

2024

gotcha!



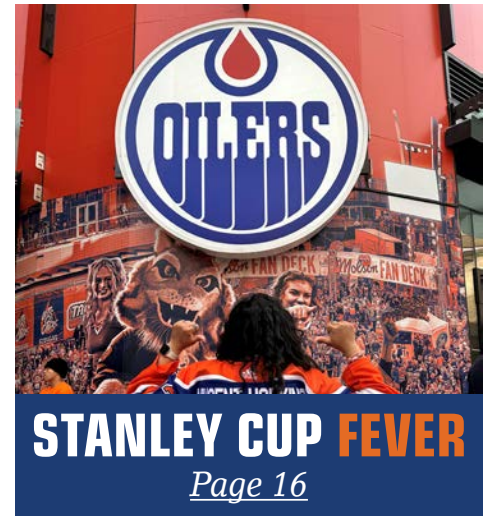
PHOTO CONTEST

Winners announced on pages 8-9.

# ATA NEWS

June 11, 2024 | Volume 58, Number 15

News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association



CORY HARE

In recognition that June is Pride Month, a new flag has been installed on the side of the parkade at ATA headquarters in Edmonton. The flag belongs to Edmonton Public Teachers' Local No. 37. Vandals destroyed the previous flag last fall during an anti-2SLGBTQ+ protest. A police investigation was launched; there have been no arrests.



## Funding failures

Even school board officials are speaking out about budget constraints.

Read Jonathan Teghtmeyer's editorial on [page 2](#).



## Off Script

Summer is for self-care.

See [page 4](#).



## Viewpoints

Government is following the playbook for backsliding democracy.

See [page 3](#).



## Cross-country snapshot

Teachers across Canada united in calls for better education funding

See story on [page 4](#).



## Financial trouble

Teacher layoffs on the horizon as boards struggle with more students and less money.

See story on [page 5](#).



## Digital delay

AB Ed assessment tool to be piloted for one more year.

See story on [page 7](#).

## School boards speak out on funding failures



### EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer  
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Don't bite the hand that feeds you. My dog Olive gets this. And, typically, so do school boards.

Sometimes they get it too well. In my years of watching education, I can tell you it is quite rare for many school boards to speak out about funding levels — even when they should.

However, as school boards prepare their budgets for September 2024, we are hearing them use some stronger-than-usual language.

"This level of funding provided by the province falls substantially short of meeting the needs of our students," said Calgary Catholic board chair Shannon Cook in a recent news conference.

A growing number of school boards in the two metropolitan areas are calling out the Weighted Moving Average

(WMA) for leaving kids behind, and the boards are putting numbers to it.

"Due to the weighted moving average formula (WMA), our funding lags our growth substantially," said Edmonton Catholic trustee Terry Harris to CTV News. "This current year, the calculation shows we're educating over 2,000 students who are unfunded."

"Not underfunded — unfunded."

which amounts to an average of 2,200 unfunded students each year.

"Something needs to change," EPSB superintendent Darrel Robertson said to CBC News. "I think that we can all agree that we must prioritize the future of children across the province."

"I still have massive fears that if we keep getting told we receive less, we won't be able to meet the needs

release. "We don't foresee relief in this, when we project what our enrolments are going to be coming in the next few years."

I think the resolve of school boards to speak out more on the underfunding of public education is a testament to how bad things have gotten in schools.

After years of underfunding, we can't wait any longer for the government to start listening to teachers and trustees and begin funding public education better.

I'll give the last words to Laura Hack. "Students deserve better, families deserve better and Calgarians deserve to be part of this Alberta advantage now."

#### A personal note

This will be my last ATA News editorial for a little while. Rest assured that while my absence two years ago was health related, this one is not. I am taking an educational leave and hitting the books for a bit. I look forward to talking to you again real soon.

Have a great summer. Enjoy the rest. ■

*"If we don't receive relief ASAP, we will hit a wall and be in crisis mode."*

Laura Hack, Calgary Public chair

Calgary Catholic says 1,500 students will be unfunded next year because of the WMA. For Edmonton Public, that number is 4,000.

The Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB) recently published a report that shows, as a result of the WMA, the funding shortfall over the past 5 years has totaled \$118.5 million,

of all who come to us," said Calgary Public chair Laura Hack during budget debate.

"If we don't receive relief ASAP, we will hit a wall and be in crisis mode."

Even some smaller and rural boards are starting to speak out.

"It's a difficult time," Aspen View chair Candyce Nikipelo said in a news

## Diversity initiative cause for excitement



### Q & A

Dennis Theobald  
ATA Executive Secretary

**Question:** I've heard about the Diversity Equity Network (DEN) initiative approved by the Annual Representative Assembly. Where do I sign up?

**Answer:** Whoa there, Tiger! We aren't quite ready yet, but we are on the way.

The 2024 Annual Representative Assembly approved funding for the establishment of Diversity Equity Networks as part of a larger diversity initiative. In my 24 years of attending ARA, I am hard-pressed to recall an initiative that was greeted with such enthusiasm.

DENs are modeled on Association specialist councils, but instead of bringing together teachers based on their teaching specialties, DENs will provide a structure where teachers who identify as members of a diverse group could come together to dialogue, support each other, and organize relevant events and services. They will be self-defining and self-organizing, with a focus on providing programming to members who might be scattered across the province.

A good example of a prototype DEN is the Alberta Teachers' Association's Gender and Sexuality Alliance (ATAGSA), which was established

by gender- and relationship-diverse teachers and has provided opportunities for its members, including 2SLGBTQIA+ teachers and their allies, to meet monthly in a safe virtual space to share their stories, resources, supports and to build connections and community. The ATAGSA assists teachers wanting to establish local GSAs, promotes understanding of how human rights, employment and labour law impact gender- and relationship-diverse teachers and students, and promotes dialogue around pressing issues affecting the community.

We anticipate that DENs will eventually be formed around a wide variety of potential identities and are excited by the potential of this new approach to provide service to members and support the diversity of our members.

But we have some work to do first.

Over the next few months, Association staff will develop draft terms of reference and processes for establishing and operating DENs. We will develop a funding model that will be flexible and sufficient to support DEN activities while providing for necessary accountability. All this work will need to be informed by input from the Association's Diversity Equity and Human Rights (DEHR) Committee and, ultimately, approved by Provincial Executive Council.

All of this work might seem like unnecessary bureaucracy, but we are establishing an entirely new mechanism for serving members. Getting the details right, or at least as close to right as we

can, is important for the success and sustainability of the program.

I am anticipating that we will be ready to launch around January 2025. You can expect to see a communications campaign to raise member awareness of the program.

