

FALL 2024

THE ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

ATA Magazine



**WE ARE
HERE!**

Standing strong for gender inclusion

UNSUNG HERO

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Fall 2024/Vol. 105/No.1

Feature

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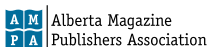
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Cover, pp. 17 and 27



Emily Chu 初晴 is an illustrator, muralist and visual artist who is passionate about community arts. She is also the co-organizer of Chinatown Greetings, and the founder of Together Chinatown Art Fair. Her recent clients include the Alberta Craft Gallery and Shop, the Canada Council for the Arts, CBC Arts and Chatelaine. Find Emily's work at heyemilychu.com or @heyemilychu on Instagram.



MATHIAS BALL

pp. 8 and 9



Mathias Ball is an illustrator who resides in a lakeside town near the Great Lakes. They have worked with clients such as *The Washington Post*, Huggies, Scholastic, and *The New York Times*, and their work has been recognized by the Society of Illustrators. Drawing inspiration from nature, they can be found in the fields taking pictures of the night sky or attempting to befriend the local wildlife.



ALECIA NACHTIGAL

p. 10



Alecia Nachtigal is a Werklund School of Education graduate from the University of Calgary and a certificated teacher in Alberta and BC. She began her teaching career at a nature- and play-based school in Victoria, BC, where she learned about the power of Mother Nature as a lead teacher in a child's life. After obtaining her forest school practitioner's licence from the Child and Nature Alliance of Canada, she returned to the prairies of Mohkinstsis (Calgary) where she teaches kindergarten.



JEFF SIDDLE

p. 10



Jeff Siddle is an educator and adventurer who blends pedagogy with outdoor experiences. With a background in physical and outdoor education, his journey spans teaching roles in special needs settings and wilderness therapy. Jeff has been an executive member with the Global, Environmental and Outdoor Education specialist council of the ATA for 10 years and currently serves as the outdoor education representative. From guiding river expeditions to advocating for outdoor education, Jeff aims to connect communities through service and education.



NADIA DELANOY

p. 12



Nadia Delanoy is an assistant professor in leadership, policy and governance, and a researcher at the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary. Her research interests include evidence-based practice in assessment; leadership and innovative pedagogies in technology-enhanced environments; AI in education as well as big data; and social media analytics to support innovative business practices. She is an award-winning educator and prioritizes research that has an impact in the K-12 space.



JODIE WALZ

p. 12



Jodie Walz is an educational technology consultant with the Rocky View School District. She has over 18 years of experience teaching in the classroom and has spent the last five years leading teachers in her district. She has completed her master of educational technology at the University of Saskatchewan. Jodie shares her passion for technology by helping integrate learning management systems and guiding teachers on engaging students using digital tools. She also embraces the idea of creating versus consuming when using technology.



CRYSTAL PUIM

pp. 48 and 50



Crystal Puim is an Edmonton-based corporate photographer. A trusted industry partner with more than 20 years' experience, she elevates brands with a professional, discerning eye. Fun fact: Crystal is a huge supporter of Alberta teachers and once was accepted into the education program at the U of A only to later politely decline it to follow her photography path. Her company, Crystal Puim Photography (crystalphotos.ca), is a staple in Western Canada.



THOMAS ROGERS

p. 55



Thomas Rogers has over a decade of teaching experience in the humanities. Currently an assistant principal at S. Bruce Smith Junior High with Edmonton Public Schools, he has also served as a teacher and curriculum coordinator. Passionate about technology, he adds to his portfolio as a Microsoft innovative educator expert and HP teaching fellow. Thomas is pursuing his master's in educational studies, focusing on artificial intelligence and educational technology.

The Alberta Teachers' Association respectfully acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10 territories—the travelling route, gathering place and meeting grounds for Indigenous Peoples, whose histories, languages, cultures and traditions continue to influence our vibrant community. We are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us. We recognize the land as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on or are visiting.



PHOTO BY RYAN PARKER

Elissa Corsi

Editor-in-Chief, ATA Magazine
Rédactrice en chef de l'ATA Magazine


Let's all embrace safe spaces in education

IN THIS EDITION OF THE ATA MAGAZINE, we delve into a crucial conversation that affects not just our classrooms but our entire education ecosystem — the fostering of inclusive and safe spaces for 2SLGBTQIA+ students and educators. Our commitment to nurturing environments where everyone, regardless of their gender identity or relationships, feels welcomed and valued is more than a goal; it's a necessity.

Education, at its core, is about growth, learning and the respectful exchange of ideas. To uphold these values, it is essential to ensure that all members of our school communities are supported comprehensively. This includes creating spaces where gender and relationship-diverse individuals can thrive without fear of discrimination or exclusion. As educators, it's incumbent upon us to create learning environments that foster inclusivity, respect and celebration of diversity.

When students feel safe, their capacity to learn and engage increases exponentially. Similarly, when teachers feel supported in their identities, they can focus more effectively on their role as educators, mentors and role models. We hope the articles and reflections presented in our feature will inspire meaningful dialogue and action within our educational community.

Let this edition serve as a reminder and a call to action. Use inclusive language, display symbols of support like rainbow flags and use safe space stickers. For more information, please take a look at the diversity, equity and human rights resources that are available through the Association's website. Additionally, teachers can provide a supportive ear and advocate for the needs of gender- and relationship-diverse students, ensuring they have access to school resources and counseling if needed.


Together we can create a more inclusive future in education. 

Tous ensemble pour les espaces protégés dans nos écoles

DANS CETTE ÉDITION DE L'ATA MAGAZINE, nous nous penchons sur un sujet crucial qui affecte non seulement nos élèves dans les salles de classe, mais aussi l'ensemble de notre écosystème éducatif : la création d'espaces inclusifs et protégés pour les élèves et les enseignants 2ELGBTQIA+. Notre engagement à créer des environnements où toute personne, quelle que soit son identité de genre ou ses relations avec autrui, se sente accueillie et valorisée n'est pas seulement un objectif, mais un devoir.

Le développement individuel, l'apprentissage et l'échange d'idées dans le plus grand des respects constituent le cœur même de l'éducation. Pour défendre ces valeurs, il est donc essentiel de veiller à ce que tous les membres de nos communautés scolaires bénéficient d'un soutien total. Pensons notamment à créer des espaces exempts de toute discrimination ou exclusion où les personnes de diverses identités de genre et de relation peuvent s'épanouir pleinement. En tant qu'enseignants, il nous incombe donc de créer des environnements d'apprentissage qui favorisent l'inclusion, le respect et dans lesquels la diversité humaine est célébrée.

Lorsque les élèves se sentent bien et en sécurité à l'école, leur capacité d'apprentissage et de participation augmente de façon exponentielle. De façon similaire, tout enseignant dont l'identité est respectée sera plus à même de concentrer ses efforts sur son rôle d'éducateur, de mentor et de modèle. D'où notre souhait que les articles et réflexions présentés dans ce numéro puissent servir de source d'inspiration aux membres de notre communauté éducative, susciter en eux le désir d'entamer un dialogue constructif et des actions significatives.

Que cette édition serve de rappel et d'appel à l'action. Autant que possible, utilisez un langage inclusif, exprimez votre soutien à l'aide de symboles comme des drapeaux arc-en-ciel et apposez des autocollants « espace protégé ». Pour plus d'information, consultez également les ressources sur la diversité, l'équité et les droits de la personne sur le site de l'ATA. De plus, les enseignants peuvent offrir une oreille attentive aux personnes de diverses identités de genre et de relation; mettre en évidence leurs besoins; et veiller à ce qu'ils aient accès aux ressources de l'école et au soutien d'un conseiller, si nécessaire. Travaillons ensemble à créer un avenir où l'éducation inclusive aura de plus en plus sa place. 

Letters

We want your feedback

We'd like to hear from you! In several locations throughout this magazine are sections calling for ideas and submissions from teachers. Please watch for these and send us your ideas. After all, this is your magazine. Email your feedback to Elissa Corsi, editor-in-chief, elissa.corsi@ata.ab.ca or Cory Hare, managing editor, cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

GUIDELINES FOR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Word limit: 300

Please include

- your first and last name, and
- basic information about your teaching assignment (i.e. school, grade, subject).

All letters are subject to editing for length, clarity, punctuation, spelling and grammar.

Read the spring issue

The *ATA Magazine* is available on our website. To read our spring issue, visit teachers.ab.ca/news/loud-and-quiet-and-everyone-between.

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Most Memorable Lesson provides inspiration

I've been reading the spring issue of the *ATA Magazine* in the midst of cleaning up my classroom and other end-of-year duties and I just wanted to say that Kristine Wilkinson's "A night at the zoo" was such a touching and moving article.

Kristine and her colleagues need to be commended for that excursion and overnight trip to the zoo with their special group of students. I shed a tear reading that article for the way she exposed her students to a unique and wonderful learning moment, and one they will never forget I'm sure. She and her colleagues are a truly dedicated group of educators.

Thank you for publishing this beautiful story of the commitment to teaching as we finish this school year.

— Steven Zilinsky, *Prairie Christian Academy, Three Hills*

READ THE ARTICLE



ATA Magazine wins awards

The *ATA Magazine* took home a gold award and two silver awards at the annual Alberta Magazine Awards hosted by the Alberta Magazine Publishers Association (AMPA) on Sept. 26.

The gold award (first place) was for the best short written feature and went to Celeste, a teacher who wrote about her mental health struggles in the spring 2023 edition of the magazine. Celeste's story, "The Great Overwhelm," was part of a collection of stories that was nominated for "best editorial package," and earned the silver award.

The other silver award went to illustrator James Lee Chiahan, a freelancer hired by the *ATA Magazine* to create an illustration of system principal Kenny Yeung for



the magazine's Unsung Hero section. That illustration was published in the fall 2023 issue of the magazine.



PHOTO BY RYAN PARKER

FROM THE PRESIDENT MOT DU PRÉSIDENT

Jason Schilling


President, ATA
Président de l'ATA

Student well-being is our top priority each day

AFTER I WAS FIRST ELECTED ATA president, as I was preparing to leave my school to start my term, I spoke to my students about the changes that would be occurring. Throughout the conversation, one student was in tears, saying my class was their safe space, the one place in the school where they could be their true self, and they were going to miss that. Of course, I welled up with tears, but the comment also reminded me of the importance of creating safe spaces.

Like most of my colleagues, I always worked hard to build relationships with my students to ensure that they felt safe. As a drama teacher, I felt this was essential to having a productive and successful class. I took special care to create a space where students felt emotionally, mentally and physically safe so that they would be willing to take risks in their learning and push themselves beyond their comfort zones.

It is not easy to stand in front of your peers and act, dance or sing. Each class worked hard to accept and encourage one another's creativity. When we had a breach of that safety, we would stop, reflect and then work again to rebuild trust. Trust is key to creating safe and caring spaces in school.


