to travel anywhere Westjet flies in Canada or the continental United States.

The AMA recently formed a partnership with the ATA to provide teachers with exclusive deals on various travel products and services. Further information is available via the Members Only section of the ATA website.

Diversity and funding: The focus of ARA 2024

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Diversity was a prominent theme throughout the May long weekend as 450 teacher delegates gathered in Calgary for the ATA's Annual Representative Assembly.

Delegates passed a series of resolutions that will significantly change the ATA's approach to issues related to diversity, equity and human rights (DEHR).

Significant amongst them is resolution 3-29 which will provide funding for the creation of diversity equity networks (DENs). Modelled on ATA specialist councils, these networks will provide a structure within which teachers of a diverse group can come together to dialogue, support each other and organize relevant events and services. Where specialist councils focus on what or who a teacher teaches, DENs will focus on how a teacher identifies personally.

"Five years from now, somebody is going to ask where were you when the DENs were created in the ATA?" said one delegate. "And you want to be able to say, 'I was there, I was a part of that, I made that happen.'"

"What this is, is an opportunity to acknowledge that diversity equity and inclusion are our moral duties," said another delegate. "All teachers experience intersections that can be addressed by DENs. Teachers may be directly impacted by diversity because of their own identity or may be impacted because of the diversity needs of their students."

Other diversity-related resolutions also evoked passionate speeches during debates. Resolution 2-22 funds a third-party equity audit for the Association; 3-28 creates two annual seminars for local DEHR chairs; 3-33 creates an Indigenous education initiatives grant; 3-30 provides support for hosting the CTF Women's Symposium in Alberta; and 3-21 adds a new Professional Development staff officer who will



Cecil Hall, a member of Calgary Public Teachers Local No. 38, expresses his opinion during a policy debate at the 2024 Annual Representative Assembly in Calgary.

provide support to DENs and other diversity initiatives.

Resolution 4-1 aims to protect the rights of teachers to display Pride materials in their classrooms, after several school boards have made teachers remove their displays.

"Supportive and affirming Pride materials, like posters, stickers, flags etc., can be seen and experienced as beacons of hope," said one delegate speaking on resolution 4-1. "Our students look for the symbols. They look for them, and when they are absent, or even worse, when they are removed, it is noticed, it is internalised, and it decreases feelings of safety, representation and opportunities for education."

A number of other diversity-related resolutions that passed (3-20, 3-12, 3-13, 3-8) protect teacher autonomy around GSAs, selecting resources and providing support and protection to diverse students. Other resolutions responded to issues stemming from the government's planned legislation

impacting how 2SLGBTQ+ students are supported in schools, including changing names and pronouns (3-18/19), the use of the notwithstanding clause to pass legislation (3-5), parental notification (2-16) and preserving the privacy of children (3-6/7).

Impact of underfunding

During the debate on resolution 3-45, delegates spent nearly 90 minutes passionately sharing stories about how underfunding has impacted their classrooms and schools. That resolution states, "Alberta's students deserve better than to have the lowest-funded public education system in Canada," and calls for the government to restore per-student funding to the national average.

"Principals are being put in impossible situations, and I am getting tired of having those conversations with my teachers," said one school principal. "I am a principal of a small school, 200 students. I could have hired an extra

three to three-and-a-half teachers in my school if we were just funded at the average level."

Another delegate shared some words from one of her students who happened to see the resolution on her desk and wanted to write a response to it.

"In my class alone, there are 39 Grade 7 students, and many of us need extra help," read the teacher. "Imagine needing help, and there's no one available to assist you. That's our reality. This lack of support often leads to feelings of frustration and apathy."

"When students don't receive the help they need, they can start to feel like their education doesn't matter, and they might give up trying altogether. I think some of my classmates already have."

Cellphones and other resolutions

Another resolution (3-43) that received significant attention calls for the prohibition of smartphones in classes unless there is a defined pedagogical, digital wellness or medical purpose to their use. The resolution was passed with strong support.

Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaides has launched a survey on cellphone use and is open to legislating a ban. Governments in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec have already implemented cellphone restrictions.

"New research shows that if you are a teenager in Alberta, you will get, on average, 192 notices a day from your social media feeds, so it is no surprise that they are reaching for their devices all the time," reported one delegate. "Our resolution is important as it aims to ensure that when a restriction is introduced, teacher professional judgment remains at the forefront of all decisions related to smartphone use in Alberta classrooms and schools."

The assembly also passed resolutions relating to the Canada Pension Plan, the draft social studies curriculum, political parties in school board elections, actions that limit student protestors and the protection of education institutions during global conflicts. ■

ATA president chastises government for underfunding

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

The Government of Alberta is failing a generation of students through its chronic underfunding of public education.

This was the key message delivered by Alberta Teachers' Association president Jason Schilling during his address to delegates of the Annual Representative Assembly in Calgary on May 18.

"It is time for government to stop the excuses and fund the future of our province in a way that honours [students'] future potential," Schilling said. "Their failure to do so will be their shameful legacy."

In arguing that chronic underfunding has put the teaching profession and public education in crisis, Schilling chastised the government for bragging about increasing education funding by 4.4 per cent when more than 13 per cent is needed to bring Alberta's per-student spending up to the Canadian average. He noted that chronic underfunding hasn't kept up with inflation and student enrolment growth, has led to flawed implementation of the new curriculum and is failing to meet the

social, emotional and cognitive needs of students.

Beyond funding, Schilling expressed concern about a growing lack of respect for diversity, particularly toward members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, as evidenced by a September rally at Barnett House, followed months later by Premier Danielle Smith's announcement of upcoming legislation centred around the use of pronouns in schools and other gender and sexual minority issues.

"Let's be clear: it is not the role of teachers to out kids who do not want to come out," Schilling said. "To do so would be unprofessional, disrespectful, illegal and potentially dangerous."

Schilling said he is deeply concerned about the effect of Smith's announcement on teachers' ability to provide safe, caring and inclusive spaces for all students, but he added that teachers will not be swayed by those who have politicized sexual orientation and gender identity.

"We will not be deterred from doing the right thing for students by those who will misrepresent our actions and intents. We will not be intimidated by those who throw vulgar slurs at us. We will stand up for students."

Schilling then moved on to curriculum, calling on the government to delay the implementation of the social studies curriculum until the Association's recommendations are properly addressed.

Opportunity to share

Shifting from challenges to opportunities, Schilling promoted the ATA's Let's Get Loud communications initiative, which is gathering and sharing videos from teachers explaining the realities they're facing in their classrooms.

"Sharing the stories of our classrooms is one of the best ways to let the public know what our colleagues and students are experiencing day in and day out," Schilling said.

Schilling then touched on the fact that teachers are currently in the early stages of central table bargaining, stating that teacher unity will be critical since this level of bargaining will affect all members in the province.