Diversity Equity Networks are part of a larger diversity initiative that will include the following:

- **Restructuring the Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee of Provincial Executive Council**

The role and membership of the DEHR committee will be expanded to provide representation, coordination and oversight of DENs. The revamped committee will continue to provide policy advice to Provincial Executive Council concerning general diversity, equity and inclusion issues, liaise with local DEHR Committees and organize budgeted events such as the DEHR Conference.

- **Expanding diversity responsive initiatives within existing Association programs**

Diversity training, accommodations to support diversity, and celebrations of religious, cultural and racial identity are being undertaken by and for staff of the Association, which will be the subject of a diversity audit to be carried out over the course of the year. A program for local DEHR chairs at summer conference will be offered in alternate years. Plans are being developed to create within

the Association Instructors Corps a cohort of racialized teachers to offer focused professional development relating to the experience of race in the profession and the classroom. Policy and program initiatives will be considered through the lens of diversity as they are being developed and delivered.

- **Creating a new Social Justice and Equity (SJE) sub-program area within the Professional Development program area**

The creation of this new sub-program area will facilitate the activities of the DENs, support the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, and coordinate diversity initiatives.

- **Maintaining the Indigenous Education and Women in Leadership Committees of PEC and their associated programming**

Our established Indigenous Education and Women in Leadership Committees will continue to do their work. Both these committees and the programming they support provide extraordinary value to teachers and have provided insights that will inform other initiatives.

As you can see, there is a great deal that needs to be done, but this is important and complex work that deserves to be done well. ■

Questions for consideration in this column are welcome. Please address them to Dennis Theobald at [dennis.theobald@ata.ab.ca](mailto:dennis.theobald@ata.ab.ca).



# UCP bills follow playbook for backsliding democracy



## VIEWPOINTS

Elizabeth Smythe  
Special to the ATA News

This spring, I have been teaching a course on Canadian democracy. The goal was to look at Canada through a democratic lens within the context of a world where, according to every index and study, the number of democracies is declining and even well-established ones are in trouble.

These trends have spawned a decade of research by political scientists and historians on how and why democracies decay. Calling the phenomenon “democratic backsliding”, these studies have titles like “How Democracies Die” and “Democracy Erodes from Above.”

They chronicle the ways in which, despite elections, power and authority is increasingly concentrated in an executive that gradually becomes unaccountable. The most common path to this scholars call “executive aggrandizement.”

In the context of populism and political polarization, a group – often with a strong leader – claims they embody the political will of “the people” (us) and thus they must target those who threaten or thwart that will through strong, unchecked authority. The target (them) is often “the elite,” the “establishment” and their experts or allies. In some cases, migrants, religious or ethnic minorities may be targeted.

The methods of consolidating power in the hands of the executive are so consistent that many scholars provide a checklist of measures used to undermine institutions that check or limit their power.

These include manipulating or undermining confidence in election processes, marginalizing or weakening elected legislatures, eroding the independence of courts and the rule of law, the strategic use of sham referendums to legitimize actions, weakening or disbanding any independent institutions that provide a check on executive power, and silencing or discrediting civil society groups as either foreign agents or allies of the establishment. This backsliding is often complex and incremental, a sort of slow drip, drip.

Unfortunately, the class saw evidence that Canada, especially at the provincial level, is seeing democratic backsliding in Quebec, Ontario and Alberta. In the case of Alberta, it began with the UCP government of Jason Kenney and the rhetoric around the conspiracy to strangle the Alberta fossil-fuel-based economy

by a number of environmental groups who were foreign-funded agents in cahoots with the Trudeau government in Ottawa. The drip, drip became a torrent, however, under the current UCP government of Danielle Smith.

In the past two years, we have seen a plethora of bills designed to achieve “executive aggrandizement” beginning with the initial draft of Bill 1, the Alberta Sovereignty within a United Canada Act. Despite the Orwellian name, the act would protect Alberta from federal laws and policies that are deemed to be unconstitutional or harmful to Albertans or

“ In the context of populism and political polarization, a group ... claims they embody the political will of “the people” ... and thus they must target those who threaten or thwart that will through strong, unchecked authority. ”

economic prosperity by requiring municipalities, school boards and police to not enforce federal laws.

On second reading in December 2022, only after there was an outcry on the part of the Opposition, many legal experts and the public, did the government propose an amendment to remove provisions in the bill that would have granted the cabinet unilateral powers to change laws or enact measures without going to the legislature. The premier announced the changes, claiming the bill was “never supposed to give cabinet such sweeping authority.” Really? Was this a mistake or a testing of the waters?

Recently, the government has introduced two more bills that raise the spectre of more democratic backsliding. In April, the government tabled Bill 18, which would require municipalities, universities,

school boards and other provincial entities to receive approval from the province before signing an agreement with the federal government.

It was designed to limit their autonomy. The bill included research grants awarded to academics by independent research councils (though their funding is federal) through a peer-reviewed process. The intent is to vet such research according to the UCP’s conservative ideology.

Not only is it a clear, intended violation of academic freedom – and possibly free speech – it will destroy research at Alberta universities. The response from the presidents of the two largest universities has been tepid at best, seeking further talks and pleading the case to be exempted. Student and faculty associations have taken a much stronger stand in demanding the bill be withdrawn.

Democratic backsliding, however, is at its most blatant in Bill 20, which gives the cabinet more discretion to remove elected municipal councillors from office, and forcing councils to repeal bylaws the province objects to. It also institutes a pilot project in Edmonton and Calgary to enable parties to run in elections, which many see as a stalking horse for Take Back Alberta.

The bill also raises suspicion and conspiracy theories by banning the electronic tabulation of votes. It adds a smidge of voter suppression to boot by ending vouching. Edmonton city council unanimously, and quite rightly, called it an attack on democracy.

Finally, the recent refusal to renew the contract of the ethics commissioner in revenge for her finding the premier in violation of conflict-of-interest laws and acting to interfere with justice in a way that posed “a threat to democracy” and replacing her – after an hour of debate – with a partisan former UCP candidate and donor is classic executive aggrandizement strategy.

While many of my students felt dismay in seeing the playbook of democratic backsliding laid out before them, I encouraged them and all of us to use our civil liberties – while we still have them – to vote, speak out, organize, protest and convey loudly to the government our opposition to these anti-democratic measures.

Such actions stopped the gratuitous use of the notwithstanding clause to strip teachers of their bargaining rights in Ontario. We must also try to find those pockets of groups within the UCP who still believe in democracy and urge them to challenge democratic backsliding within their party under its current leadership. ■

Elizabeth Smythe is professor emerita, Concordia University of Edmonton.