Student safety and well-being has always been the primary concern of teachers and school leaders. It is imperative that we let students know they are safe and seen in their classrooms, not just during Pride month, but every day of the year. We should never take for granted the impact of leading by example and fostering schools and classrooms that are accepting, respectful and safe. By doing this, we enable our students to explore, rise to challenges, take risks in their learning and achieve their full potential. 

Le bien-être des élèves, notre priorité absolue tous les jours

APRÈS AVOIR ÉTÉ ÉLU pour la première fois à la présidence de l'ATA, alors que je m'apprêtais à quitter mon école pour entamer mon mandat, je me suis entretenu avec mes élèves au sujet des changements qui s'annonçaient. Tout au long de la conversation, une élève était en larmes, disant que ma classe était son espace protégé, le seul endroit à l'école où elle pouvait réellement être elle-même, et que cela allait lui manquer. Naturellement, mes yeux se sont remplis de larmes, mais ce commentaire m'a aussi rappelé l'importance de créer des espaces protégés.

Comme la plupart de mes collègues, j'ai toujours travaillé fort pour tisser des relations avec mes élèves afin qu'ils se sentent en sécurité. En tant qu'enseignant d'art dramatique, j'y voyais une condition essentielle pour favoriser la productivité et la réussite en classe. Je veillais plus particulièrement à créer un espace où les élèves se sentaient en sécurité sur les plans émotionnel, mental et physique afin qu'ils soient disposés à prendre des risques dans le cadre de leur apprentissage et à sortir de leur zone de confort.

Il n'est pas facile de se présenter devant ses pairs pour jouer un rôle, danser ou chanter. Dans chaque classe, on s'efforçait d'accepter et d'encourager la créativité de son prochain. Lorsque cette sécurité était compromise, nous nous arrêtons et prenions le temps de réfléchir, puis nous remettons au travail pour rétablir la confiance. En effet, la confiance est la clé dans la création d'espaces bienveillants et sécuritaires à l'école.

La sécurité et le bien-être des élèves ont toujours été la principale préoccupation des enseignants et des leaders scolaires. Il est impératif de faire savoir aux élèves qu'ils sont en sécurité dans leurs salles de classe et de reconnaître qu'ils y ont leur place, non seulement pendant le Mois de la fierté, mais chaque jour de l'année. Ne perdons jamais de vue l'influence que nous exerçons en prêchant par l'exemple et en œuvrant pour faire des écoles et salles de classe des milieux où l'on se sent accepté, respecté et en sécurité. Ce faisant, nous permettons à nos élèves d'explorer, de relever des défis, de prendre des risques dans leur apprentissage et de réaliser leur plein potentiel. 

'TIS (ALMOST) THE SEASON...



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Archival issues of the **ATA Magazine** can be just as relevant now as they were when originally published, or they can remind us how far we've come. You decide.

Check out these items from the Fall 2004 issue of the **ATA Magazine**, which took a look at the importance and meaning of — and threats to — a “good” public education.



A "good" public education

20 YEARS AGO

“

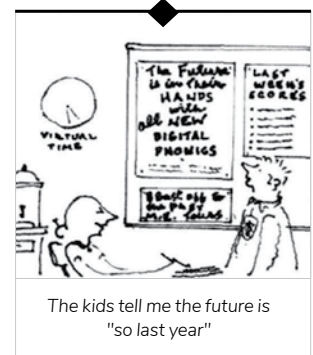
The peak of per-student spending in Alberta was reached in 1987 when in constant dollars it reached \$5,229. From that year the funding has declined in real terms by \$1,306. It is not surprising then that despite government's constant assertion that it is re-investing in education every year, that ‘re-investment’ has not even compensated for the effects of increasing enrolment and inflation.

— David Flower,
“Public Education as a Trojan Horse: The Alberta Case”

“

The number of people who do, in fact, confuse the possession of a storehouse of knowledge with being ‘smart’—the latter being a disconcertingly common designation for those who fare well on quiz shows—is testament to the naïve appeal that such a model holds. But there are also political implications to be considered here. To emphasize the importance of absorbing a pile of information is to support a larger world view that sees the primary purpose of education as reproducing our current culture. [...] defining the notion of educational mastery in terms of the number of facts one can recall is well suited to the task of preserving the status quo.

— Alfie Kohn, “What Does It Mean to Be Well Educated?”



“

Is this notion of a collectivity still valid or relevant in this age of increasing fragmentation and individualism? Is it in danger, and if so, is it still salvageable? If we can define the notion and determine that we can save it, how, then, do we nurture and strengthen the understanding that, as a society, our survival depends on being able to embrace the collectivity implied by the term *public*?—that in order to defend a notion of the public good, we must first identify ourselves as part of a public.

— Ricardo Acuña, “Visions of the Public Good”



Michael Koehler: Teacher, builder, creator

Lindsay Yakimyshyn

Associate Editor, ATA Magazine

BUILDING A PERFORMING ARTS centre was never one of Michael Koehler's goals. But somehow his career, family life and passion to create collided, and The Venue emerged.

When he was in high school, Koehler found happiness in construction and industrial arts, so much so that he considered becoming an architect. But unsure he would measure up, he decided to stick with his best subject, math. He completed a four-year bachelor of education in secondary mathematics and went straight into teaching. His first teaching assignment included only one math class, as well as CALM, drafting and construction.

"Those are all things I enjoyed doing — I just never imagined I'd get to teach them," Koehler says.

Now that he's taught for more than 30 years, Koehler stays motivated by taking on different assignments, finding new approaches or building things ... literally.


"Whether it's creating a piece of furniture, making dinner, creating an interesting approach to teaching fractions, I am just always interested in the creation process," he says.

Throughout his career, Koehler has also embraced opportunities to help others engage in the creative process. For example, one day Koehler was building a set for the school's drama class and it occurred to him that students could be doing that work. So he put the wheels in motion for a theatre tech course that brought together industrial arts and theatre students.

This experience served Koehler well when he took on his biggest volunteer project yet — a new theatre in High River.

In 2011, with two daughters engaged in the arts, Koehler became involved with the local theatre group, sometimes as a performer and sometimes as a set builder. Experiencing first-hand the community's strong support for artists and performers, he saw a need for a dedicated theatre space.

Excited by the prospect of building something for his community, Koehler co-founded the High River Performing Arts Foundation (HRPAF) with the goal of building The Venue, a 200-seat black box theatre. The HRPAF currently operates an outdoor stage on The Venue site while also programming the Bandstand in George Lane Park in High River. Now treasurer of the HRPAF, Koehler takes pride in the long-standing impact of the space he helped create.

"I see that it has a great influence on a community, for kids, youth, adults and seniors alike," he says, "I can look at this and see my fingerprint on that work." 

► **Got an idea?** *Unsung Hero* is a space dedicated to honouring ATA members past and present who have had notable achievements, either in the ATA or in their private lives.

If you know of a member whom you feel should be recognized, please contact section editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca.

Michael Koehler

Cofounder of the High River Performing Arts Foundation in High River

Recipient of the 2021 Hilton Mierau Award of Excellence in Off-Campus Learning

Cofounder of the Foothills Emergency Services Program



Rooted in nature and play

Forest schools foster resilience and confidence

Alecia Nachtigal and Jeff Siddle

Guest contributors

Alecia Nachtigal is a Calgary kindergarten teacher and a certified forest school practitioner. She sat down with teacher Jeff Siddle, outdoor education liaison with the ATA's Global, Environmental and Outdoor Education Council, to talk about forest schools and how they can influence traditional schools.

WHAT IS A FOREST SCHOOL?

Forest school is a pedagogy built on trusting relationships and a connection to the land. It takes place in a consistent location, with children and educators returning often over an extended period. Forest school prioritizes building reciprocal relationships with Indigenous Peoples, who have been learning, growing and caring for this land since time immemorial. Forest school is an educational philosophy that's rooted in the belief that all children and youth are capable and curious, and places great value on children's self-directed play by providing ample space and time for children to immerse themselves in play.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF FOREST SCHOOL?

Outdoor child-led play helps children develop their own personal boundaries, self-assess risky situations and grow their intrinsic confidence, all skills critical to a happy, healthy life. When a child balances while walking on an elevated log, they have an opportunity to perceive a risk, such as falling off, and problem-solve by assessing the path that will get them across most safely and effectively. Perhaps it takes this child a few attempts to successfully cross, and when they do, they will likely experience a sense of accomplishment by overcoming a challenge independently, helping build confidence.

During the log balancing, this child will likely have gone through a plethora of feelings, such as fear, excitement and joy. Cycling through all these feelings helps this child work through and self-regulate emotions. Engaging in risky play supervised by caring facilitators can support child development in many beneficial ways, including embodying physical literacy by building fine and gross motor skills. Witnessing this type of growth and development in children first-hand is incredibly inspiring.

HOW CAN ELEMENTS OF FOREST SCHOOL BE INTEGRATED INTO TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS?

The biggest misconception about integrating forest school is that you need a forest to do it! Forest school can happen anywhere, as long as children have access to some bushes, a puddle, some logs, a snowbank or even a pile of dirt and lots of unstructured time for free play and exploration. Returning to the same natural space as a forest school group is key, as it builds stewardship in children and deepens their connection with themselves and with the land, both critical elements in decolonizing our education system. Many outcomes of Alberta's program of study can be assessed while children are engaging in freely chosen play.



ISTOCK ADAPTED AND ILLUSTRATION BY BIANCA HO

WHAT ARE SOME BARRIERS OR LIMITATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH INTEGRATING FOREST SCHOOL INTO TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS?

Access to safe, natural spaces; inadequate outdoor gear; a shortage of supervisors; and a lack of decent time between periods are all limitations I have come across personally and ones that colleagues have mentioned to me as well. My suggestion is to start small. In your schoolyard, give your students the challenge that they are free to play; they just can't touch the playground equipment! Some loose parts, such as logs and sticks, can often be all students need to get started in some wonderful nature-based, self-directed play.

In a caregiver newsletter distributed a few times a year, put in a callout for mittens, rain pants, snow pants, toques or whatever the needs of your class are and start a clothing library with other colleagues. Now (and here comes the hardest part most often), decentralize yourself as the teacher! Be an observant supervisor and step in to intervene with empowering language only when necessary. Let the play begin! ^{ATA}

HISTORY OF FOREST SCHOOL

Forest school is a pedagogy that takes place in the great outdoors. The first forest school started in the 1950s in Denmark and the concept has grown in popularity in the U.K., Europe and North America ever since.



ISTOCK ADAPTED

Assessment in a digital age

These technology tools can help teachers

Nadia Delanoy

Assistant Professor,
Educational Leadership,
Werklund School of Education,
University of Calgary

Jodie Walz

Educational Technologist,
Calgary Catholic School District

IN A TECHNOLOGY-RICH SOCIETY, teachers can often feel overwhelmed by the number of digital tools that can be available to use for instruction and assessment. In this article, we will highlight a few tools and considerations to help teachers meaningfully implement digital tools to support quality assessment and student learning.