"Our goals can only be realized through our collective action," Schilling said. "By recognizing our strengths and working together, it is now time to embrace our collective desire to make change and protect public education from the failures of government."



Jason Schilling, ATA president

ATA will remain true to its roots

Executive secretary reaffirms ATA's core values and direction

Kim Clement
ATA News Staff

After a year of self-examination following the Alberta government's decision to strip the organization of its role in governing professional conduct and competence, the Alberta Teachers' Association remains steadfast in its foundational principles.

That was the message given by the ATA's executive secretary Dennis Theobald in his address to the 2024 Annual Representative Assembly, held on May long weekend in Calgary.

"Despite everything, we are who we have always been, and that is a good thing," Theobald said as he underscored the ATA's dual identity as both a union and a professional organization. "From the outset, the Association was envisioned as being a union of professionals, and that is our first fundamental."

Theobald highlighted the interconnectedness of the union's efforts in collective bargaining and its role in supporting teacher professionalism, citing concerns about class size, support for inclusion and

adequate preparation time as both professional and union issues.

Theobald defended the importance of a free, publicly funded education system that serves all children, warning against the expansion of private schools under the guise of choice.

"These schools are exclusive, in the sense that they are very much defined by who they exclude," he said.

He called for continued advocacy to preserve and enhance public education's inclusive nature.

Theobald detailed the ATA's initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion within the profession and the broader education system. He highlighted ongoing efforts to support women in leadership, engage with Indigenous communities and represent gender- and relationship-diverse students and teachers.

"Responding to diversity, promoting justice, seeking equity and striving to ensure all are included is now an expectation," he said.

Addressing the assembly, Theobald praised the dedication of teacher volunteers and ATA staff, acknowledging the complexities and challenges they face. He stressed the need for ongoing



Dennis Theobald, ATA executive secretary

CORY HARE

support and training for volunteers, recognizing that the increased demands on classroom teachers have impacted their capacity to volunteer.

"One of our greatest strengths, our dependence upon volunteerism, has become a vulnerability," he observed, urging careful consideration of how to adapt to these changing dynamics.

In closing, Theobald reminded members of the guiding principles

that should inform their decision making: the ATA's identity as a union of professionals, its determination to ensure everyone feels welcomed in public education and its commitment to serving Alberta's teachers.

"If you do that," he concluded, "we will continue to be a robust and dynamic organization, fully capable of advocating for members' rights and professional interests." ■

Diversity initiatives in the works as budget passes

Pedro Carriel
ATA Treasurer and Chief
Financial Officer

an overall budget with a small surplus of \$74,800. The annual fee for associate members is now \$213.30.

Approved budget highlights

Budget 2024-25 includes a number of programs, initiatives and targeted investments all aimed at strengthening the Association's capacity to effectively deal with expected challenges, while at the same time providing enhanced service to members.

ARA delegates approved that the Association undertake its first ever Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Audit. Association staff have already commenced the creation of a sub-program area within Professional Development to coordinate the Association's support for diversity, and over the long weekend, members approved establishing teacher-defined

and teacher-driven Diversity and Equity Networks (DENs) and allocating funding to support the work carried out by Diversity, Equity and Human Rights (DEHR) chairs across the province.

Further, funds were earmarked to pilot an Indigenous education initiatives grant, establish a Beginning Teachers' Network and implement a mentorship program for school leaders.

As part of the overall budget and supporting the work described above and other priorities, four FTEs were approved. The addition of executive staff officer positions in both Teacher Employment Services and Professional Development will strengthen the capacity of these program areas to maintain service to members and support the new initiatives.

The addition of a professional staff officer in Regulatory Affairs

and Membership Support will expand the Association's ability to assist the rapidly growing number of members who are the subject of complaints filed with the Alberta Teaching Profession Commissioner. An additional professional staff officer with responsibility for facilitating events and conferences will support the Association and its subgroups, especially specialist councils, to manage increasingly complex speaker and venue contracts, to seek out efficiencies by coordinating events and to market Barnett House facilities to external customers.

Finally, recognizing the critical importance of effective long-term planning and risk mitigation, delegates also approved strategic information technology services investments and allocations to both the Capital Fund and the Special Emergency Fund (SEF). ■

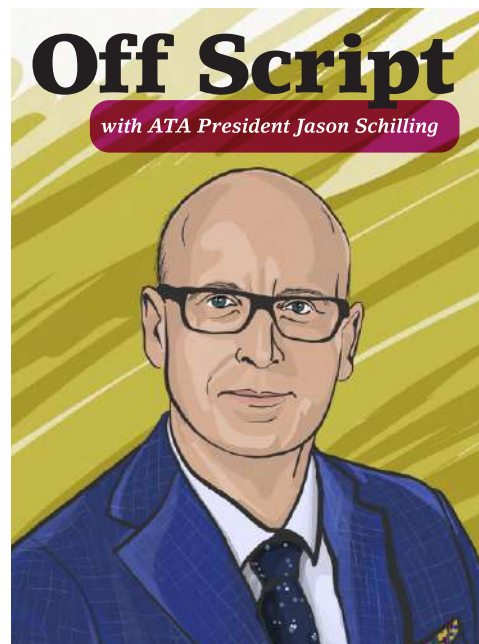
ARA 2024

The ATA's 107th Annual Representative Assembly took place in Calgary. More than 450 delegates spent the May long weekend discussing issues such as the ATA's budget for 2024-25 and adopted new policy related to diversity, education funding and the use of technology in class.



PHOTOS: CORY HARE

We are strong when we stand together



The ATA just held its 107th Annual Representative Assembly (ARA) in Calgary, and the assembly continues to be one of the best demonstrations of democracy I have been privileged to witness. Hundreds of teachers come from across the entire province to debate policy, honour colleagues and to approve a budget for the next year.

I have talked to many people about ARA, and they often wonder what it is all about and why it is important. The *what* is easy to describe as the ATA is a policy-driven organization, and our policy tells our members and the public what we value and believe in. This policy then helps set the direction and vision of the ATA, and that's *why* it's important.

This last ARA was especially important for several reasons, the first being that the assembly laid the groundwork for

advancing a vision that sees the ATA starting significant work on diversity, equity and inclusion. The work this past weekend will benefit our current members and generations to come, and that is special.

Second, the assembly approved a budget for next year that will strengthen the ATA's ability to provide services to our members, such as professional development and teacher employment services. The budget will also ensure the ATA is financially ready for the upcoming year, which will be a challenging one as central table bargaining ramps up.

Finally, I spoke at ARA about how public education is in a crisis due to a chronic lack of funding, and delegates shared many stories about how the lack of funding is impacting their students, classrooms and themselves. These

stories were powerful and personal, and showed how teachers care deeply about making sure their students get the best education possible.