## SUMMER THOUGHT



“ If you’re not barefoot, you’re overdressed. ”

## Off Script

with ATA President Jason Schilling



I welcome your comments.  
Contact me at  
jason.schilling@ata.ab.ca.

# Take care of yourself this summer

In 1986, Ferris Bueller said, “life moves pretty fast. If you don’t stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it.” As a then 16-year-old, I didn’t fully appreciate the multi-level meaning of those musings. However, as a much older Gen Xer, I would have to say I can relate extremely well to those words and the sentiment that goes along with them. As I was looking to write my last Off Script for this school year, I was planning to address the multitude of issues we have been facing. But really, it is nothing you do not already know, as you live it daily.

Instead, I want to write about something different, though it is on a topic that we hear about all the time: teacher wellness. Before you roll your eyes and stop reading, hear me out. The irony is not lost on me when school boards or the minister make comments

about the importance of teacher wellness. If it was so important to them, then things would be coming off teachers’ plates. Classroom conditions would improve. Every student would be funded.

Given that, Ferris was right. Life does move pretty fast. Over the last several weeks, I have had several reminders about the importance of health, friends and family. We tend to take for granted the time we have with each other, and it becomes easier for us to put interactions with loved ones off to another day. As busy as our lives are, we need to stop moving and look around.

My wish for you as we approach summer holidays can also be captured in another less popular, yet equally profound Ferris quote: “The question isn’t ‘what are we going to do,’ the question is ‘what aren’t we going to do?’”

So, what are we not going to do this summer? Plain and simple: work. As much as we love our profession and want what is best for our students, it means nothing if we ignore the importance of taking care of ourselves.

Colleagues, this summer, we all must take time for ourselves. I would go so far as to say be selfish about it. Set time aside for family, friends, quiet walks, patios, sunshine and maybe a good book that has nothing to do with professional development. As teachers and school leaders, you give so much to everyone else; now it’s time to focus on you. Be ruthless about your summer down time. You earned it.

We know next year will be challenging, and we will all need to be at our very best. So until then, close that laptop, put the phone on silent and pull a Bueller. ■



ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Expansion of the ATA’s gold medal program will see more recent education grads rewarded for their academic excellence.

## ATA expands gold medal program

ATA News Staff

A long-standing ATA award program that recognizes outstanding new education graduates will expand from four recipients to 13 beginning next year.

The Gold Medals in Education are currently awarded to new graduates of four institutions: the University of Alberta, Campus Saint-Jean, University of Calgary and University of Lethbridge. Next year the program will also include graduates of nine other Alberta-based institutions.

The program awards graduating bachelor of education students who have demonstrated the highest overall general proficiency in their coursework and field experience programs.

“These awards recognize the talent of up-and-coming leaders in education and reinforce the ATA’s public commitment to maintaining high standards of excellence in the profession,” said ATA president Jason Schilling.

Another new addition to the program is a \$2,000 cash award for each recipient. Previously, award winners received only a gold medal. In order to finance

this change, the program is switching from solid gold medals to gold plated.

Originating in 1951, the program was due for an update, Schilling said.

“These changes are modernizing this program and enabling us to recognize excellent graduates from all across the province rather than just select institutions,” Schilling said. ■

### ATA Gold Medals in Education

#### Currently awarded to

- Campus Saint-Jean
- University of Alberta
- University of Calgary
- University of Lethbridge

#### Expanding to

- Ambrose University
- Concordia University of Edmonton
- Keyano College
- The King’s University
- Medicine Hat College
- Mount Royal University
- Red Deer Polytechnic
- Northwestern Polytechnic
- St. Mary’s University

## Funding at issue for teachers across Canada

Kim Clement  
ATA News Staff

### Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan teachers are beginning a broad-scale work-to-rule campaign after negotiations have, once again, reached an impasse. Last month, teachers have rejected a second offer from the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation (STF) and the Government-Trustee Bargaining Committee.

The three-year tentative agreement proposed an additional \$18 million per year to address classroom complexity and salary increases totalling eight per cent over three years. However, in a vote on May 29 and 30, 55 per cent of teachers voted against the agreement.

“The result of this vote is a message to the government and the Saskatchewan School Boards Association that teachers need to see real changes to classroom complexity and compensation,” said STF president Samantha Becotte.

The first offer, voted down by 90 per cent of teachers on May 8 and 9, led to resumed negotiations and the tentative agreement announced on May 17. Despite the agreement’s provisions for additional classroom complexity funding and increased transparency, teachers felt their priorities were not adequately addressed.

“The STF executive and I will do whatever it takes, for as long as it takes, to get a deal done with the support of our collective to strengthen our profession and public education for current and future students,” Becotte said.

### Ontario

Bargaining for the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) has concluded with an arbitrated settlement for the 2022–2026 collective agreement.

Wage gains include an 11.73 per cent increase for teachers and occasional teachers and a \$1 per hour annual boost for education workers. An additional 7.41 per cent addresses wage freezes from Bill 124 legislation.

OSSTF president Karen Littlewood stated, “Overall, this agreement is unquestionably a win for us — and a resounding indictment of the Ford government’s education policy.

Meanwhile, an arbitration decision

has granted Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario members, including occasional teachers, an 11.73 per cent salary increase over four years, retroactive to 2022, surpassing the government’s proposed 1.25 per cent increase.

### Nova Scotia

On May 22, Nova Scotia’s public school teachers ratified a new contract with the province, with 91 per cent of teachers voting 80.5 per cent in favor. The agreement includes an 11.47 per cent salary increase over three years, retroactive to August 1, 2023, and a 12 per cent raise for substitute teachers. It addresses working conditions, classroom conditions and the teacher retention crisis. It also adds more counselors to schools.

“This agreement contains several important gains for teachers ... it is a fair agreement that serves as a solid steppingstone to future progress,” said Nova Scotia Teachers’ Union president Ryan Lutes.

“This would not have been possible without the strength and solidarity members demonstrated when they provided the bargaining team with an overwhelming strike mandate earlier this spring.”

### What does this mean for Alberta?

The ATA’s chief negotiator, Sean Brown, says that teachers nationwide are united against underfunding, advocating for improved conditions and proper funding to address student growth.

“While some jurisdictions have existing class size/complexity provisions in their respective collective agreements, not all do. The common thread is teachers fighting to improve their working conditions because they know these are also students’ learning conditions.”

Brown says that Alberta teachers have previously accepted stagnant wages during economic challenges, yet today’s teaching demands, which encompass diverse student needs, require salaries that are more appropriate with the expectations.