3 KEYS TO EFFECTIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY TOOLS



Always know your content.



Use the right tool for the right job.



Ask yourself: what pedagogical methods will best serve my students?

Choice Boards

A choice board is a form of differentiated learning activity that provides students with voice and choice.

Benefits of choice boards:

- Scaffolded activities
- Balanced assessment to meet students where they are
- Universal design for learning
- No tech, low tech and high tech
- Can be used and remixed



Explore this example of a choice board!

RECOMMENDED RESOURCE



The Fuel Cell Car Science Kit

This kit teaches the principles behind the real-scale fuel cell vehicles currently being rolled out across the world.

Available through the ATA library.

WORKSHOP AVAILABLE

These exercises are part of a workshop series entitled "Assessment in a Digital Age," which is available through the Werklund School of Education Teaching and Learning at the University of Calgary.

These technology tools and exercises can be useful for teachers in integrating digital tools for assessment and learning design.

Google Forms

Google Forms is a tool that allows users to deliver formative assessments easily and quickly. You can add images and videos to your forms to guide student learning and connect to curricular outcomes.

Conveniently add created Google Forms to your Brightspace environment so students can access them on various devices.

Benefits for teachers:

- Easy to use
- Collaborative
- Gives students voice
- Enables data collection

Benefits for students:

- Easy to use
- Accessible



UDL Wheel

Universal Design Learning (UDL) guidelines and checkpoints can assist educators in designing flexible lessons and curriculum that reduce barriers to learning and provide innovative and supportive learning to meet the needs of all learners.

Benefits of a UDL Wheel:

Helps educators evaluate existing curricula goals, materials, methods and assessments



Teachers can create the UDL Wheel and use it to easily apply the principles of UDL in their classroom. Try it out!



Teachers can explore Google Forms to collect student learning data or formative feedback, like in this check-in after a decimals math lesson.



Does that *really* belong in the classroom?

Responding to parent questions about diversity and inclusion

Lindsay Yakimyshyn

Associate Editor, *ATA Magazine*

QUESTIONS ABOUT ISSUES OF DIVERSITY and inclusion in our schools, whether posed by parents or others, can be a challenge for teachers and school leaders. So what are some ways teachers and school leaders can respond to such questions? Three seasoned professionals provide their insights.

It's the law

Carla Peck

Professor, University of Alberta

Teachers and school leaders have a responsibility to make sure every child in their classroom or school — no matter how they identify — feels safe, valued and seen. This is clearly articulated in the *Education Act*, in Alberta's Teaching Quality Standard and in the *Alberta Human Rights Act*. In other words, teachers do not have a choice to teach for and about diversity; it is a central part of their responsibility toward students and their families.

If a parent asks why a teacher is using a particular book in their classroom, or why they are exploring diversity in their community, teachers can lean on official legislation and policies (including curriculum) to support their pedagogical decisions. In addition, valuing diversity and engaging with both multiple perspectives and controversial issues is central to the development of citizenship competencies, which are foundational in public education.

We all have to learn to live and work with people who are not like us. Learning about what makes us unique deepens our understanding of one another and can help us navigate differences of opinion or perspective as we participate in our shared responsibility to contribute to society together.



ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL PARILLAS

Learning together

Consider booking an ATA Professional Development workshop for your team to continue your individual and collective learning journeys.

- » Working with Parents to Promote Student Success
- » Supporting Gender and Relationship Diversity in School Communities
- » Take a LEAP: Unlearning Racial Bias
- » L'enseignement adapté aux différences culturelles

For more information and to book, check out the ATA website > Professional development > Workshops and presentations or e-mail pdworkshops@ata.ab.ca.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCE



Identity, Culture and Belonging: Educating Young Children for a Changing World
Tony EAUDE

Available through the ATA library.

Seek expert guidance

Fitz Sherman

Member of the Canadian Teachers' Federation's (CTF/FCE) Advisory Committee on Diversity and Human Rights

Teachers are obligated through the Alberta curriculum to teach students diverse perspectives. In today's classroom, teachers and school leaders must respond to questions regarding diversity and inclusion topics in a caring, loving and understanding way.

Some teachers and school leaders may not have specialized training or have engaged in comprehensive research on how to handle topics on diversity and inclusion. If the teacher or school leader does not feel comfortable speaking to an issue being raised, they should seek guidance and use their best judgment, turning to experts on these topics and (if possible and appropriate) inviting them into the classroom or school. In some situations, the students or their parents could be an expert on a topic. While you might invite them to share their knowledge, do not assume they will be comfortable doing so.

Help is available

Keith Hadden

Former ATA Co-ordinator,
Teacher Employment Services

Schools reflect society; thus, they welcome students with a wide range of backgrounds, needs, cultures and identities. Provincial policies, school division policies and legislation, and moral purpose all contribute to a teacher's workplace obligations to meet the varying and complex needs that arise from diversity. As we see more extremism in society in general, teachers and school leaders can be assured that their professional organization, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), supports them in this important and sometimes challenging work.

The ATA's Teacher Employment Services program area assists teachers in situations where a parent has become aggressive or where an employer has made unreasonable or unlawful demands of an employee. The assistance provided will depend on a variety of factors and will range from advising a teacher on professional means of protesting a directive to providing legal assistance where necessary. Teachers who are faced with a difficult situation in trying to address diverse student needs should call for advice and assistance (1-800-232-7208).

'THOSE KIDS' ARE our kids

*A Catholic principal
and parent's
perspective*

Kate Santos

Guest contributor

My trans son Liam came out just over 10 years ago when he was in Grade 6. A YouTuber he was following had just shaved her hair for cancer research and Liam asked if he could shave his head as well (his hair was very long at the time). I had no problem with this so out came the clippers. When we were done, staring at himself in the mirror, Liam said to me, "Mom, I'm a boy." I didn't fully understand what he was telling me. A short time later, Liam was downstairs and he texted me.

"What if I'm transgender?"

Then it clicked for me! I texted him back. "Be the best transgender person you can be and we'll figure it out."

When I think back now on Liam's elementary years, there was certainly a pattern that I hadn't fully recognized at the time. The first time Liam got into trouble at school was in Grade 1 when he went into the boys' bathroom instead of the girls'. When asked why, he didn't know how to answer—he just felt like that was where he was supposed to go.

As Liam progressed through the early elementary grades, he oscillated in how he expressed his developing understanding of his gender identity. In Grade 1, he preferred to dress like a boy. Then, in Grade 2, he entered what I call his "Laura-Ingalls-Wilder-Little-House-on-the-Prairie" phase. In trying to emulate what he understood a girl should be, he carried a doll around all the time and wore the same strawberry dress so much I had to peel it off him. Then in Grade 3, he tried to be into soccer. He wasn't interested in sports at all, but it gave him permission to dress in more masculine athletic clothes. Like many trans youth, Liam was trying to reconcile who he felt he was with his understanding about how girls and boys his age are supposed to look and act.

Since coming out as male, Liam has never wavered in his gender expression. When Liam was in Grade 8 and at a school where everyone knew him only as a boy, he came to me one day really excited

and said, “Mom, now that everyone just knows me as a boy, I can figure out what kind of boy I am!”

Despite this excitement, Liam struggled to be fully comfortable with being out at school. He didn’t join his school’s student gay-straight alliance (GSA) because he was afraid that would be a public announcement that he wasn’t male or might cause other students to think he was gay. This is really important for us teachers to understand—having a GSA is an essential support for gender-diverse youth, but it’s not the be-all and end-all.


Only a handful of Liam’s secondary teachers knew he was born biologically female and they were very supportive, but I don’t think Liam necessarily felt that support all the time. He was so hypervigilant and anxious about making sure he was fitting in and acting “normal” that it was easy for him to miss what teachers were doing behind the scenes to support him.

This reinforces to me that we have to be overt in our efforts to ensure every student feels safe, welcome and valued. Little symbols of support like rainbow flags, pronoun pins and safe space posters help students know who they can go to if they need to talk or if they just need to let down their guard and breathe for a minute.

In junior and senior high, even with support from teachers and school leaders, Liam changed schools a number of times.




Liam was trying to reconcile who he felt he was with his understanding about how girls and boys his age are supposed to look and act.



Without fail, a student from his elementary school would switch to Liam's current school and would use his dead name or mention that he "used to be a girl". We transferred from the Catholic system to the public system hoping that things would be different, but our community is tight knit and Liam was eventually outed again. He ended up finishing Grade 12 through an outreach program.

"What harm could you potentially cause by supporting Liam?"

War at home



On the home front, things weren't easy either. When Liam came out, his dad and their side of the family were not supportive at all. They wanted Liam to go through conversion therapy. At one point, they told Liam, "you can't be a part of this family until you're a girl again." Liam was 12 at the time. Family was and is so important to him. We talked about it, and he wrote a letter to them that basically said, "I love you all. You mean the world to me, but I'm not a girl and I can't be a girl for you. Until you can accept that I can't be a part of your family."

My ex-husband told me that, by supporting Liam, I was "starting a war" and that I was committing child abuse. It was ugly. I actually was worried that I might be harming Liam so I did lots of research. When I spoke to someone at a local Pride resource centre, they asked me two very helpful questions.

"What harm could you potentially cause by supporting Liam?"

"What harm could you potentially cause by *not* supporting him?"

That made my choices going forward a lot simpler, even though the road was often tough.

"What harm could you potentially cause by not supporting him?"


Please move up a row

For a number of years, I've had the privilege of working with the ATA's professional development team to deliver workshops on gender inclusion. Whenever I deliver these workshops, teachers essentially sit in three rows. In the front are the passionate allies who are like, "Thank God you're here! I've got so many questions!" Then there's a middle row of teachers who are curious but uncertain about what to say and do and who are petrified of making a mistake. Then there's a row of teachers at the back who are sitting with their arms crossed.

My goal when I present is to move everyone in the room up a row. I want to get the allies in the front presenting and being resources for the students and teachers in their school. I want the folks in the middle row to fully understand the many ways they can help and for them to become more engaged with sharing ideas and strategies. And the folks in the back? I simply want them to be more contemplative about the serious role they play for students, colleagues and family members who are gender diverse so they will start to talk about and look for possible supports.

As a school leader, this is the same sort of strategy I take when I get a phone call from a parent about an art lesson promoting the so-called "gay agenda" because the students were painting rainbows. I push back in a gentle way. I ask them to explain what their concern actually is. I reframe the conversation to focus on inclusion and our professional and legal responsibilities to provide safe and inclusive learning environments.

"I don't know what you mean by asking me if we're promoting 'the gay agenda', exactly, but if you're asking if we're trying to promote tolerance and genuine respect, and to live the Catholic values of loving others no matter who they are or where they come from, then yes, we're doing that."

Ultimately, what's important for all of us to understand is gender-diverse kids aren't *those* kids. They're *my* kid. They're our brothers and sisters and cousins and grandkids. They're *our* students. As teachers, it's up to us to ensure that these kids are safe at school, because, unfortunately, they're not safe everywhere. 