But teachers simply cannot do it anymore. The cracks are showing, and the government must address this crisis immediately. Telling the stories of our classrooms is important and will be vital next year, so I encourage each of you to continue to talk to your networks about the importance of public education.

Our Annual Representative Assembly is vital to our unity as an Association, and I left this year's assembly with a feeling of gratitude for the delegates who gave up their long weekend to do this work. I also left with a feeling of pride as the delegates showed that when we stand together united, we stand together in strength. ■

Thirteen Alberta school boards to receive funding cuts

ATA News Staff

School boards in a number of growing communities will receive less provincial funding next year, according to recently released funding profiles.

School jurisdiction funding profiles posted to the Alberta government website on May 6 outline the provincial funding that each school board will receive for the next school year. The 2024–25 profiles show 13 Alberta boards will experience funding cuts.

As a result of these cuts, schools in communities such as Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, Okotoks, High River, St. Albert, Camrose, Two Hills, Fort MacLeod and Morinville will likely experience even larger class sizes and program cuts when school starts in the fall, said ATA president Jason Schilling.

"There is no excuse in our growing, wealthy province to have funding cuts for public education," Schilling said.

Year after year after year, school board funding has failed to keep up with inflation and enrolment growth. As a result, Alberta now has the lowest per-pupil spending on education in all of Canada, Schilling said.

He added that he is hearing from teachers that many school boards, in

addition to those experiencing funding cuts, will be laying off teachers at the end of the school year. These plans run contrary to government budget announcements heralding the hiring of 3,000 additional school staff over the next three years, he said, adding that school boards must halt any planned layoffs, and the government should

immediately announce additional funding for the fall.

"The weighted moving average has proven disastrous for education funding. We've had years of rapid enrolment growth and insufficient funding," Schilling said.

When adjusted for inflation, per-pupil education spending will be down

13 per cent provincewide, compared to 2019, he said.

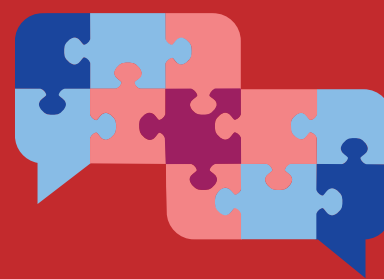
"We are now 3,000 teaching positions behind where service levels were at just five years ago," Schilling said. "As a result of underfunding, class sizes have grown, programs have been cut and supports for students continue to erode." ■

School jurisdiction funding profiles: 2024–25

School board	Dollars cut	Per cent cut
The Medicine Hat School Division	-\$1,045,675	-1.4%
The Northland School Division	-\$761,115	-2.3%
The Aspen View School Division	-\$646,458	-1.7%
The Battle River School Division	-\$546,236	-0.8%
The Foothills School Division	-\$521,043	-0.6%
The Living Waters Catholic Separate School Division	-\$504,056	-2.2%
The Sturgeon School Division	-\$500,310	-0.8%
The Greater St. Albert Roman Catholic Separate School Division	-\$360,390	-0.6%
The Peace Wapiti School Division	-\$339,760	-0.4%
The Holy Family Catholic Separate School Division	-\$221,112	-0.9%
The Livingstone Range School Division	-\$52,483	-0.1%
The Northwest Francophone Education Region	-\$34,316	-0.4%
The St. Paul School Division	-\$32,561	-0.1%

BARGAINING

Central Table 2024



We are ATA.

Initial proposals exchanged in central bargaining

ATA News Staff

Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) officials met in mid-May with representatives of the government and school board bargaining team to exchange opening proposals for the next round of central table bargaining.

The ATA's finalized opening proposal is the result of months of work and consultations with teachers, which included surveys, focus groups, a telephone townhall, the collective bargaining conference and three member webinars. Now that the

initial proposal has been shared with the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association (TEBA), teachers are able to view the finalized version by clicking on Collective Bargaining Updates on the ATA home page at teachers.ab.ca.

Central Table Bargaining Committee (CTBC) chair Peter MacKay offered his thanks to members in a Members' Update email sent after the exchange of proposals.

"We appreciated receiving all of your input and feedback on the draft initial proposal," wrote MacKay. "The streamlined proposal focuses on your key priorities — classroom conditions,

improvements to salary and key working conditions."

At its May 9–10 meeting, Provincial Executive Council discussed the feedback received on the draft proposal previously shared with members, made some adjustments to it and voted to approve the final version to take to the bargaining table.

"The bargaining team will not be able to achieve everything in this proposal," said ATA chief negotiator Sean Brown. "We will achieve as much as we can, whether that is a settlement offer or mediator's recommendations, and then it will be up to you to decide if it is enough to reach a settlement."

Brown says the proposals are now up for discussion, debate and negotiation at the bargaining table. TEBA will bring forward its own proposals and they will push back on CTBC's positions. A final agreement will only be possible if both sides are able to move off from their opening positions in order to work towards a settlement.

The first day for negotiations is set for June 7. Teachers are encouraged to wear Red for Ed on that day in order to show support for the bargaining team and its objectives. Brown says updates will be provided after each day of bargaining as the process unfolds. ■

Highlighted resolutions



Resolutions arising from the six-year review of policy

1-97/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that policy 13.2.3.11 be amended to read—

“The Government of Alberta should ensure, at minimum, that no public, separate or francophone school authority receives a reduction in funding in current or subsequent years due to any public emergency that results in disruption to the student population.”

1-129/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that policy 22.2.1.7 be amended to read—

“To protect data, school authorities, when contracting with information technology services and vendors, must ensure that all such contracts involving the collection, use, disclosure or transfer of personally identifiable information contain clauses

1. identifying the source of the school authority’s right to enter into a contract;
2. specifying the purpose for which the personally identifiable information or data is being collected;
3. specifying the scope and type of personally identifiable information or data that is to be collected or transferred;
4. limiting or prohibiting the disclosure of the personally identifiable information or data to third parties except where required or authorized by law;
5. limiting or prohibiting the sale of the data;
6. ensuring that the school authority has exclusive control over access to the personally identifiable information or data;
7. ensuring that, when activating an account for any individual, said individual is not presented with privacy terms that differ from those stipulated in the contract;
8. specifying who is responsible for giving individuals access to their own personally identifiable information for the purpose of review or correction according to statute;

9. specifying whether the service provider or vendor has the right to store and process the personally identifiable information or data in a country other than Canada;
10. outlining specific data breach notification processes and notification requirements;
11. prohibiting the service or vendor from modifying the contract unilaterally;
12. granting school authorities the right to audit service providers or vendors to ensure that they are complying with the contract; and
13. detailing how the life cycle of the personally identifiable information or data will be managed in a way that complies with the record retention schedule.

Local resolutions

2-1/24

St. Thomas Aquinas Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge school authorities to provide teachers with relevant and necessary information on current and past dangerous behaviours exhibited by any student in their care that may pose a safety risk to any staff or students in their care.