“Teachers had done their part in past rounds when it came to accepting increases below inflation or agreeing to take zeros when provincial coffers were challenged.” ■

# School boards facing budget crunch set to lay off teachers

Jonathan Teghtmeyer  
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Almost one-third of Alberta school boards are expecting to reduce teaching positions in September, despite an overall 4.4 per cent increase to education in the provincial budget. As Alberta school divisions pass budgets for the next school year, even the boards that are hiring teachers expect class sizes will grow.

Red Deer Catholic Schools (RDCSD) is set to cut 16 per cent of its teaching staff, equivalent to 90.6 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. The board will run a \$4.2 million deficit, despite an increase in provincial funding of just over \$2 million, using reserves to cover the deficit. They say their reserves will now be drained to the minimum allowable level set by the province.

"Given the current funding framework and inflationary pressures, we are no longer able to maintain the types of support that have historically been provided in their current form and focus, particularly if they are outside our instructional mandate," says RDCSD Board chair Murray Hollman.

Sturgeon Public Schools is expecting a one per cent increase in enrolment despite seeing their funding drop by 0.8 per cent next year. Sturgeon is expecting to layoff 43 of its 344 FTE teachers. Meanwhile, Medicine Hat Public School Division (MHPSD) is receiving about a million dollars less in provincial funding compared to last school year. The reduction is largely because funding for the shared Coulee Collegiate school will now be routed through another school division, but they are still facing a tight budget, expecting to reduce staff FTEs by 11.8 teachers.

"With no increase in per-student instruction grants, reductions to other grants and rising financial pressures, we have less funding per student next year than this. This makes it challenging to keep up with increasing operational costs," said Catherine Wilson, MHPSD Board Chair.

## Larger growing school boards also face budget challenges

The Edmonton Public School Board will be taking \$16.5 million from reserves to balance their budget. They say they are only able to create 4 new teaching positions at a time when 6,000 students are being added.

"We really do need a solution to a funding formula into the future because we are running out of



ISTOCK

School boards around the province report feeling the squeeze of funding shortfalls.

surplus to sort of smooth over the bumps," said EPSB superintendent Darrel Robertson.

Provincial grant rates will remain static for the next school year, but school divisions are facing rising costs. Numerous school boards have cited utilities, insurance and employee benefits as some of the biggest drivers.

ATA president Jason Schilling says there is no excuse for these cuts.

"This is a wealthy, growing province," Schilling said. "Year after year after year, school board funding has failed to keep up with inflation and enrolment growth and, as a result, we now have the lowest per-pupil spending on education in all of Canada."

Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaides said Alberta's population grew by 200,000 people last year, representing the largest annual increase in decades.

"We are seeing a record number of families move to the province, because they want to be part of the Alberta Advantage," said Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaides in a written statement to the ATA News. "We're stepping up and investing more in education to help accommodate this growth. Over the next three years, we have planned to invest more than \$1.2 billion to address classroom complexity, which will go directly to hiring 3,000 more teachers and other educational staff."

School jurisdiction funding profiles from Alberta Education show that 13 school divisions are facing a funding cut for next school year, while 10 more will receive small increases of under one per cent. Across the province, board funding will increase \$250 million (3.4 per cent) while enrolment is projected to increase 3.6 per cent.

Calgary Catholic School Division (CCSD) is expecting an increase in enrolment of more than 2,000 students (3.3 per cent), but says the province's Weighted Moving Average (WMA) will leave 1,562 students unfunded.

"The level of funding provided by the province falls substantially short of meeting the needs of our students," says CCSD Board chair Shannon Cook.

Edmonton Catholic also reports around 2,000 students unfunded for next year due to the WMA.

"The Weighted Moving Average has proven disastrous for education funding," says Schilling. "We've had years of rapid enrolment growth and insufficient funding. When adjusted for inflation, per-pupil education spending will be down 13 per cent provincewide, compared to 2019."

Schilling says he has doubts the minister's pledge of 3,000 additional education workers over the next three years will be achieved with so many school divisions reducing positions and constraining hiring. But Nicolaides points to \$263 million in new funding to school boards this year, along with 43 new school projects that are projected to add 35,000 student spaces.

The student population is projected to rise by over 50,000 students this year and next year combined.

The Calgary Board of Education (CBE) is expecting to hire 655 more education workers, including teachers and support staff, but expects class sizes to grow next year, as the new workers will not keep up with enrolment growth.

## Space crunch expected to worsen

CBE facilities superintendent Dany Breton says space is an issue, as some schools are approaching 120 per cent capacity.

"And what does that look like? It looks like common areas needing to be converted to classroom spaces, but that comes with a bill, through reduced program richness and variety in our schools, because those common spaces are no longer available for everyone."

Foothills Composite High School in Okotoks is already at 120 per cent capacity. They've received an announcement about design funding for a new high school, but a school opening is still many years away. Despite Okotoks being a rapidly growing community, Foothills School Division is getting about half a million dollars less in provincial funding next year, as student population across the school division is expected to fall by 164 students. They will be looking to cut \$1.4 million from their budget for teachers.

Alberta school boards had to submit 2024-25 budgets to the minister of education by May 31, and those budgets are subject to his approval. ■

## At least 19 school divisions projecting teacher cuts

School Divisions Projecting Teacher Position Cuts*	Budgeted cut in teacher FTEs
Red Deer Catholic	90.6
<b>Sturgeon</b>	<b>43.2</b>
<b>Medicine Hat Public</b>	<b>11.8</b>
<b>Buffalo Trail</b>	<b>11.4</b>
St Paul	11.0
Foothills	10.8**
<b>Aspen View</b>	<b>10.4</b>
Wetaskiwin	8.7
<b>Peace Wapiti</b>	<b>5.3</b>
<b>Grasslands</b>	<b>4.2</b>
<b>Pembina Hills</b>	<b>4.1</b>
<b>FrancoSud</b>	<b>4.0</b>
<b>Black Gold</b>	<b>4.0</b>
<b>Wild Rose</b>	<b>3.3</b>
<b>Fort Vermilion</b>	<b>2.7</b>
<b>High Prairie</b>	<b>2.5</b>
<b>Chinook's Edge</b>	<b>2.0</b>
<b>Northern Gateway</b>	<b>1.0</b>
<b>Westwind</b>	<b>0.5</b>

**Bolded divisions** are budgeting for increased student enrolment

\*Based on a scan of publicly posted budgets for 2024-25

\*\*Estimate based on publicly available information

## Winners and losers in provincial funding

### Boards receiving largest reductions

School division	Funding cut	Percentage
Northland	-\$761,115	-2.3%
Living Waters		
Catholic Separate	-\$504,056	-2.2%
Aspen View	-\$646,458	-1.7%
Medicine Hat Public	-\$1,045,675	-1.4%
Holy Family		
Catholic Separate	-\$221,112	-0.9%

### Boards receiving largest increases

School division	Funding increase	Percentage
Edmonton Public	\$51,133,977	4.6%
Greater North		
Central Francophone	\$2,780,707	4.6%
Edmonton Catholic	\$25,980,164	5.6%
Calgary Public	\$85,175,689	6.5%
Fort McMurray Public	\$6,014,799	6.8%

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# Violence against teachers on the rise across U.S.