About the author

"Kate Santos" is an assistant principal whose transgender son "Liam" works as an educational assistant in the same school division. They've asked to remain anonymous for this piece because Liam is not "out" at work and is concerned about possible career and relationship impacts if colleagues find out he was born biologically female.

GENDER

Gender is the complex interrelationship of biological, psychological, social and cultural factors.

It goes far beyond traditional binary notions of male and female, and is not necessarily fixed at birth—it often evolves as individuals learn and grow.

Across its billions of individuals and thousands of cultures, the human species embodies a diverse spectrum of genders.

Gender consists of the following four elements:



ASSIGNED SEX

Most often determined at or around the time of our birth based on our anatomy, physiology and genetics

→ Female, male, intersex, assigned male at birth, assigned female at birth, etc.



GENDER IDENTITY

Our internal understanding of who we are based on our bodies, relationships, feelings and experiences; and how we describe this identity using our existing vocabulary

→ Cisgender, nonbinary, Two-Spirit, queer, questioning, transgender (trans), etc.



ATTRACTION

Goes beyond being sexually attracted to certain types of people, and includes the degree to which we are driven to seek romantic, emotional, spiritual and intellectual relationships with others

→ Aromantic, asexual, bisexual, gay, demisexual, heterosexual, lesbian, pansexual, etc.



GENDER EXPRESSION

How we present ourselves through our clothing, hairstyle, makeup, behaviours, voice and language, which we may consciously or unconsciously vary in different situations

→ Androgynous, feminine, masculine, genderfluid, etc.

TAKE *nothing* FOR GRANTED

Dan Grassick

Staff Officer, ATA
Guest Editor, ATA Magazine

I “came out” professionally for the first time when I applied for an ATA staff officer position. I was 36 years old and a teacher and school leader with more than a decade of experience. But despite everything I had going for me, I was barely out to close friends and family and was completely closeted at work.


Through tears, I told the ATA hiring committee that I finally felt safe enough to let my employer, colleagues and students know that I was queer and this was due, in no small part, to the Association’s ongoing efforts to advocate for gender diversity and inclusion. Eight years later, as I stood in my office on the seventh floor of the ATA building, I watched in shock

as waves of protestors gathered across the street, hurled homophobic and transphobic slogans at my colleagues and tore down the Pride flag that was hanging on our parkade. It was a stark reminder: take nothing for granted.

Decades of hard-fought progress that made Alberta’s schools safer and more welcoming for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and adults are threatened by what seem to be ever-increasing misinformation, hateful rhetoric and oppressive policy decisions. We risk losing everything we’ve gained. We not only have to stand our ground, we also need to keep pushing forward.

We do this by developing a common language and by communicating in inclusive and respectful ways. We do this by dispelling myths about how gender is taught and by prioritizing the safety and belonging of our gender-diverse students and colleagues over our own discomfort or uncertainty. We do this by working

with gender- and relationship-diverse individuals to identify possible supports and by taking action.

The road ahead is challenging and not without risk, but we must work together to ensure that our classrooms, schools and communities are safe spaces where all are welcome. 



About the guest editor

Dan (they/them) is an award-winning teacher who loves to mash-up subjects and influences to create engaging learning experiences for students and teachers alike. Proudly queer and neurodiverse, Dan strives to build community wherever they are whether it’s in a classroom, around a campfire, or under a tent in the pouring rain.

No Closets IN THE CLASSROOM

A teacher's journey to authenticity

Rin Lawrence

Guest contributor

It was the look on their faces—worry, pleading, but especially hope. I was sitting with student members of my school's Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA), and they were waiting for me to answer their question.

"You are queer, right?"

What they really wanted to know was whether I was like them.

Their question left me with a choice. Was I going to be genuine and honest and come out, or was I going to continue to wear a mask of secrecy?

I always knew I was destined to teach. I was drawn to teaching long before I'd completed my own schooling, feeling that I could make a difference in students' lives. What I didn't always know was that I was transgender. It took me decades to learn and unlearn what it meant to be me. It wasn't until university that I even heard the word transgender and longer still to understand the reason I was so drawn to this word.

Being a transgender teacher has brought many challenges, but also great purpose. During the year of my probationary contract, I considered coming out because I wanted to be my best self, but I wasn't sure if doing so would impact my evaluation. When I approached my mentor teacher about it, he was personally supportive, but he suggested that I remain

closeted until I had a continuous contract to protect myself from any potential systemic transphobia. His response confirmed many of my fears, so I complied.

Being in the closet is a constant battle of pretending to be something you are not, of thinking about everything you say and do, and ensuring you are not standing out. As a teacher at the front of the classroom, I felt like I was acting on a stage. Instead of being me, I was playing a character, the quirky teacher who never talks about themselves.

Eventually, I got so used to it that I could put on the teacher mask in an instant. All the while, my true self was underneath, pretending not to exist. Over time, I began to question myself and doubt which version of myself was real.

Wearing a mask each day felt inauthentic and ultimately impacted the quality of my teaching. I felt removed from my students and incapable of creating genuine connections with them. This detachment extended to my relationships with colleagues.

Going back to that moment in the GSA, with the 2SLGBTQIA+ students and their pleading looks, as my eyes met theirs, I knew I could not continue with the mask I'd been wearing for so long, so I answered them honestly.

"Yes. I am queer."

The next moment was pivotal in my life, and came to be the driving force behind my commitment to fostering inclusion and diversity in our schools. The students' faces lit up, and smiles broke out all around the room. The moment was huge for them, but it was also huge for me. I accepted that I could no longer conceal my true self.

Bolstered by my newfound confidence, I chose to be honest with my colleagues, but was cautious at first. I approached a

... to say it out loud, freely and without being asked was scary, but also freeing.

couple of my closest friends and told them "I'm gay and I'm trans." This may seem small, but to say it out loud, freely and without being asked was scary, but also freeing.

My colleagues smiled, chuckled a couple times and hugged me. One person even told me they knew something was wrong, that they knew I had been holding back, but they hadn't pried because they hadn't wanted to push. They asked me what name and pronouns I would like them to use, and they immediately began to use them.





The best part of their reaction was asking me what I wanted them to do with the information I had shared, how I wanted it spread around the school. With relief, I told them I did not want to have the conversation 100 times with 100 staff members. Instead, I asked them to tell staff members using my old name “Hey! Did you know that he is now going by Rin and he/him pronouns?” This way, the information could spread naturally in an easy and non-judgmental way.

My next step was a visit to my principal’s office. After hearing the same script I’d used with my colleagues, she smiled and asked why I seemed concerned. I explained that I was nervous about parent reactions and how she would handle pushback. She laughed, showing no signs of trepidation. Instead, she listed multiple policies and legal acts that protected me and thoroughly affirmed my right to be myself. This was the reassurance I needed, and from that point forward I held my head up high and began to teach as me.

This freedom to be my genuine self, to no longer second guess, and to be truthful positively overhauled my mental health. But it also affected my students, especially those who attended GSA or identified as 2SLGBTQIA+. When they spoke about their futures, I started to notice something ignite in their eyes and voices. Some of them said they wanted to be teachers, and I realized they were seeing themselves in me. They were seeing a successful, queer, trans adult who had built a life despite facing systemic pressures. I realized that, by existing as myself, not only could I be out, but I could create a safe and inclusive space for my students.

As I look back on that period of my career, with seven years of hindsight, I can see that my newfound commitment to authenticity improved my teaching, contributed to the education of my school community and empowered students to be their whole selves much earlier than I had had the opportunity to do.

My time leading teachers’ GSAs has also opened my eyes to the breadth of experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ educators. I have learned that many of my colleagues have had experiences similar to mine, while others have experienced the oppression and discrimination I had feared. Coming out is not right for everyone; your safety is most important. For me, looking back, coming out was what I needed, and I would not change my path. I just wish more of my colleagues could have experienced the warmth and love that I did. ^{ATA}



About the author

Rin Lawrence (he/him) is a diversity consultant and teacher with over a decade of experience in Alberta’s education sector. He chairs the Edmonton Public Teachers Local 37 Staff Gender and Sexuality Alliance, bringing personal insights from his lived experiences with sexual and gender diversity. Rin

also serves as the lead organizer for the Alberta Teachers’ Association Gender and Sexuality Alliance, advocating for diversity as a unifying force and inspiring positive change in educational settings.

ACRONYMS AND ALTERNATIVES

Language is powerful. It elevates and celebrates as much as it represses and oppresses.

To create and maintain inclusive learning environments that welcome everyone, teachers and school leaders must be mindful of the words they use, especially when describing individuals or groups based on aspects of their identity, such as their gender.

The 2SLGBTQIA+ acronym reflects different genders and focuses on one or more of the four elements listed on page 19.

TWO-SPIRIT

Honours the wide range of traditional and contemporary Indigenous gender identities

TRANS

Used by people who do not identify with the sex assigned to them at birth

LESBIAN, GAY AND BI(SEXUAL)

Focuses on romantic and sexual attraction

QUESTIONING

A state of uncertainty or exploring of gender identity

INTERSEX

An assigned sex for individuals whose anatomical, physiological and genetic characteristics fall outside of the conventional male–female binary

QUEER

Umbrella term used in multiple ways: to describe a gender identity, particular forms of attraction and expression, or to refer to all gender-diverse people

No single acronym or inclusive term works in all cases for all people, so here are some general recommendations:

- Choose an acronym currently being used by a reputable Canadian organization:
 - ▶ 2SLGBTQ+ (Statistics Canada)
 - ▶ 2SLGBTQI+ (Egale Canada)
 - ▶ 2SLGBTQIA+ (Public Service Alliance of Canada)
- Use an inclusive term instead of an acronym. The Alberta Teachers’ Association uses “gender and relationship diverse” to recognize the important role different forms of attraction play in gender identity and to affirm diverse family structures.
- Be specific. If you’re researching Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer youth or asexual and aromantic adults, use these terms.
- Define your terms. For example, if you’re using *queer* as an inclusive term for all gender- and relationship-diverse people, explain that you won’t be using an acronym or a corresponding list of identities.

COMING IN VS COMING OUT

Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer identities

An interview with Alex Wilson

Professor, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan

How did traditional Indigenous cultures on Turtle Island understand gender and sexual identity?

Communities of people develop their own cultural norms and understandings about gender and sexual identities over generations. Indigenous cosmologies, origin stories, the way we understand our place on and in connection to the earth and other living beings, allow for all kinds of possibility.

Many creation stories include tricksters, beings who shift between animal, plant and human forms to teach us about our place in the universe and our relationship to the land and others. So, not only is there a common understanding in our world views that diversity and possibility exist, but also that transformation can and does happen. Many Indigenous cultures understand that individual identities, including gender and sexual identities, are fluid and can change.

When was the term Two-Spirit first used? What does it attempt to capture and how does it fall short?