2-5/24

Calgary Separate School

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Canadian Teachers’ Federation to advocate for dedicated funding from the Government of Canada for English-as-an-additional-language (EAL) students and for special education programs proportional to the number of immigrants who will be eligible for EAL and special education programming.

2-10/24

Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association investigate and report back on ageism in the field of education in Alberta.

2-11/24

Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to provide funding to school authorities that is sufficient to ensure that any student who is identified as needing professional counselling or a psychological assessment is able to access these services during the school year when these needs are identified.

2-14/24

Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association develop Association instructor sessions that support professional development for substitute teachers.

2-16/24

Edmonton Catholic Teachers

Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to communicate to school authorities that notification and permission regarding human sexuality, as outlined in section 58.1 of the *Education Act*, is not necessary when addressing human identities that include sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

2-20/24

Rocky View

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to refrain from entirely digitizing diploma examinations and continue to maintain the current paper-based format alongside digitized versions to ensure equitable access and minimize technical vulnerabilities.

2-21/24

Rocky View

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to access supports used in daily instruction to remove language barriers in any provincial achievement test or diploma examination with the exception of English and French language examinations.

2-22/24

Rocky View

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association conduct, and share the results of, an independent, third-party equity audit to find opportunities to increase equity across the Association.

2-30/24

Edmonton Catholic Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED that this Annual Representative Assembly express its support for an increased emphasis by the Association on its “union functions.”

Provincial Executive Council resolutions

3-5/24

Provincial Executive Council

The Association opposes the use of the ‘notwithstanding clause,’ section 33 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, by governments to diminish or disregard the rights of persons in legislation.

3-6/24

Provincial Executive Council

The Association prioritizes safety and security of students and so opposes legislation, regulations and policies relating to issues of student gender and relationship diversity that may expose students to heightened risk of physical, psychological or socioeconomic harm.

3-7/24

Provincial Executive Council

The Association opposes legislation, regulations and policies requiring teachers to disclose information concerning a student’s gender or relationship identity or expression.

3-8/24

Provincial Executive Council

The Association supports teachers in the exercise of their professional judgment concerning how best to protect the privacy, safety and security of gender- and relationship-diverse students.

3-9/24

Provincial Executive Council

Fundamental Belief: Pension assets are the property of and are to be managed exclusively for the benefit of active plan contributors and beneficiaries.

3-10/24

Provincial Executive Council

Contributors to the Canada Pension Plan who reside, are working or have worked in Alberta should be afforded the opportunity to determine individually whether to transfer their accrued entitlement to an Alberta Pension Plan or allow it to remain with the Canada Pension Plan.

3-11/24

Provincial Executive Council

The Association supports the collective and individual right of Albertans to remain as full participants in and beneficiaries of the Canada Pension Plan.

3-12/24

Provincial Executive Council

Fundamental Belief: The Association affirms teacher professional judgment and autonomy in the selection of learning resources and management of classroom and library collections in support of students’ freedom to engage with media and material that depicts and respects the dignity and diverse lived experiences of all persons.

3-13/24

Provincial Executive Council

The Association urges school authorities, in collaboration with teachers, to develop local policy to guide teachers and school leaders in responding to book and resource challenges in a manner that defends teacher professionalism and judgment and affirms students’ freedom to read and experience a variety of media that represents and respects the dignity and diverse lived experiences of all persons.

3-14/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to amend the Guide to Education to include in its Controversial Issues statement an affirmation of the right of students to read and otherwise engage with diverse and potentially controversial material in an appropriate, safe and supportive learning environment.

approved at ARA 2024

3-15/24

*Provincial Executive Council
Parkland Teachers*

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association support diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives and programming at Alberta postsecondary institutions and call upon the Government of Alberta to refrain from penalizing financially, or by other means, those Alberta postsecondary institutions that choose to implement DEI policy and/or maintain DEI offices.

3-16/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that school authorities recall teachers displaced due to emergency situations only when there is work for teachers to do, the work can be done safely and the work can be done in compliance with public health orders and recommendations and government declarations. Reasonable notice must be provided as per employment standards legislation.

3-17/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge school authorities to work with the Alberta Library to gain provincewide licences to high-quality online resources for all Alberta classrooms.

3-18/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge school authorities to ensure teachers are permitted to use, and be addressed by, their chosen name and pronouns that align with their lived gender experience on/in all official capacities and school records, and within the everyday business of the school.

3-19/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge school authorities to ensure that all students are permitted to use, and will be addressed by, their chosen name and pronouns that align with their lived gender experience on/in all official capacities and school records, and within the everyday business of the school.

3-20/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta and school authorities to support the professional judgment of teachers when facilitating gay-straight alliance activities.

3-21/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association provide funds to increase the executive staff complement in Professional Development by one to address workload issues and enhance the professional functions of the Association.

3-23/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association provide funds to enhance professional

development and mentorship supports for beginning teachers through formalization of a beginning teachers' network.

3-24/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association provide funds to support local and school authority partnerships to provide mentorship opportunities for new school leaders.

3-25/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association provide funds to increase the executive staff complement in Teacher Employment Services by one to address workload issues and preserve Association capacity to serve members.

3-26/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association provide funds to increase the capacity of Regulatory Affairs and Membership Support to carry out membership support and information functions through the addition of a professional staff position.

3-28/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association provide funds to establish two seminars annually for local diversity, equity and human rights chairs.

3-29/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association provide funds to create a constitutional and funding framework to support the establishment and operation of diversity and equity networks.

3-30/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association provide funds to host an evening function for delegates attending the Canadian Teachers' Federation's Women's Symposium in Alberta in 2025.

3-31/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association provide funds to create capacity to support organization of and contract management for Association and specialist council events, including large-scale multimodal and virtual meetings, through the addition of a professional staff position.

3-33/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association provide funds to create an Indigenous Education Initiatives Grant program to support innovative projects with connections to community toward fulfillment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' Calls for Justice.

3-34/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that, pursuant to bylaw 9(2)(a), the fee payable by an active member employed full-time be 1,422 per annum effective 2024 09 01.

3-35/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that, pursuant to bylaw 9(2)(f), the fee payable by an associate member be \$213.30 per annum effective 2024 09 01.

3-36/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to substantively involve Association membership in curriculum development processes and policy decisions impacting high school programming and graduation requirements.

3-37/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Government of Alberta clearly communicate to school authorities that preservice teachers who have not completed their bachelor of education programs may not be employed as teachers until they have applied for certification and have received a temporary letter of authority.

3-39/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that policy 16.2.1.4 be amended to read—

"The Government of Alberta should provide targeted funding that funds growth to all institutions offering teacher preparation programs in Alberta to ensure that the annual number of graduating teachers in the province meets or exceeds the number needed to staff new teaching positions and those vacated through attrition."