*American study reveals a post-pandemic increase in violence and aggression against educators*

Lindsay Yakimyshyn  
ATA News Staff

**U.S.** teachers and school staff have experienced more violence and aggression following the pandemic, according to a study released by the American Psychological Association (APA). This increase followed a noticeable decline in threats and violence experienced by educators across the U.S. during COVID-19 restrictions.

In 2019, the APA established a task force to investigate the experiences of teachers and school staff with respect to violence and aggression in schools. This research built on a national study conducted a decade earlier by the APA, signalling that this is not a new area of concern.

"Aggression and violence against educators and school personnel are major concerns that affect the well-being of school personnel and the students and families they serve," said the study's lead author, Dr. Susan Dvorak McMahon, "This study highlights a growing crisis in our schools that needs to be addressed nationally."

For the current study, approximately 15,000 participants from across the US completed a survey during the pandemic and another 12,000 completed a separate survey after restrictions lifted. The first survey asked participants to report on their experiences with violence and aggression both before and during the pandemic, while the second survey gauged participants' post-pandemic experiences.

The study's results showed that instances of violence and aggression decreased when COVID-19 restrictions were in place, and that post-pandemic incidences then returned to and, in some cases, exceeded the pre-pandemic numbers. Results showed, in particular, a marked increase in verbal harassment toward educators by a student or a parent or guardian. For instance, the proportion of teachers having experienced verbal or threatening aggression decreased from 65 per cent pre-pandemic to 33 per cent during pandemic restrictions, rising to 80 per cent post-restrictions. Instances of physical violence showed a similar pattern, falling to 14 per cent during restrictions and rising to 56 per cent post-restrictions.

Aside from concerns related to experiencing violence and aggression, teachers reported feeling anxious, burned out and stressed, and wanting to quit. Participants also made suggestions related to policies and resources, such as targeted training and additional staffing (including mental health personnel), to support educators.

Looking at these results, McMahon emphasized the need for stakeholders and policymakers to develop a comprehensive approach to build safe schools that promote the safety and well-being of educators and the school community.

"We need to address the entire ecology of the school, as well as engage with parents and communities in order to improve school climate, work environment and student learning," McMahon said.

## The Alberta experience

The APA's report comes a few months after the ATA released results from a pulse survey that revealed Alberta's teachers are also grappling with aggression in schools. Conducted in December 2023, the

ATA study found that half of Alberta teachers have encountered bullying or aggression, with 95 per cent of this being experienced in person at school.

Dr. Philip McRae, ATA associate coordinator of research, sees parallels between what the APA has reported and what Alberta teachers are experiencing.

"The APA and ATA research reveal shared struggles and unique challenges in addressing post-pandemic aggression in schools," McRae says.

McRae adds that the American and the Alberta-based research both signal the need for systemic changes to address the corrosive impact of aggression in schools and school communities.

"By looking at meaningful changes — reducing class sizes, enhancing supports and resources, and providing comprehensive training — the Government of Alberta can mitigate the impact of aggression and foster a safer environment for teachers, and, ultimately, a more positive learning environment for all students across Alberta's public schools." ■

# ATA welcomes delay of digital assessment platform

Sandra Bit  
ATA News Staff

A delay in the implementation of Alberta Education's new digital assessment platform is welcome news for teachers, say ATA officials.

In a memo that went out on May 14 to superintendents of public, separate, francophone, charter, private and Indigenous schools, the Alberta government updated the implementation timelines for its digital assessment platform, continuing to make it optional for the 2024-25 school year.

The new platform, introduced by Alberta Education in 2023-24, is intended to move the delivery of provincial achievement tests (PATs) and the written portion of diploma exams to an online format. It was tested this school year in pilot form and was originally scheduled for mandatory use in 2024-25.

However, the memo from Alberta Education states that optional implementation will continue for the 2024-25 school year for digital PATs and diploma exams, "to ensure that school authorities have time to conduct professional development activities with staff and ensure technical readiness before using the platform to administer assessments."

Schools and school authorities will be able to opt in for each PAT or diploma exam administration; Grade 6 and 9 PATs will be available on the digital platform; and only written-response diploma exams in English language arts, social studies or French language arts/Français will be available on the platform. Alberta Education will be offering support for implementation throughout the pilot period next year.

"I am glad to see a delay in the implementation as the ATA raised concerns about the program and its

implementation schedule," said ATA president Jason Schilling.

Not all schools are able to do the exams online due to a lack of devices and/or internet access, and students have struggled with the technology, Schilling said. The ATA also has concerns about glitches experienced by the online program during exams.