There are a number of stories about the origin of the term Two-Spirit. What they have in common is that the modern iteration of the term came about in the early 1990s and was accepted by and adopted by the Indigenous LGBTQIA+ community as a self-descriptor that captured the variety of diverse gender and sexual identities that exist in Indigenous cultures. Although the specific interpretation of what being Two-Spirit means varies from culture to culture, the common term is seen as helpful in the promotion of a greater understanding about traditional teachings and identity in a contemporary context.

When the term was first adopted, many who self-identified as Two-Spirit took the term to mean that they possessed some balance of both male and female energy or masculinity and femininity. In our current context, however, the term Two-Spirit represents and celebrates the rich diversity of genders and sexualities found across Indigenous nations and traditions. It recognizes that we're from this land and we have a responsibility to it and to all our relations. The term is not meant to impose European notions of dualism and a male/female binary.

*Coming out is about developing a sense of your identity.
Coming in is about connection and community.*



Was the term Indigiqueer created to provide an option for those who wanted to avoid accidentally reinforcing the binary because of the two in Two-Spirit?

Indigiqueer was coined by Theo Cuthand in 2004, about a decade and a half after Two-Spirit was first used. Some Indigenous queer people don't use the term Two-Spirit because of the confusion about the "two." For others, identifying as Two-Spirit implies a certain commitment to spiritual, ceremonial and cultural roles or responsibilities. Indigiqueer is a broad term that incorporates sexual and romantic orientation as well as gender identity and gender expression and is preferred by some younger Indigenous queer people.

Can you explain the difference between "coming out" and "coming in"?

Most people are familiar with the concept of coming out. It's generally understood to describe when people come to an understanding about their gender or sexual identity, and are able to declare it to the world. As a process, coming out is about developing a sense of your identity and being able to declare who you are as an individual.

Coming in, on the other hand, is about connection and community. It's about discovering that who you are is part of something bigger than yourself. The notion of coming in came from my own research with people who identified as Two-Spirit about the processes they went through to understand, validate, express and fully present themselves as a part of their communities. Rather than being an internal, individually focused process, theirs was a process of interconnection, kinship and relationship.

All the people who took part in this study mentioned a common connection to land and place and community when they were young. As they grew older, they were forced to fragment their identity and hide a part of it to fit in (at school, for example). So, coming in for them was about creating a circle or family, in many cases, where they could be authentically included and present.

Do you have any advice for teachers or school leaders?

Being able to fully be who you are can be life-saving for queer youth. Every teacher has a shared responsibility to students to create inclusive spaces where coming in is possible. Sometimes doing this work will be uncomfortable, and teachers might need to put their personal ideology aside. We need to focus on the bigger picture: supporting the young humans in our care. ^{ATA}

About the author

Dr. Alex Wilson (she/her) is a professor in the department of Educational Foundations in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. A Two-Spirit member of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation, Wilson is the first Canadian First Nations woman to receive a doctorate from Harvard University. Her research on "coming in" theory has led to land-based learning programs and educational practices that honour the contributions and lives of Two-Spirit people. She is currently chair of 2Spirit Manitoba.

PRONOUNS

Referring to someone by their correct pronouns is as fundamental as getting their name right.

- ▶ The word preferred should not be used when describing the pronouns someone wants you to use to identify them. Who they are and how they want to be addressed are not preferences, they're an essential affirmation of their identity. Intentionally using the wrong pronouns for someone is beyond careless or disrespectful, it's hateful.
- ▶ Some may ask that no pronouns be used and that they be referred to by their names only. Others may use different sets of pronouns in different contexts (such as at school or in social settings) or may use a combination of "rolling pronouns" (he/they). If you're uncertain which pronouns to use, ask!
- ▶ Sharing your pronouns signals your allyship to gender- and relationship-diverse individuals and helps establish inclusive learning environments.

If you're unsure, just ask!

THEY/THEM

Use they/them to refer to new people until you get a chance to ask them which pronouns they use. It is very important to avoid making assumptions about the genders of people you do not know.

ENGLISH PRONOUNS

In English, the following singular third-person pronouns are used (among others):

- he/him → they/them → xe/xem → zi/hir
- she/her → ey/em → ze/zir

FRENCH PRONOUNS

Because French adjectives, nouns and pronouns reflect the masculine or feminine nature of the objects to which they refer, using gender inclusive language in French can be tricky. However, a number of gender neutral pronouns are starting to be more widely used, such as

- iel, im and ul (objective) → ael, ille and ol (subjective)

More information is available from Egale Canada

- **Affirming Adults: A Guide to Supporting Gender Diverse Children and Youth**
<https://egale.ca/awareness/affirming-adults-guide>
- **Terms and definitions**
<https://egale.ca/awareness/terms-and-definitions>

FOSTERING 2SLGBTQIA+ INCLUSION IN THE *early grades*

Caitlin Campbell

Guest contributor

Children learn about the concepts of gender and relationships starting at an early age and develop understandings about how they, their peers and their families compare within cultural patterns and societal norms. Young students frequently reinforce stereotypes by rejecting and “policing” gender-diverse peers and diverse family representations, negatively impacting 2SLGBTQIA+ students’ mental health.

Teachers can ensure the well-being of all children by creating welcoming classrooms that affirm and celebrate gender and family diversity.

Inclusive language

When addressing groups, families or new people, use inclusive language like *folks*, *friends* or *grown-ups*. Normalize and regularly use diverse gender identities, family compositions and inclusive pronouns like *they/them*. Avoid terms like “boys and girls” or grouping children by presumed gender.

Affirm diversity

Use visuals, toys and books to provide examples, opportunities and affirmation

of gender-diverse identities, expressions and play. Build respect for self-determination and diversity with phrases like

- Colours/clothes/toys are for everyone!
- It feels good to be yourself!
- Everyone decides for themselves.

Teachers can ensure the well-being of all children by creating welcoming classrooms that affirm and celebrate gender and family diversity.

Read alouds

Use picture books as anchor lessons to provide examples of gender and family diversity such as trans and non-binary characters and same-sex parented families. Build awareness and respect over time. Develop critical thinking skills using stories and illustrations by asking questions that challenge stereotypes, highlight characters’ feelings and find similarities, such as


- Why do you think __?
- Is __ true for everyone?
- They feel confident when they __!
- Who else loves gymnastics/baking cookies/karate?

Focus on normalizing rather than exceptionalizing 2SLGBTQIA+ representation.

Teachable moments

Respond to disrespectful language (e.g. “these are only for girls/boys” or using “gay” as an insult) and actions (such as exclusionary and gender-policing behaviours) right away. Respond non-judgmentally and help students develop social-emotional awareness, empathy and respect by connecting to previous discussions, read alouds or personal experiences. Model how to self-correct your own mistakes and accept correction from others.

Start now!

Teach like you have 2SLGBTQIA+ children and families in your class whether you know it or not, because you probably do! 

About the author

Caitlin Campbell (she/her) is a kindergarten teacher and a graduate student in the master of education program at the University of Calgary. She is passionate about creating joyful early childhood spaces that celebrate diversity, inclusion and anti-bias education. Her research interests include early childhood education and development, anti-oppression education for social justice, and raising awareness among educators to create safe, affirming early childhood education spaces for 2SLGBTQIA+ children and families.

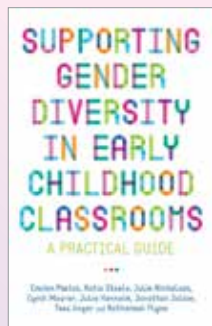
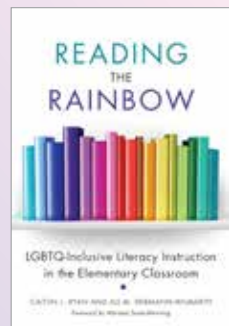
FURTHER LEARNING

BOOKS

Available through the ATA Library!

Reading the Rainbow: LGBTQ-inclusive literacy instruction in the elementary classroom

Supporting Gender Diversity in Early Childhood Classrooms: A Practical Guide



WEB RESOURCES

- **Diversity Library by Parents for Diversity**
<https://parentsfordiversity.com/diversity-library>
- **Egale**
<https://egale.ca/inclusive-schools/#tab-educator-resources>
- **Skipping Stone**
www.skippingstone.ca/resources-full#basics
- **The Gender-Friendly Classroom**
www.edcan.ca/articles/gender-friendly-classroom

THE *importance* OF APOLOGIES

Dan Grassick

Guest Editor,
ATA Magazine

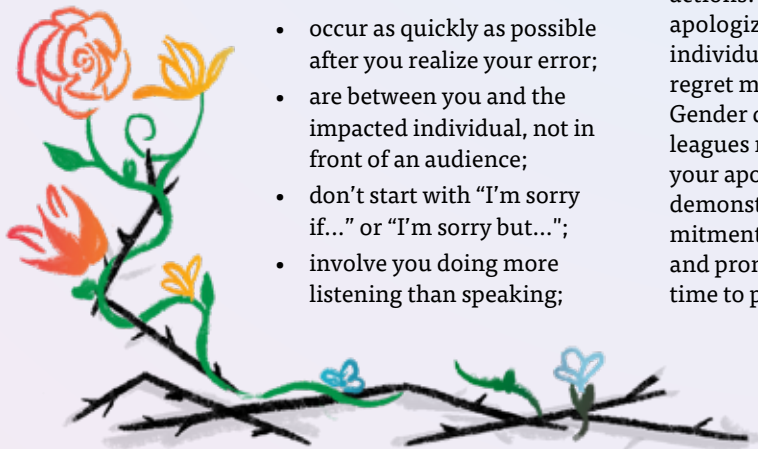
Even the most dedicated allies will, from time to time, accidentally misgender or misname their gender-diverse students and colleagues. When you make a mistake, it's important to know how to apologize.

EFFECTIVE APOLOGIES

- occur as quickly as possible after you realize your error;
- are between you and the impacted individual, not in front of an audience;
- don't start with "I'm sorry if..." or "I'm sorry but...";
- involve you doing more listening than speaking;

- are simple, heartfelt and focus on the impacted individual's feelings (not yours); and
- include a commitment on your part to improve and do better.

Our intentions don't always align with the impact of our words and actions. If you find the need to apologize repeatedly to the same individual, your expressions of regret may start to ring hollow. Gender diverse students and colleagues may choose not to accept your apology. No matter what, demonstrate your sincere commitment to getting their names and pronouns correct, take the time to practice and do better! ^{ATA}



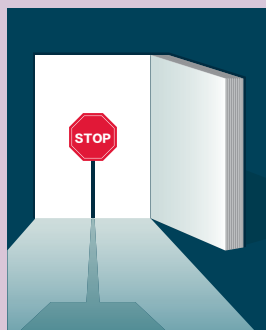
ATA TEACHER EMPLOYMENT SERVICES IS HERE FOR YOU

The *Education Act* requires that students, parents, school divisions and principals ensure that Alberta schools are welcoming, safe, caring and respectful learning environments for all students. The act also mandates that student organizations, including gay- and queer- straight alliances, are to be formed upon request.