3-40/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Government of Alberta expand Alberta Education's Rural Practicum Program so all preservice teachers are eligible to receive funding for field experience placements at locations greater than 100 kilometres one way from their places of residence.

3-41/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that operational decisions concerning school library and learning commons spaces, including resource selection and removal, be made by certificated teachers.

3-42/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that mandated literacy and numeracy assessments be conducted by teachers with the appropriate professional development required for the administration of the specific literacy and numeracy assessments.

3-43/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the use of smartphones and other smart devices by students in Alberta classrooms during instructional time is prohibited to promote a focused, engaging and safe learning environment, except where teacher professional judgment identifies a pedagogical purpose, including, but not limited to, enhancing digital literacy and engaging with the curriculum in interactive ways, instances where digital wellness education is being explicitly taught or applied, and accommodating properly documented student medical needs.

3-44/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association oppose the use of political party affiliations in Alberta school board elections.

3-45/24

Provincial Executive Council

BE IT RESOLVED that Alberta's students deserve better than to have the lowest-funded public education system in Canada and that, therefore, the Association urge the Government of Alberta to immediately restore per-student funding to the national average as a first step toward re-establishing this province as a leader in resourcing and supporting public education.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Assembly resolutions

4-1/24

St. Albert Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED that teachers are able to demonstrate support for safe spaces for all students and teachers through the utilization and display of Pride materials in their classrooms.

4-2/24

Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED that this Annual Representative Assembly publicly express its opposition to Alberta Education's April 26, 2024, social studies curriculum.

4-3/24

Edmonton Public Teachers

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association unequivocally condemns actions that stop or limit the ability of student protestors to gather peacefully and express themselves in accordance with their right to peaceful assembly as provided for in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

4-4/24

Rocky View

BE IT RESOLVED that the Association urge the Canadian Teachers' Federation, through Education International, to advocate with responsible international bodies to designate schools and educational institutions as sanctuary spaces, making their occupation, conversion to military purposes or destruction by military forces (including irregular military forces) a crime under international humanitarian law. ■

IF ALBERTA IS THE RICHEST PROVINCE IN CANADA, THEN WHY ARE WE SPENDING THE LEAST ON EDUCATION?*

*We bet you thought the asterisk would lead to some sort of stat that softens this embarrassing statement. Unfortunately, the truth only gets worse. The latest report on "Education Spending in Public Schools in Canada", conducted by the Fraser Institute in 2023, puts into perspective how poorly Alberta stands against the rest of our country. As much as we hate to reference the Fraser Institute, their study shows Alberta spent the least on a per-student basis for public education in all of Canada in 2020/21. To make matters worse, data shows that from 2012 to 2021 provinces like Quebec and BC have rightfully increased spending by 33% and 13%, respectively. Whereas Alberta has had a shameful decrease of 12% in spending over that same time period. When public education does not receive the proper funding, students' needs are not met. Classrooms are overfilled, diverse programs are being cut, and there is less teaching support for students with complex issues. The compounding effects of these issues have seen distraught teachers in our province leave their chosen profession altogether. It's time to right the wrongs. It's time for solutions. Tell your MLA, "Stop the excuses."

StopTheExcuses.ca



The Alberta
Teachers' Association

Council approves initial bargaining proposal

PEC POINTS

Audrey Dutka
ATA News Staff

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held May 9 to 11, 2024, at Barnett House, Edmonton.

1. Amended and approved the Central Table 2024 Initial Proposal. The Central Table Bargaining Committee will meet with the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association to exchange initial proposals and commence bargaining matters prior to the end of June 2024.
2. Approved for submission to the 2024 Annual Representative Assembly (ARA) a resolution that Alberta students deserve better than to have the lowest-funded public education system in Canada and that, therefore, the Association urge the Government of Alberta to immediately restore per-student funding to the national average as a first step toward re-establishing this province as a leader in resourcing and supporting public education.
3. Reconsidered Council's position on a local resolution, which will be communicated to ARA delegates.
4. Authorized the Association to approach Alberta Education to update and release the provincial

standards on inclusive education to reflect the current reality in Alberta schools.

5. Authorized the Association to work with the College of Alberta School Superintendents to create environments where staff feel supported and encouraged to report incidents of student and/or parent aggression with an annual report provided to school division joint health and safety committees.
6. Authorized the Association to develop a workshop to assist teachers and school leaders in addressing demeaning or hateful remarks and actions from students, staff, parents and/or the public.
7. Increased the 2023-24 capital budget to fund three security-related expenditures at Barnett House.
8. Approved Council committee and representation assignments for 2024-25.
9. Approved the Association's nominees to the Canadian Teachers' Federation Advisory Committee on the Teaching Profession, Advisory Committee on the Status of Women, Advisory Committee on Diversity and Human Rights, Advisory Committee on Indigenous Education and Advisory Committee on French as a First Language.
10. Approved the draft Association calendar for 2024-25 and provisionally approved for finalization by staff the draft Association calendars for 2025-26 and 2026-27.
11. Amended the Administrative Guidelines pertaining to specialist councils. ■

Edmonton teacher Gordon King joins ATA executive staff

Kim Clement
ATA News Staff

Gordon King is the newest addition to the ATA's executive staff team in Teacher Employment Services.

King brings more than 30 years of experience in a variety of teaching, school leadership and central office roles in the Edmonton Public School District.

Reflecting on his journey, King said he is eager to return to a role where he can directly support teachers and advocate for their needs.

"I am incredibly excited to start working on behalf of teachers," King said. "I firmly believe we have some of the most committed and talented educators in the world, and they deserve to be recognized for the incredible work that they do." ■



Gordon King, TES staff officer

Record your weekly hours

ATA Teacher Employment Services

Canada's employment insurance (EI) program provides temporary income to unemployed workers while they look for employment or upgrade their skills. For teachers, EI could come into play for those without a contract.

Substitute and contract teachers

Keeping a work log may help you qualify for regular EI benefits when your employment comes to an end. Qualifying for regular benefits under EI regulations is contingent upon the following criteria:

1. Your employment contract as a teacher has ended and you are not in receipt of an employment offer for the next school year or benefit premium contributions for the summer.
2. You have not worked for at least seven consecutive days.
3. You have the required number of insured hours accumulated in the past 52 weeks to qualify for EI.

The number of hours required depends on your teaching status and location within the province. It also depends on whether you are new to the workforce and if you've filed a previous EI claim. Check the EI website for the required number of hours in your particular

circumstance. Generally, you require approximately 600 hours of employment; however, this can change depending on your individual circumstances.

Unless you are extremely short on hours to qualify (100 or more), the Alberta Teachers' Association usually recommends applying regardless, as waiting too long to apply can be another reason your claim could be denied.