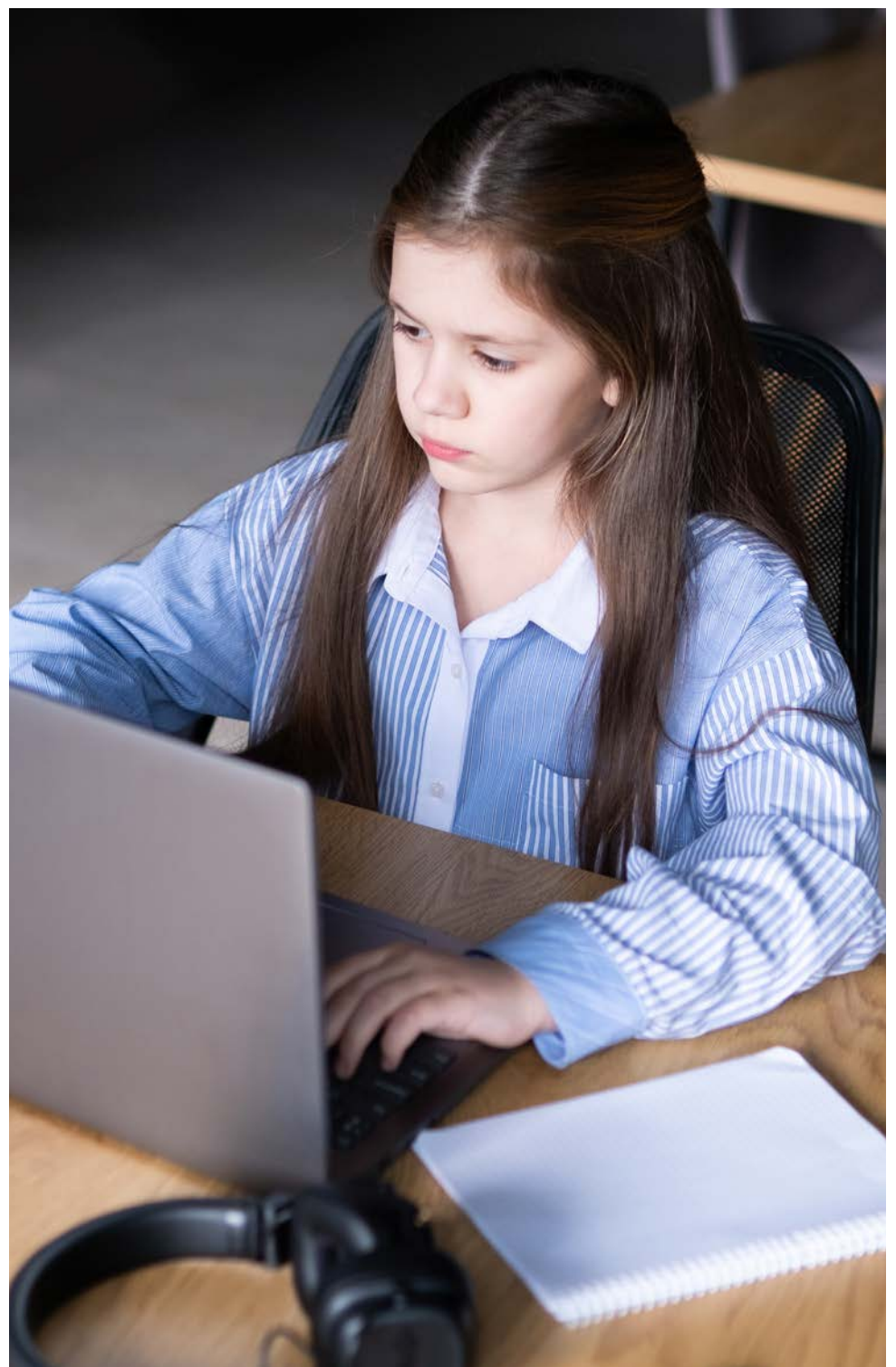
"Students should not have to be piloting a program while writing a high-stakes test," Schilling said. "Teachers also have issues moving to the online platform because the format does not allow students to use all the strategies teachers use with students to be successful."

Staff officer Terra Kaliszuk, a member of the ATA's curriculum committee, thinks the delay is a wise decision because technical and accessibility problems have continued to surface during the optional implementation of Alberta's digital assessment platform.

"Teachers continue to report issues with the platform's speech-to-text functionality, problems with tools embedded in the platform (such as dictionary and thesaurus tools that are not up-to-date), concerns with access to consistent and reliable Wi-Fi, and difficulty accessing a sufficient number of compatible devices to run the digital assessment platform," Kaliszuk said.

Additionally, teachers have shared that students are experiencing additional stress as they navigate the technology itself, over and above the stress of completing an assessment. The digital assessment platform continues to contribute to student testing anxiety, as it has made the examination process more difficult for students to navigate.

Kaliszuk maintains that until schools are equipped to implement this digital platform in a way that ensures that students can focus on their assessments rather than on technical problem solving, its implementation must be delayed. ■



Full implementation of a new digital assessment platform will be delayed for at least a year.

ISTOCK

# 2024 gotcha! PHOTO CONTEST

## And the winners are ...

The 2024 Gotcha! Photo Contest drew dozens of submissions from Alberta teachers. Here are the judges' top-three picks along with some honourable mentions.

### PRIZES AWARDED:

First \$200  
Second \$100  
Third \$50

### CONTEST JUDGES:

Bianca Ho, ATA graphic designer  
Cory Hare, ATA News managing editor



### FIRST PLACE | SUNNY SNOWSHOE

Grade 7 outdoor education students engage in a snowshoeing adventure at Hogarth Lakes in Kananaskis country.

Photographer: Court Rustemeyer, Vincent Massey School, Calgary

Date of photo: Jan. 18, 2024

Judges' comments: A brilliant blue sky balances the shadows that stretch towards the foreground, and the snowshoe tracks lead directly to the viewer. This creates an engaging composition that creates interest in the subjects' activities.







2



**SECOND PLACE | FOREST EXPLORER**

Exploring the forest on Orange Shirt Day.

*Photographer:* Amanda Kiat, Glendale Sciences and Technology School, Red Deer

*Date of photo:* Sept. 28, 2023

*Judges' comments:* This playful portrait is all about the cheeky facial expression. It's also helped by effective background blurring and compositional lines that draw the eye to the subject. It has just the right amount of symmetry and asymmetry in the pose and framing of the subject by the trees.



**THIRD PLACE | DAYBREAK**

A striking sunrise greets teachers as they arrive to begin one of the last school days before Christmas break.

*Photographer:* Jocelyne Hunt, Holy Spirit Academy, High River

*Date of photo:* Dec. 20, 2023

*Judges' comments:* An image with striking impact is the result of a lovely dynamic sunrise contrasted against the quietness of the overall image — warm and cool colours producing a harmonized, balanced palette. The cherry on top is the solitary vehicle with its brake lights on — just a hint of human presence.



3

**HONOURABLE MENTION**



HM

**FORCED PERSPECTIVE**

Students appear to be riding in a trailer pulled by a toy tractor driven by Scorch, their school's mascot.

*Photographer:* Mark Knoch, Eastglen High School, Edmonton

*Date of photo:* Oct. 11, 2023

*Judges' comments:* This photo is clever and fun. The forced perspective is well-executed and the students are also acting their parts. The engagement of the students brings a smile!



HM

**ON THE BALL**

Grade 11 student Charlie Cooper concentrates on the ball during junior girls volleyball action.

*Photographer:* Christopher Fensky, École Secondaire Beaumont Composite High School, Beaumont

*Date of photo:* Oct. 3, 2023

*Judges' comments:*

The photograph perfectly captures action and anticipation. The depth of field is executed well — the main subject is in focus, the general expressions of the other players are captured, and the observers on the bleachers add context without detracting from the moment.



HM

**ACTIVE RECESS**

Grade 4 students Ata Sen, Kellan McCannell and Ali Aljouma work on their soccer skills during recess.

*Photographer:* Kira James, Lauderdale School, Edmonton

*Date of photo:* May 15, 2024

*Judges' comments:* This photo draws its strength from fundamentals such as triangulation, clean composition and freezing a moving target. The ball and subjects lead the eye around the composition in an engaging way. There is action, tension and focus!