Employers, parents and others who try to infringe on the basic human rights of gender and relationship diverse students could find themselves in jeopardy of sanction by a tribunal or court.

If you find yourself in a difficult position trying to advocate for your students or your inclusive school or classroom, please call ATA Teacher Employment Services for advice at 1-800-232-7208.

BOOK CHALLENGES ON THE RISE



In Canada, in 2023 *Maclean's* and *CBC News* reported that an online group of individuals launched co-ordinated book challenges in Ontario and British Columbia, seeking to remove all books that discuss sexual orientation and gender identity.

“When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part.”

-Rudine Sims Bishop, "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors," in *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom*, 1990

What to do?

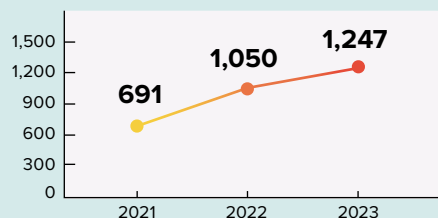
The Canadian School Libraries organization issued a statement in May 2023 that provides a number of recommendations for school divisions, including the following:

- ▶ Establish and follow procedures for the reconsideration of library resources so that challenges are handled professionally and unemotionally.
- ▶ Resist calls to deny students' right to read based on values that do not align with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and *Canadian Human Rights Act*.
- ▶ Re-invest in professional library staffing and quality collections.

The United States has seen a growing trend in the number of requests to ban books in schools. Nearly half of targeted titles represent the voices and lived experiences of gender-diverse and racialized people.

Source: American Library Association (ALA)

NUMBER OF REQUESTS TO BAN BOOKS



YOUR heart IS A MUSCLE

Ivan Coyote

Guest contributor

There is a picture of seventeen-year-old me on the wall in my high school, class of 1987. I have a spiral perm and I am wearing my favourite sweater. I look very much like the other girls I graduated with. Same shellacked hair, same sparkly blue eyeshadow.

But I wasn't. I was wearing a costume in order to survive and escape.

I grew up in a Catholic family in the Yukon in the seventies and eighties, and even though I was loved by my giant family, I was lonesome. I knew since forever that I was not like the other little girls at school somehow, and I could not imagine growing up to be like my mom or my aunts or my grandmothers, no matter how much I loved and respected all of them. In the songs I heard, in the movies I watched and in the many books I read, I never heard mention, or even caught a glimpse, of anyone else like me.

Coming out in high school back then didn't feel anything close to possible. I didn't even know any queer adults. I had no role models, no road map, no history, no evidence.

When I first started to write stories and publish books, I wrote them for that lonely, teenaged me. I wrote my history down, and imagined and invented a future for myself so I might be found, or followed.

The first time I was invited to come and read my work in a public high school, well over 20 years ago now, I swallowed all my teenage ghosts and high school hallway memories and went, knowing what it would have meant to a younger me to see and hear a real live queer and trans person stand up in my school library and tell a true story about themselves, what it would have meant back then to have been gifted with any possibility of a future me.

Over two decades later, I have now published 13 books and have performed for more than half a

million middle and high school students, in many different countries, and on five continents. This is not easy work. Compared to a soft-seat theatre full of consenting adults with paid tickets in their pockets, school shows are a grind. I do this work because it is important. Because every single one of us, no matter who we are, need to see a reflection of ourselves in the world around us. And for queer and trans kids who might be forced out of their families, homes, schools or communities by the current rising tide of hate and misinformation, this work is even more important and vital.

Mic drop

Back in 2018, I went to Vernon B.C. on a four day tour of schools that would culminate in an evening of storytelling for parents in the district. A couple of hours before the evening gig, the principal who had organized the tour called me.

"Just a heads up," she said, "we've just been warned by the police that there might be a protest tonight at your show. A conservative parents' group might picket outside and try to disrupt your performance."

"Try not to worry about it. We've asked for a visible security presence in the school, and police are alerted and will be in the area. Let's go with the business-as-usual strategy," she said, using her best principal voice.

So I tried not to worry about it, and I told stories to about 400 parents in a school gymnasium that night. Turned out there were no protestors outside, and nobody disrupted my performance. In fact, we had a pretty fun time, until the question-and-answer session at the end.



A thin woman stood up and told me that she had come that night expecting to have a problem with my stories. That she had kept her kids home from school the previous day so they wouldn't be exposed to my ideas. That she was expecting to be offended by me and had planned to stand up and march out tonight in protest, but she hadn't. She said I actually seemed like a nice person, and that she was sorry that I was going to burn in hell for eternity.

She said she believed trans people are a scientific accident, that our mothers had been exposed to toxic chemicals while we were in the womb, chemicals found in lead paint, or that had leached into food from the lining of tin cans and Jiffy Pop. Jiffy Pop popcorn was full of stuff that could cause birth defects such as transsexuals, she informed the gobsmacked room, and that chemically altered trans people shouldn't be allowed around children because we could give them ideas about themselves, ideas that could spread, and did I think I was a toxic chemical trans, or did I catch it from hearing trans ideas somewhere?

A man in the front row stood up and asked if he could address her question. Normally I would never do what I did next, which was remove the microphone from the stand and walk over and hand it to the big bearded guy standing in the front row, but I knew this particular man. He was with his very pregnant wife and their five-year-old daughter, who just happened to

Unfortunately, things feel worse for us now than they ever have. The clock has not only stopped but has been rewound by decades.

be wearing a frilly pink dress and a tiara. I knew this man, and I trusted him.

He took the mic from me and turned to face everyone. He said his name was Laoh and explained that he had just moved to Vernon with his wife and young family. He was a nurse, he said, and a trans man. He said that, to his knowledge, his mother had never eaten any Jiffy Pop when she was pregnant with him, but she had made her home very unsafe for him when he came out, and that he had had to leave home as a result. He explained that his teenage years had been hell. He told the crowd that if he could have made himself straight instead of trans he would have, as a survival tactic. If there had been an easier road he would have taken it, he said.

He said he hoped with all of his heart that none of the woman's kids were queer or trans because she was obviously not able to reconcile her hate enough to be a loving parent. But that was okay, because her kids would find people like him, and me, in the world who would be there to love and support them even if she could not. We would step up and take care of her children if she couldn't or wouldn't. Then Laoh sat back down.

Talk about a mic drop.

In 2018, I could laugh about that woman and her Jiffy Pop theories, because we were moving forward, making progress. Back then I thought that woman and her hateful pseudoscience were an anomaly, not an omen. Unfortunately, things feel worse for us now than they ever have. The clock has not only stopped but has been rewound by decades.

Losing ground


I just read this back to myself and wondered, did I just write rewound as in wind back, or rewound as in wound again? For me, the answer is both. We have gone back in time, and all of that hurt is happening again, only worse now, because for a while we were given glimpses of a better time, a more loving world, and then they were snatched away and replaced with bathroom bills and protests and vitriol and fearmongering.

The crowds that we see increasingly protesting in our streets are advocating for queer and trans youth to be as lonesome and afraid and closeted at school as they may be at home. These people are willing to fight to force queer and trans kids to remain closeted and unsupported rather than giving them the chance to live authentically for a few hours a day.

These are hard times to be a teacher. I did seven high school presentations last week and came home every afternoon exhausted, and reminded again of how much heart and energy it takes to stand up in front of a group of teenagers and hold their attention.

We cannot cave to political pressure and force ourselves and those kids back into a political closet.

But we have to continue to do this work. It is not hyperbole to say that providing a trans or non-binary kid with a safe place to learn is a life-changing act, and quite possibly a life-saving one. We cannot cave to political pressure and force ourselves and those kids back into a political closet.

I want to close with the words of Leslie Feinberg, the blue-collar author of *Stone Butch Blues*, which was the first book I ever picked up and truly found a version of myself in. Feinberg writes: "I'm not saying we'll live to see some sort of paradise. But just fighting for change makes you stronger. Not hoping for anything will kill you for sure. Take a chance. You're already wondering if the world could change. Try imagining a world worth living in, and then ask yourself if that isn't worth fighting for. You've come too far to give up hope." 



About the author

Ivan Coyote (they/them) is a celebrated storyteller, filmmaker and performer from Whitehorse, Yukon. Their books have received numerous awards,

have been included on the long list for Canada Reads and have been nominated for the Governor General's Award for Non-Fiction. Ivan is the recipient of two honorary doctorates and has served as the writer-in-residence at multiple Canadian universities. Ivan currently works as a specialist in inclusion and creative expression at Yukon University.



ATAGSA MEMBERS SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS

about allyship and the importance of supporting gender diversity among students and teachers



True allyship is about learning, listening ... and being brave.

– John (he/they), high school teacher from Calgary

BEING VISIBLE is so important. I had a student tell me last year that they didn't think that as a non-binary person they could work in education, but now they have the confidence to do so because they had a non-binary teacher. These moments of recognition and future possibility are so important!

– Sarah (they/them), high school teacher from Treaty 7

I AM NOT out at work because I feel that I would be treated very differently in the community that I work in.

– Q (she/her), junior/senior high teacher from rural Alberta

REAL ALLIES show up, listen to our voices, understand the challenges that we are facing, and then constantly work to use their own privilege and power to pave the way forward alongside us. They throw themselves in front of the fire to keep us safe, knowing that they will not be burned the way we will. Allyship is an ongoing action rather than a passive identity. Ally is a title that must be earned.

– Nic (they/she), Grade 7–9 teacher from Edmonton

ASK FOR PRONOUNS.

Use those pronouns. And when you mess up, apologize and move on.

– D (he/him), junior high teacher from Calgary

GENDER-DIVERSE

people are born into a diaspora. We grow up around family and friends who rarely understand us in our entirety. This isn't their fault, especially given that we often must do a lot of growing up before we even fully understand ourselves. We often recognize from a young age that we are different in some way. Feeling different means feeling alone, and feeling alone means feeling scared. Scared students will struggle to learn, thrive, and grow to meet their full potential. As teachers and administrators, we must try to make our schools explicitly safe places for students to be their entire selves.

– M (she/her), high school teacher from Calgary



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Pressure cooker

Alberta school leaders are feeling compassion fatigue and burnout

Lisa Everitt

Staff Officer, ATA



A leader builds positive working relationships with members of the school community and local community.”

— *Alberta’s Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) for school leaders*

THE ABOVE EXPECTATION is set out by Alberta’s 2023 *Leadership Quality Standard (LQS)* for school leaders. According to the LQS, indicators of this competency include demonstrating commitment to the well-being of members of the school community; creating a warm, safe and caring environment for students and staff; and showing concern and empathy toward others. This human-centred and relational approach to leading a school community means that school leaders must provide emotional support in their interactions with colleagues, students and other members of the school community.