The EI program also provides benefits for specific life events such as

- illness,
- pregnancy,
- caring for a newborn or newly adopted child,
- caring for a critically ill or injured person, and
- caring for a family member who is seriously ill with a significant risk of death.

Service Canada provides the following services:

- Timely and accurate EI benefit payments and services
- Support for EI clients through each stage of their claim
- Benefit information
- Responses to enquiries
- Assistance to employers
- Claims processing and direction to appeal decisions
- Client authentication and identification
- Prevention, detection and deterrence of fraud and abuse ■

4 MORE THINGS

about Gordon

What is the greatest life lesson teaching has taught you?

In my many years of teaching, I have repeatedly been reminded that humility is an absolute requirement in this profession. From observing the amazing colleagues I have had the honour to work with, I have seen so much selflessness in their interactions with students. I regularly marvel at the skill, compassion and raw emotional support that these people display on a daily basis. I am constantly in awe of them as colleagues and as human beings.

Knowing what you know now, what advice would you give yourself in your first year as a teacher?

The advice I would give myself as a first year teacher is "don't sweat the small stuff." It is so important to develop relationships with students before worrying about outcomes and government-mandated testing. Learning is organic and it will only happen when a student feels comfortable in your care and trusts you not to do them harm. I have tremendous respect for all of the new teachers currently entering the profession in these challenging times as their commitment to the profession is unquestioned.

Favourite song to put you in a good mood?

My favourite song/band to put me in a good mood is almost anything from the Tragically Hip (although it also sometimes makes me melancholy thinking about the loss of one of Canada's most iconic musicians).

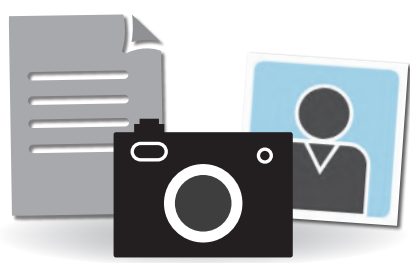
Favourite activity/hobby/project on the go at home?

My favourite thing to do at home is also something very new to me. My last teaching assignment included teaching welding, something I knew very little about and, shockingly, I fell in love with the process of fusing metal together. I have recently purchased a new welder and am currently fabricating a new aluminum swim deck for my fishing boat. (Boating/fishing is another activity I enjoy immensely).

WHAT TO DO

Apply for benefits online through the Government of Canada website: canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/ei-regular-benefit.html

Contact Teacher Employment Services at 1-800-232-7208 for assistance with questions that are not readily available on the Government of Canada website.

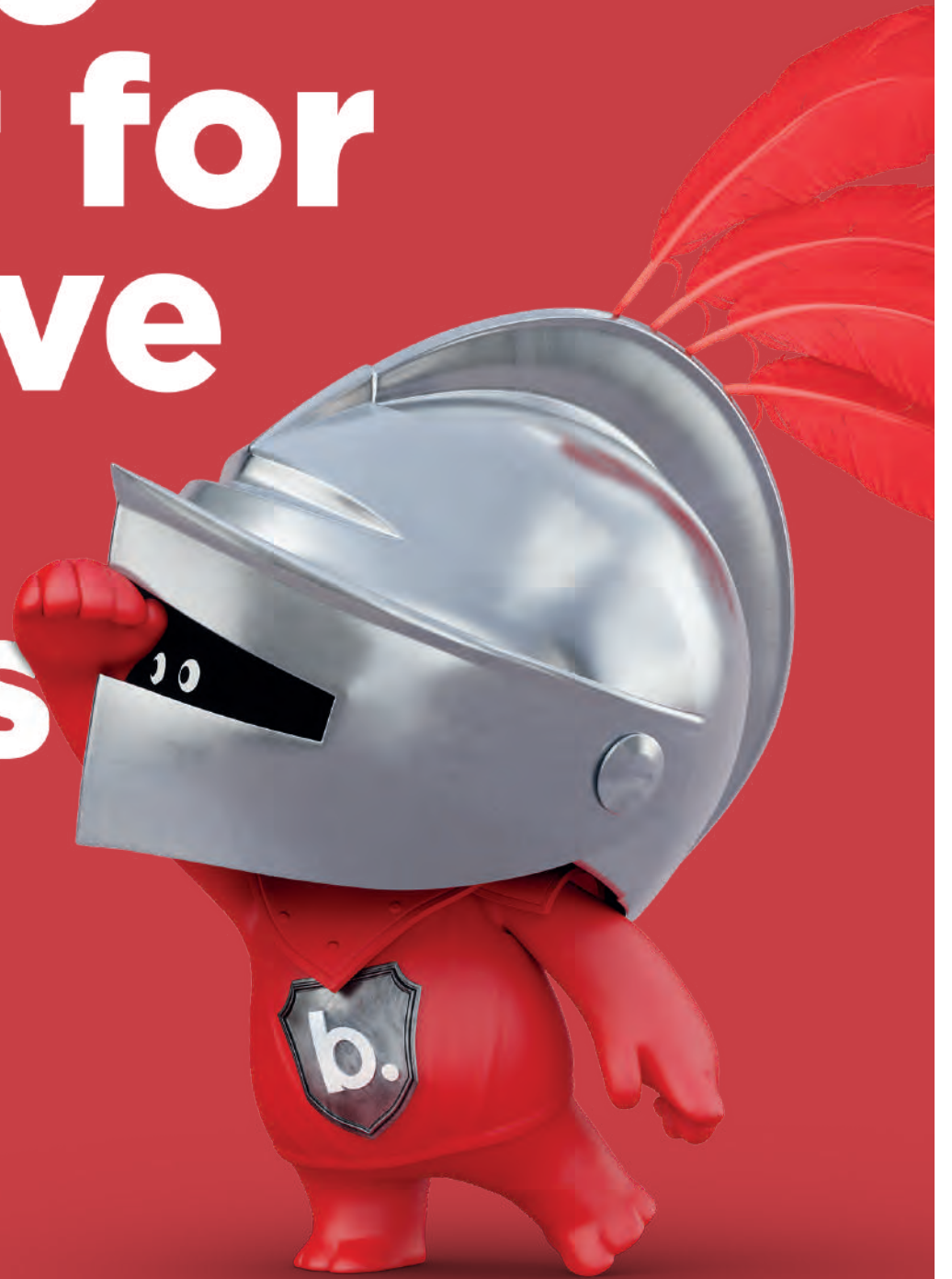


STORIES AND PHOTOS WANTED

If something newsworthy is going on in your school, district or local, please let us know. We will also consider articles, photos and cartoons. Please email tips and submissions to managing editor Cory Hare: cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

Look no further for exclusive group savings

As an ATA member, you can receive exclusive home and car insurance savings and enhanced coverages.



belairdirect.
car and home insurance

Certain conditions, eligibility requirements, limitations and exclusions apply to all offers. Visit belairdirect.com for more details. Offers may change without notice. We offer car insurance and home insurance in Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island and home insurance only in British Columbia. © 2023, Belair Insurance Company Inc. All rights reserved.