HM

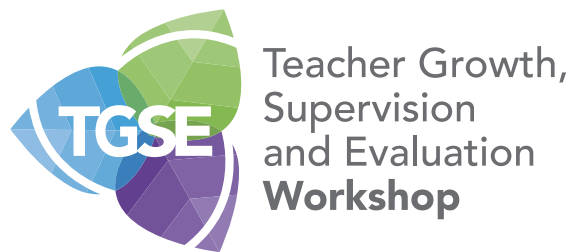
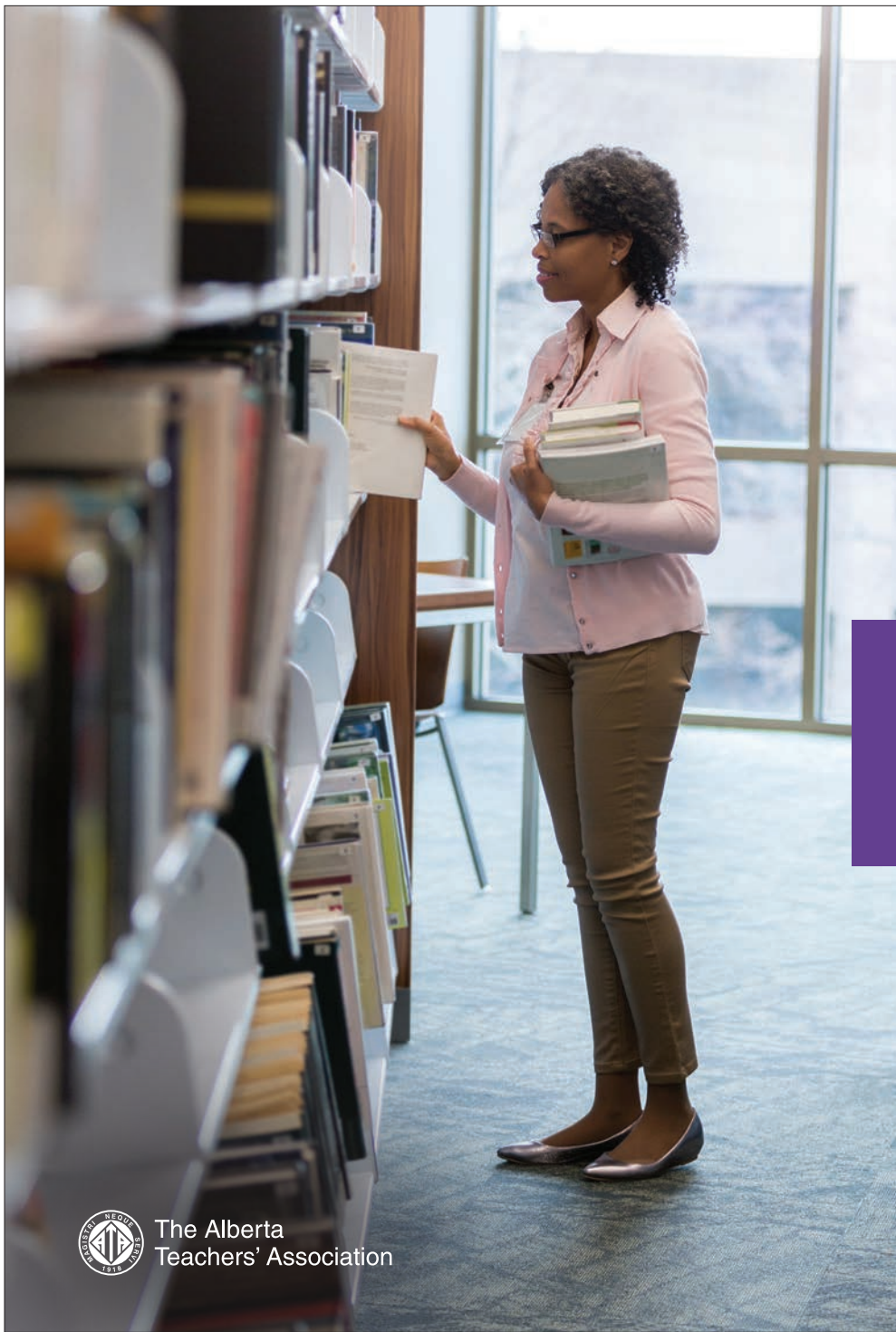
**LIGHT AND SHADOW**

A Grade 4 student creates a shadow puppet play as part of a light and shadow science unit.

*Photographer:* Vanessa Goerzen, Chaparral School, Calgary

*Date of photo:* Nov. 30, 2023

*Judges' comments:* The glow and magic of play is captured in this moment through light and shadow, producing a photo that is visually interesting while also conveying an air of mystery.



## TGSE WORKSHOP FOR SYSTEM AND SCHOOL LEADERS

A two-day workshop focusing on principals' roles and duties as outlined in the *Education Act*, the TGSE Policy and the *Leadership Quality Standard*.

August 15-16, 2024

Sheraton Cavalier Calgary Hotel  
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### REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!

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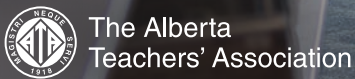
For event information visit

<https://abschoolleaderspd.sched.com/>



Scan QR code to register

For more information or to register, contact **Sudeep Dua** in Teacher Employment Services at **780-447-9400** (in Edmonton), **1-800-232-7208** (toll free) or [sudeep.dua@ata.ab.ca](mailto:sudeep.dua@ata.ab.ca).



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The ATA's "Coat Hook" commercial has been recognized with a Telly Award.

TAG MEDIA

# ATA commercial earns award

ATA News Staff

An ATA commercial has won an industry award. The Association's "Coat Hook" commercial, produced by TAG Media, has earned a bronze Telly Award in the 30-second, public interest and awareness category. The Telly Awards showcase the best work created within television and

across video, for all screens, and receives more than 12,000 entries globally from six continents and all 50 American states. Award winners represent work from some of the most respected advertising agencies, television stations, production companies and publishers from around the world. To date, TAG has won nine Telly Awards in this category (four silver and five bronze) for their work on creating commercials for the Association. ■

# ATA Magazine short-listed for industry awards

ATA News Staff

The ATA Magazine has been nominated for three awards by the Alberta Magazine Publishers Association (AMPA). In May, AMPA announced the finalists for its annual Alberta Magazine Awards and the ATA Magazine was listed in three categories: best editorial package,

best short written feature and best illustration. "I think these nominations reinforce that the hard work and dedication shown by our staff and contributors is translating into a top-quality magazine for members," said editor-in-chief Elissa Corsi. Award winners will be announced in September at the 2024 Alberta Magazines Conference. ■



The ATA Magazine has been nominated for three industry awards.