A May 2023 survey conducted in partnership with the Alberta Teachers’ Association found that Alberta school leaders are experiencing both satisfaction and fatigue with respect to the emotional support they provide, as well as a variety of burnout symptoms.

COMPASSION SATISFACTION AND COMPASSION FATIGUE

Compassion involves noticing the suffering of others, experiencing empathy for their suffering, then taking action to relieve the suffering. Providing this type of support during times of crisis or trauma can create compassion fatigue and compassion stress for the caregiver, potentially leading to symptoms that resemble post-traumatic stress disorder in its most severe form (ATA and Kendrick 2020). On the other end of the compassion continuum is compassion satisfaction, which helps protect mental and emotional well-being. Compassion satisfaction results when caregivers find ways to help others and know that their efforts make a difference for those they are helping (ATA and Kendrick 2020).

For this particular study, the levels of compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue in school leaders was assessed based on a validated scale called the Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL) Scale Version 5 (Stamm 2012).



TOP 5 SYMPTOMS OF BURNOUT

1. Lack of energy
2. Exhaustion
3. Memory problems
4. Concentration problems
5. Reduced initiative for work-related tasks

- May 2023 ATA survey

Using this scale, data collected using an online survey was converted into a score that reflected levels of compassion fatigue and satisfaction being experienced by participants at the time they completed the survey. Across the 104 participants, the average score for compassion satisfaction was 32, indicating a moderate level, and the average score for compassion fatigue was 35, also indicating a moderate level.

These moderate levels for both compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction demonstrate the complex nature of these phenomena for school leaders. The two phenomena coexist in a school leader's work life as these individuals can experience both the joy and the pain of caregiving in their regular work day.

However, when school leaders were asked, upon seeing their ProQOL scores, which concept related most strongly to their mental state, 67 per cent of them identified with compassion fatigue. When asked why they selected compassion fatigue, school leader participants shared many reasons for their choice, such as feeling burdened by taking on the worries of others and feeling depleted by their efforts.

Participants who identified their emotional state as being closer to compassion satisfaction shared that they worked in supportive environments where they felt they were able to make a difference and build strong relationships.

Overall, school leaders' responses demonstrate that they work in environments where they are trying to create positive school environments, but their work is unrelenting, underresourced, emotionally draining and not well respected.

Research has revealed that "acting against one's internal emotions has a significant association with anxiety, stress, and diminished psychological wellness." (Jeung, Kim and Chang 2022, 190). Given the LQS requirements and the intensive emotional labour that leaders have invested in their relationships at school, it is important to understand how the emotional work of school leadership can impact mental and emotional well-being.

continued on page 35



I IDENTIFY WITH COMPASSION FATIGUE BECAUSE ...

- “[I’m] having to take on the worries of my staff colleagues, students and their parents.”
- “I feel drained most of the time. My efforts just don't seem to make a difference in the ways that I hope they would. There are so many children and families in crisis and not enough support.”

I IDENTIFY WITH COMPASSION SATISFACTION BECAUSE ...

- “I enjoy seeing people prosper and gain positive self esteem as a result of my helping them.”
- “I left a position where I had no autonomy and am now in a position to affect change.”

- Survey responses

ISTOCK ADAPTED



- ▶ This research report can be found on the Association's website <https://teachers.ab.ca/professional-development/education-research/research-publications>.



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continued from page 33

School leaders and burnout

Responses from school leaders to the question, which of the following symptoms of burnout have you experienced since January 2023?

VALUE	PERCENT	RESPONSES
Lack of energy	94.7	89
Exhaustion	88.3	83
Memory problems	79.8	75
Concentration problems	77.7	73
Reduced initiative to complete work-related tasks	64.9	61
Sleep disorders	59.6	56
Reduced performance of work-related tasks	57.4	54
Reduced desire to help colleagues or other staff	55.3	52
Reduced imagination or creativity	53.2	50
Inability to make decisions	47.9	45
Apathy or lack of emotional commitment to work	46.8	44
Reduced desire to help students	36.2	34

List of symptoms derived from the Maslach and Jackson Burnout Inventory (1981). Items from the Burnout Inventory were updated to reflect school settings.

BURNOUT

Jeung, Kim and Chang (2022) define burnout as “a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress” (188). Burnout differs from compassion fatigue and compassion stress because, while both phenomena are linked to occupational hazards, compassion fatigue and compassion stress are linked to providing trauma and crisis care and can result from single occurrences, whereas burnout occurs over a longer period of time and results from many factors such as “work overload, multiple demands, emotional labour, and a lack of psychological safety” (Corrente, Ferguson and Borgeault 2022, 22).

To measure burnout, the May 2023 survey asked school leaders to review a

list of 12 symptoms and check off those they had experienced within the previous four months. Lack of energy received the highest response rate, with 94.7 per cent of participants checking it off. This was followed by exhaustion (88.3 per cent), memory problems (79.8), concentration problems (77.7) and reduced initiative for work-related tasks (64.9).


This data suggests most of the school leaders participating in this survey were experiencing a variety of burnout symptoms. This finding is consistent with other research studies conducted by teacher organizations and academic researchers in both Canada and internationally (Agyapong, Obuobi-Donkor, Burbach and Wei 2022; Corrente, Ferguson and Borgeault 2022; ATA

and Kendrick 2020, 2021a, 2021b). The seriousness of the burnout symptoms experienced by school leaders invites a rethinking and change from “the dominant narrative [which] is that we need to monitor and improve the mental health and well-being of teachers because it might affect the mental health and well-being of students. Instead, the narrative needs to change to reflect the fact that teacher mental health is human mental health” (Corrente, Ferguson and Borgeault 2022, 33). This shift in narrative would delink school leaders from the important work they provide and would validate their right to be healthy as a part of our common humanity as opposed to only for the work they provide.

WHAT NOW?

In this study, school administrators largely felt responsible for the school culture and strongly identified with the statements, "I am a caring person" (98 per cent) who finds it "difficult to separate my personal life from my life as an educator" (59 per cent) and feel "overwhelmed because my workload seems endless" (70 per cent).

This data illustrates the need to consider the occupational well-being of school leaders who work to build caring communities in schools for everyone. School leader participants identified a variety of activities they used to achieve wellness physically, mentally, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. However, despite these self-directed and individual efforts, other measures must be considered. Developing safe and caring school cultures requires a collective approach, engaging with communities, students, teachers and school leaders through compassionate leadership.

For school leaders, these interventions should include increased system and organizational interventions from governments and school boards to ensure reduction in workload through the proper resourcing of mental and emotional health professionals to address the complex challenges in Alberta schools. 

STUDY METHODOLOGY

This research project is intended to explore the emotional labour of education staff, including school leaders. Data was collected at three different time points: June 2020, January 2021 and May 2023. This article reflects a data subset from the May 2023 survey of participants who selected their role as school administration.

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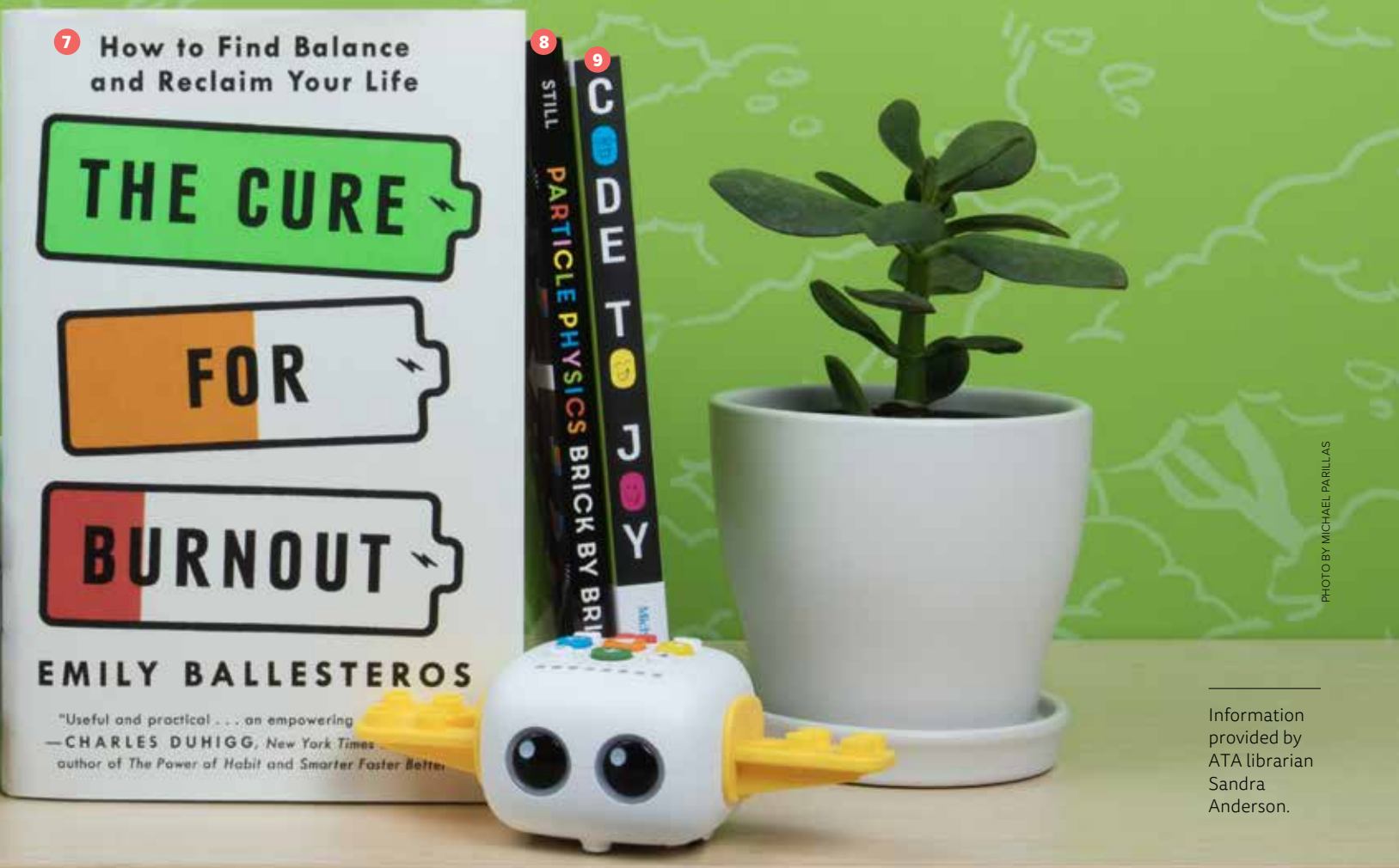
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Information provided by
ATA librarian
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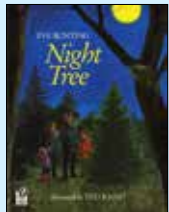
Andrea Mishio

I Wish My Teacher Knew: How One Question Can Change Everything for Our Kids.

It makes you reflect on how, like us, kids can and do come with baggage. We need to remember that a lot happens outside the walls of our school.