ATA supports new funding for youth mental health

Lindsay Yakimyshyn
ATA News Staff

The ATA is applauding the provincial government for stepping up to promote student mental health.

On May 10, the government announced it would provide \$148 million to expand a partnership with non-profit agency CASA Mental Health, which has been delivering mental health programs in care facilities for more than three decades. Of the new funds, \$40 million is earmarked for a relatively new program – CASA Classrooms – which places mental health professionals in individual schools.

The first two CASA classrooms opened in Gibbons and Sturgeon County in 2023. There are now eight CASA classrooms operating in Alberta schools and 12 more slated to open by early 2025. The announced funding boost is expected to expand the program to up to 60 classrooms by 2026.

“Supporting the mental health and well-being of children and youth

is a priority for our government,” said Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaidis. “We look forward to seeing CASA Mental Health continue to make a positive impact in Alberta’s education system.”

The partnership will bring services closer to children and families, said CASA Mental Health CEO Bonnie Blakley.

“The goal is to provide mental health services earlier to more children and youth to prevent treatment in hospitals and empower them to thrive,” she said.

Wrap-around program

CASA Classrooms are about meeting students where they’re at, Blakley said. A teacher, support staff and a team of mental health professionals work together to provide services such as therapy, psychiatric care, medication and schooling. The program also provides students and families appropriate tools and services to help them transition back to their regular school and classroom.

“From the very beginning, 40 years

ago, the mantra of CASA has always been that we’re child-centred and family inclusive and we need to wrap around the whole family,” Blakley said.

The in-school classrooms may not be the right option for all students, but they can help improve outcomes for many, Blakley said.

“We need to be aware of the severity of needs and keep everyone safe,” she said. “Everyone is doing their best to support these kids.”

Blakley added that providing a team of medical clinicians to address complex student needs ultimately gives teachers space to do what they do best.

“If you’re a teacher, a school division or a superintendent, you’re trying to educate kids and meanwhile they’re struggling with health-related issues ... our goal is to be able to provide that health piece while teachers get to teach,” Blakley said.

Welcome news

ATA president Jason Schilling welcomed the news of more funding for CASA Classrooms.

“I’m glad to see that the government is putting some money toward the mental health needs of our students, especially students who have really complex mental health needs, so that they can be successful in schools,” Schilling said. “It’s good the government is recognizing there’s a need and then putting money toward that need.”

While lauding the additional funding for CASA Classrooms – and that it is coming through the ministry of Mental Health and Addiction rather than drawing on schools’ instructional grants – Schilling hopes the funds will be sustainable to ensure Alberta’s children and youth are supported long term. He also hopes for supports for those who cannot wait until the new classrooms are ready in 2026.

“We have students and families with very specific needs right now,” Schilling said. “We need to find ways to make sure all students, those with immediate needs and those who need help in the future, are supported.” ■



The ATA has a variety of Indigenous resources available for download from its website.

Walking together

Learn about Indigenous history and perspectives with ATA resources and programs

ATA News Staff

June is National Indigenous History Month in Canada, with June 21 marking National Indigenous Peoples Day. This is an opportunity to reflect on the rich history, cultures and experiences of the Indigenous peoples who lived on this land and to carry our learnings into the fall, when the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is held – and beyond.

With many teachers and school leaders strengthening their foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit as part of the Professional Practice Standards, access to authentic, up-to-date and relevant resources is essential. To support members in their individual and collective learning, the ATA offers a range of online resources and in-person learning options related to Indigenous education.

Check out the ATA’s offerings available for you and your classroom:

For your reference

- Land acknowledgement resources, including a pronunciation guide video, posters and bookmarks
- *The Stepping Stones* series – concise overviews of such topics as Elder protocol, First Nations traditional plants and uses, the forced relocation of Indigenous peoples in Canada and terminology
- *Honouring the Voices of Indigenous Teachers and School Leaders in Alberta School Communities* – a report on the experiences of Indigenous teachers,

school leaders and central office leaders in Alberta’s public education system

For your deeper learning

- New workshops and presentations:
 - More Than Words: The Significance of Land Acknowledgements on the Journey of Truth and Reconciliation
 - *The Indian Act* – Historical and Contemporary Realities
 - Indigenous Matriarchy – Balance Through Truth, Justice and Reconciliation
 - Engaging in Numeracy and Connections Through First Nations, Métis and Inuit Traditional Games

For the classroom

- *Strengthening the Heartbeat of Reconciliation: Advancing Truth and Reconciliation in Classrooms and Schools*
- *Truth & Reconciliation Books for the Classroom* – literature recommendations for kindergarten to Grade 12 (and beyond)
- *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada* (available to borrow from the Association at no cost) ■

Access online resources or book an Indigenous education presentation or workshop here:



June is Pride month

ATA offers resources in support of sexual and gender minority students and teachers

ATA News Staff

Pride Month is observed in Canada each June, with Pride events and celebrations carrying into the summer months. The festivities serve as a reminder of the importance of creating inclusive and safe spaces for our students – and our colleagues.

To celebrate Pride and to promote safe spaces throughout the year, locals, subgroups and individual members can order Safe Space posters (bilingual), pronoun stickers and Pride materials.



The ATA also provides learning materials and workshops on fostering safe learning and working spaces for sexual and gender minorities.

Guides and resources

- *Breaking the Silence: A Guide for Sexual and Gender Minority Teachers in Alberta*
- *GSAs and QSAs in Alberta Schools: A Guide for Teachers*

- Establishing a Local Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee
- PRISM: Toolkit for Safe and Caring Discussions About Sexual and Gender Minorities

All available online.

Workshop

- PRISM – Professionals Respecting Individual Sexual and Gender Minorities
- For information on booking this workshop, contact pdworkshops@ata.ab.ca.

Further, teachers and school leaders who are part of a sexual and gender diverse community – or who are allies of this community – can also connect with colleagues through their local gay-straight alliances (GSAs), where available, or through the provincial ATAGSA. These groups aim to create a safe and welcoming space for members to build relationships, share their experiences and deepen their knowledge.

More information on supports offered by the ATA is available by emailing dehr@ata.ab.ca. ■

Calling all ATA members!

You are invited to the

ATAGSA

Alberta Teachers' Association Gay-Straight Alliance

MONTHLY MEETINGS

The Alberta Teachers' Association

Subscribe to updates by emailing atagsa@ata.ab.ca.

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR RETIREMENT!



ARTA can help.

If you are retiring this year, it is important to have a financial plan in place so you can enjoy the best part of your life.