CORY HARE

## PHOTOS WANTED!

It's time to celebrate and show off the great things that happened in your classroom this year!

As part of our refreshed campaign, "Let's Keep Great Things Happening in Alberta Schools," the ATA is seeking interesting images of both elementary and secondary students participating in various subjects and activities, indoors and outdoors. Teachers may also be featured in the pictures. A selection of photos may be shown on air during Edmonton's and Calgary's weekday morning weather reports on CTV. The campaign will relaunch in September.

Contact [andrea.berg@ata.ab.ca](mailto:andrea.berg@ata.ab.ca) to request permission release forms for students featured in the pictures.

The deadline for submissions is August 1, 2024.

Let's keep great things happening in Alberta's public schools!



COMM-312b-viii



The Alberta Teachers' Association

**DIGITAL NEWS**



The ATA News is available online.

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

# 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](https://StopTheExcuses.ca)



The Alberta  
Teachers' Association



**! ALLOCATION DEADLINE: AUGUST 31, 2024\***

If you have both a Health Spending Account (HSA) and a Wellness Spending Account (WSA), you will need to allocate your credits before the **August 31, 2024** deadline.

More information on 'how', 'what', and 'where' coming to your email\*\* or mail box (if you don't have a My ASEBP account) in June!

\* Mid-year hires will receive separate instruction on allocation and deadlines from ASEBP.

\*\* To the email listed in your My ASEBP account profile.

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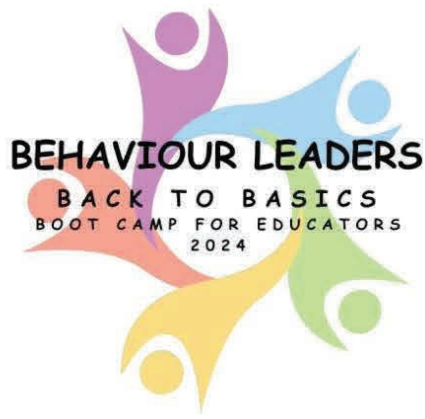
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## Behaviour Leaders

### Boot Camp Basics for Educators

Best Western, Okotoks, Alberta, CA Saturday, October 19, 2024

The Back to Basics symposium focuses on proactive, preventative and strategic behaviour classroom management strategies and interventions. Cognitive, emotional and physical strategies will be addressed. Learn to strategically manage student behaviour by setting up inclusive classrooms, developing self regulation strategies and mentoring positive behaviours to create a focused learning environment for students K-9.

More info here



#### Speakers include:

- Darci Fulton
- Les Redick
- Jyoti Roy
- Rebecca Christie
- Georgie Brewin
- Myka Piekenbrock

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The Alberta  
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### 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](http://teachers.ab.ca)

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# TALENT

June 11, 2024 | Volume 58, Number 15

# CUP CONTENDERS

## How are you showing off your Oilers team spirit on game days?

# ESPERING



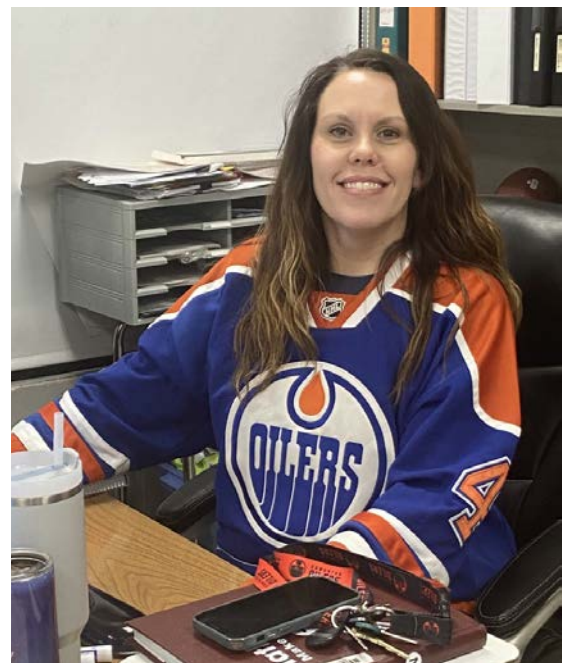
Avieneet Dhillon  
Douglas Harkness School, Calgary



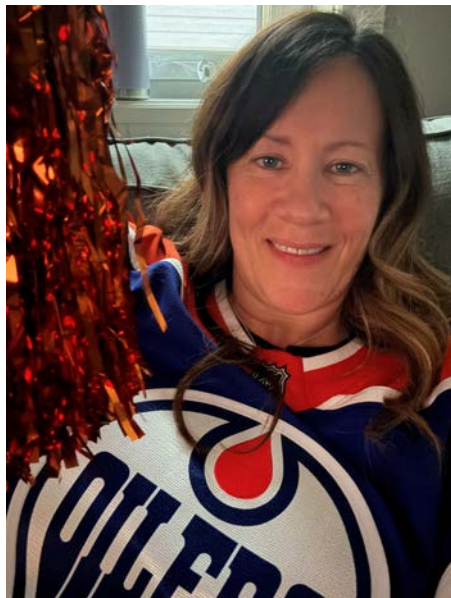
Barbara Weir Shepherd  
Parkland Composite High School, Edson



Valerie Ling  
Guthrie School, Sturgeon County



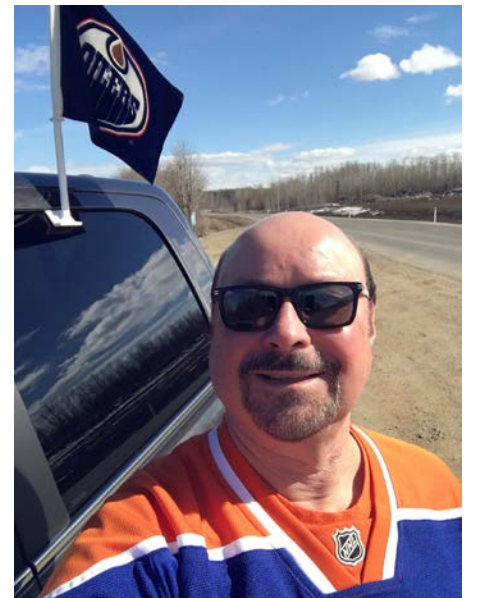
Lee-Anne Briner-Scherger  
St. Hilda Catholic Junior High School, Edmonton



Joanna Pederson Schipper  
St. Timothy Elementary School, Edmonton



Brittany McLean  
Good Shepherd School, Fort McMurray



Morris Holota  
Vilna School, Vilna