The Alberta Retired Teachers' Association can help by sharing valuable resources on **pensions, TFSAs, estate planning, and more.**

Visit our website to get started, and build confidence in your finances as you approach retirement.

bit.ly/RetirementWellness 

arta.net



BRAIDING TOGETHER '24

Pulitzer Prize Journalist:
 Connie Walker
 Cadmus Delorme
 Archbishop Bolen
 Wanda First Rider
 Fr. Cristino Bouvette
 & more...

'IN TWO CANOES'
 October 18-19
 @ Banff Centre


 www.braidingtogether.ca 




Did you know...

- We have meeting and banquet space available at Barnett House for corporate and private functions?
- We host business events, seminars, conventions, training sessions, AGM's, weddings, celebrations of life, Christmas parties and other private functions?
- We provide in-house catering to all types of events?

Please email meetingrooms@ata.ab.ca for more information or to book your event or special occasion.



 The Alberta Teachers' Association



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
CONTINUING EDUCATION

Grow your potential

Learn the skills to be a principal or superintendent. Earn your Leadership Quality Standard Certification online. For details visit conted.ucalgary.ca/abed



 conted.ucalgary.ca/abed



DIGITAL NEWS

The ATA News is available online.

For the latest issue, visit www.teachers.ab.ca/news. Subscribe to receive an email when a new issue is available. <http://bit.ly/ATAeNews>

<h2>ADVERTISING IN ATANEWS</h2>	<p>For advertising information, contact Trevor Battye at Trevor Battye Advertising Sales 1-778-773-9397 trevor@tbasales.ca</p>	<p>Next deadline Thursday, May 30, 2024, 4 p.m. (Publication date June 11, 2024) Advertisers are encouraged to book early – space is limited.</p>	<p>Circulation: 38,000 We accept Visa, Mastercard, cash or cheque.</p>
---------------------------------	---	---	--

Alberta teachers chosen for life-changing expeditions

National Geographic fellowship program spreads global awareness through teacher engagement

Mark Milne
ATA News Staff

Two Alberta teachers have caught the attention of National Geographic.

Morinville's Samantha Ur and Calgary's Tyler Dixon will participate in a prestigious two-year teacher fellowship that will take them on a life-changing international expedition to gain field experience that they will then bring back to their colleagues and students.

"This is an amazing opportunity, and I'm incredibly honoured and lucky," Ur said.

"It's a unique hands-on experience for professional development," agreed Dixon.

The Grosvenor Teacher Fellowship (GTF) is a collaboration between the National Geographic Society and Lindblad Expeditions. The program selects exemplary teachers from throughout North America to participate in three-week expeditions to one of many global destinations, then transfer their onboard experiences into transformative lessons and engagement for students and colleagues. Of the 35 teachers selected this year, only four are from Canada.

Dixon is a phys. ed. and outdoor education teacher at West Ridge school in Calgary, while Ur teaches Grade 5/6 science and outdoor education at Four Winds School in Morinville. Both are also members of the ATA's Global, Environmental and Outdoor Education Council (GEOEC).



Alberta teachers Samantha Ur and Tyler Dixon have been selected for a prestigious National Geographic fellowship program.

Dixon is headed to Antarctica while Ur chose Costa Rica. Both teachers will head to their designated locations aboard National Geographic vessels in the late fall and early winter of 2024. They'll be joined onboard by society naturalists, oceanographers and other expeditionists.

"I chose Costa Rica and Panama because of how biologically diverse and how completely different they are from here in Alberta," Ur said. "I really wanted to go so I could get those experiences. I could get stories

about how the plant and animals have learned to survive in such a crowded environment."

Dixon says he's excited to learn about the wildlife that exists in our world's southernmost regions.

"I have a real, real strong passion for outdoor education and land-based learning," he said. "Stepping out of your comfort zone, which is what I'm definitely going to be doing, and experiencing it firsthand is very valuable."

Empowering young people

Throughout the two-year fellowship, National Geographic asks that the fellows submit a number of professional development deliverables, such as goal setting, outreach and classroom activity plans, surveys and outreach presentations. The fellows help to equip the next generation with geographic knowledge and global awareness, states the program's website.

"Grosvenor Teacher fellows are an integral part of the National Geographic community, working to further young people's understanding of the planet and empower them to generate solutions and take action for a healthier and more sustainable future," the website states.

Ur and Dixon have just returned from Washington, where they met with National Geographic and Lindblad Expeditions to discuss their fellowships. They also met with alumni from past fellowships who shared their advice on what to expect.

"It's going to be absolutely inspiring beyond belief," said Ur. "Being able to connect with those other teachers and hearing about their experiences when I was in Washington was absolutely life changing."

Dixon said the application process was quite comprehensive, incorporating references, a video component and an essay.

"I'm honoured to be chosen," said Dixon. "I can't wait to bring it back and start sharing what I've learned not only with my students, but also with the education community that I'm a part of here in this province."

Ur shares that sentiment.

"We have the power to change the future of our students," Ur said. "I am so very excited to bring this back, not only to my students, but to teachers provincewide."

More information on the Grosvenor Teacher Fellowship is available at this QR code.



Spring issue of
the ATA Magazine
now available in
schools.



IN THIS ISSUE:

Feature

The loud and the quiet...and everyone in between

Extroverts and introverts bring different strengths to our classrooms and schools

Unsung Hero

Marie-Louise Brugeyroux: teacher extraordinaire

Wellness

Revitalize yourself with a summer wellness reset

Technology

Tools are available to help students who struggle with English

Diversity

We are all a complex combination of privilege and marginalization

In Profile

Lorraine Ridsdale shows her students where hard work can lead

Research Insights

Reimagining the profession: Teachers share their views on AI

Most Memorable Lesson

Choosing uncertainty over routine leads to memorable adventure

Spring issue of the ATA Magazine now available in schools.

Digital content available at teachers.ab.ca

TALENT

May 28, 2024 | Volume 58, Number 14



with utmost courtesy

A longstanding tradition at the Annual Representative Assembly (ARA), courtesy motions are brief departures from normal business that are most often employed to recognize long-serving teacher delegates who are stepping down from executive roles or retiring from teaching.



ARA 2024 was the last for John Murphy, who has stepped down from the executive of Elk Island Local No. 38 after serving in several roles for more than 15 years.



Natalie Townsend (second from left) retired from teaching last year and is now stepping down as president of Palliser Local No. 19. Townsend taught for 27 years and was local president for seven.



Wayne Lavold accepts congratulations from Heather Quinn, president of Edmonton Public Local No. 37. Lavold has retired after 28 years in the classroom. ARA 2024 was his 18th.



Shannon Dube (centre) is stepping down as president of Fort McMurray Local No. 48 after seven years. Also pictured are fellow local members Nadine Armbruster (left) and Kathy Vladicka.



Ron Zacharko is stepping down as president of Edmonton Catholic Teachers Local No. 54. Presenting the gift bag is local vice-president Kimberley Clarke.