What's your favourite “seasonal book” to use with students?

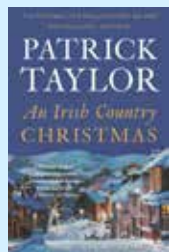
Christmas



Night Tree

It's a beautiful Christmas book about sharing the spirit of Christmas with nature.

Sinead Dullaghan



An Irish Country Christmas

Charming.

Jennifer Prestash

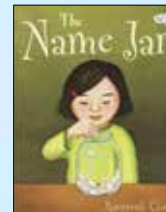
Back to school



Sometimes I Feel Like a Fox

This book explores the Anishinaabe tradition of totem poles, and children can identify with the different animal guides as they use the guides to understand themselves and others. This is a great book for the beginning of the year.

Barb Kendall



The Name Jar

A great book to start the school year, or to kick off a unit on identity, personal history, or about friendship and fitting in at school. This picture book is excellent for any grade to think about the importance of the names we call ourselves.

Joshua LaFleur

Halloween



Creepy Carrots!, Creepy Pair of Underwear! and Creepy Crayon!

These fun and easy books by Aaron Reynolds tie into some good art projects.

Colin Olthof

Remembrance Day



The Day War Came

This book is about a refugee's experience, peace, inclusion, acceptance and making a place for someone.

Adrienne Biever

Teacher recommendations gathered via Facebook.



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Employing strategic foresight to best support the profession

THE ATA ENGAGES IN STRATEGIC planning and forecasting activities across short-, medium- and long-term horizons to identify trends that will continue to shape public education.

What is strategic planning?

Strategic planning is a systematic process that includes setting goals, defining strategies and allocating resources to realize a preferred future. Part of this includes strategic foresight work: anticipating or conceptualizing future outcomes, trends and contexts to inform decision-making within an organization.

What does this look like for the provincial ATA?

The ATA has developed a strategic framework to energize a vibrant teaching profession in Alberta and, with education partners and the involvement of the public, to support great schools for all through

thoughtful strategic actions. The framework includes

- strategic directions — actions ATA members take to contribute to the desired long-term impact of the ATA's mandate; and
- directional beacons — navigational aids that guide progress toward the strategic direction, while also allowing the ATA to adapt its journey toward the desired outcomes over time.

Key to the ATA's strategic planning is the Strategic Planning Group (SPG), which aims to develop the capacity for strategic actions in the teaching profession in Alberta and advises Provincial Executive Council on long-term directions. The SPG includes staff, members of Provincial Executive Council and field members (teachers like you!).

Can ATA locals or subgroups receive grants for strategic planning?

Yes, they can and do!

ATA locals and subgroups can apply for a strategic planning grant to conduct strategic planning activities to examine their long-term goals and activities in the context of the ATA's strategic framework. Local sessions on strategic planning and foresight are often supported by ATA staff as well.

How can I learn more about foresight and trends?

Check out the ATA's website for events and resources:

- Educational research briefs (available under Professional development > Education research)
- Public lectures and other events (Watch for future events!)
- Grants for subgroups (apply under Professional development > Grants, awards and scholarships) 

Check out new resources and research available on the ATA website.



Supporting Ukrainian Newcomer Students and Their Families in Alberta Schools



Hope: Resilience and Recovery
A Report for the Alberta Teachers' Association





Utiliser la prospective stratégique pour soutenir au mieux la profession

L'ATA ENTREPREND DES ACTIVITÉS de planification stratégique et de prévision à court, moyen et long terme pour dégager les tendances qui façonneront l'avenir de l'éducation publique.

Qu'est-ce que la planification stratégique?

La planification stratégique est un processus systématique qui comprend la détermination d'objectifs, la définition de stratégies et l'affectation de ressources en vue de la réalisation d'un avenir souhaité. Cela comprend notamment le travail de prospective stratégique qui consiste à anticiper ou à conceptualiser les développements, les tendances et les contextes futurs pour éclairer la prise de décision au sein d'une organisation.

Quelle forme prend-elle à l'ATA provinciale?

L'ATA a élaboré un cadre stratégique afin d'insuffler de l'énergie à une profession enseignante dynamique en Alberta et, avec des partenaires du secteur de l'éducation et la participation du public, de soutenir d'excellentes écoles pour tous par des actions stratégiques réfléchies. Ce cadre comprend notamment :

- des orientations stratégiques,

c'est-à-dire des actions entreprises par les membres de l'ATA afin de contribuer à faire en sorte que le mandat de l'ATA produise l'effet recherché à long terme;

- des balises directionnelles ou aides à la navigation qui guident la progression de l'orientation stratégique tout en permettant à l'ATA d'adapter son cheminement au fil du temps en fonction des résultats souhaités.

Le Strategic Planning Group (groupe de planification stratégique ou SPG), qui vise à développer la capacité d'action stratégique au sein de la profession enseignante en Alberta et à conseiller le Conseil exécutif provincial sur les orientations à long terme, joue un rôle clé dans la planification stratégique de l'ATA. Le SPG comprend des membres du personnel et du Conseil exécutif provincial ainsi que des membres travaillant sur le terrain (des enseignants comme vous!).

Les sections locales ou sous-groupes de l'ATA peuvent-ils recevoir des subventions à la planification stratégique?

Oui, c'est possible et ils en reçoivent! Les sections locales et les sous-groupes de l'ATA peuvent demander une subvention à la planification stratégique pour

mener des activités de planification stratégique dans le but d'examiner leurs objectifs à long terme et leurs activités dans le contexte du cadre stratégique de l'ATA. De plus, il arrive souvent que des membres du personnel de l'ATA offrent leur soutien aux sections locales de l'ATA qui organisent des activités portant sur la planification et la prospective stratégique.

Comment peut-on en apprendre davantage sur la prospective et les tendances?

Consultez le site Web de l'ATA pour vous informer au sujet des événements présentés et des ressources offertes :

- Educational research briefs (coups d'œil sur la recherche en éducation) (sous Professional development > Education research)
- Conférences publiques et autres événements (surveillez les événements à venir!)
- Subventions offertes aux sous-groupes (pour présenter une demande : Professional development > Grants, awards and scholarships) ^{ATA}

Consultez les nouvelles ressources et les recherches récemment publiées sur le site de l'ATA.



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Creative colleagues

Teachers have their own extracurricular activities. Some volunteer. Some write books. Others produce podcasts, create art or make music. Here are some endeavours undertaken by your colleagues “out there.”

BOOKS



The Good Heart

Ben Galeski, a teacher at St. Joseph's Collegiate, has published his second novel. His newest book, *The Good Heart*, tells the story of young Joseph Benson, who leaves his ranch home and family in southern Alberta to enlist with the Canadian Expeditionary Force to fight in the First World War. In the trenches in France, Joseph and his comrades are exposed to the horrors of one of the ugliest, most brutal wars ever fought. Through it all, he has only his faith and his inner strength of character to sustain him.

BEN GALESKI

*St. Joseph's Collegiate, Brooks
Justin Press, justinpress.ca*



Reggie the Ranger Endangered Species Series

Recently retired teacher Brian Makaruk has published *Mystery of the Missing Kako Eggs* and *Mystery of the Madagascar Fire*, two books in his Reggie the Ranger Endangered Species Series. These children's books feature a red panda, Reggie the Ranger, who is committed to protecting the world's forests and their inhabitants. Part of a larger set of books by Makaruk that highlight endangered species or habitats around the world, Reggie the Ranger's stories contain facts and vocabulary words to help children learn about endangered species and unique habitats all over the world.

BRIAN MAKARUK

*Retired teacher, The Northern Lights School Division
Oxford Book Writers/Independently published
www.redpandabookstore.com*

PRESENTATIONS



National Conference on Science Education

High school science teacher Tyler Buchan travelled to Denver to present at the National Science Teaching Association's annual conference, the National Conference on Science Education. Buchan gave two presentations during the conference,

one on formative assessment techniques and one on laboratory skills performance assessments. Buchan was happy to see his sessions very well attended, to engage in conversations with teachers from around the USA and to be able to share some of what he does in his classroom.

TYLER BUCHAN

*Salisbury Composite High School, Sherwood Park
X @BuchanTyler*



World Aviation Training Summit

In 2024, aviation, chemistry and physics teacher Dana Marshall, who earned her commercial pilot's license earlier this year, presented at the 2024 World Aviation Training Summit in Orlando.

At the summit, Marshall shared the story of the South Alberta Flight Academy (SAFA). Based out of Eagle Butte High School and headed up by Marshall, SAFA (in partnership with Super T Aviation) is Canada's only flight training program contained within a high school. Marshall presents frequently on the program, how it started and where it is headed next.

DANA MARSHALL

*Eagle Butte High School, Dunmore
X @southalbertaflight*

- ▶ **What's new with you?** If you'd like to make a submission for publication in *Who's Out There?*, email a summary (50–75 words) to associate editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca.





PHOTOS BY CRYSTAL PLUM

The flower blossoms

Principal Jillian Marino on the moments that matter

Lindsay Yakimyshyn

Associate Editor, *ATA Magazine*

JILLIAN MARINO EXUDES CONFIDENCE.

It's hard to imagine her as a new teacher, struggling to make it to the end of the week. But she remembers that time well.

She was a newly minted teacher, and her students could smell the new-teacher fear. She just knew it. One Friday afternoon, after the last student had left, she closed the classroom door and the tears came.

Marino called her aunt, a veteran teacher. How could she do better? How could she make it through another week?

"Jill," her aunt began, "You can't always look back on the week and say that was a great week. And you can't always look back on the day and say that was a great day. But you can look back and find those moments of brilliance."

Now a veteran teacher and school leader herself, Marino still hears her aunt's words and pays the lesson forward.

RUNNING TOWARD A CHALLENGE

Marino always knew she would become a teacher one day. When she finished her bachelor of arts at the University of Victoria, she had her eye on teaching programs.

"Some people find teaching. For me, it was always the thing I wanted to do," she says.

So, when Marino was waitlisted for the bachelor of education (BEd) program at the University of Alberta (U of A), she was devastated but undeterred. She completed a teaching practicum at the University

of Lethbridge and then landed a spot as a late entrant at the U of A, where she completed the post-degree program in secondary education.

After tackling various assignments at different schools, Marino was asked to take on a role as social studies department head. She wasn't sure if it was the best fit — she was a young French specialist who loved coaching sports teams — but was willing to run toward the challenge. She soaked up every moment, finding new ways to connect with her students and colleagues. Before she knew it, an assistant principal position opened up at the school. Marino took a chance and applied.

"I never planned to be a principal. That was never a goal, and I was not on the trajectory," she says, "I love teaching and I love working with kids, but I got invited to be part of that, so I said yes."

She has been in school leadership ever since.

FIERCE

For nearly 24 years, Marino has been a school leader in the Edmonton area, currently serving as principal of Vimy Ridge, a sports academy. The needs of each school in which she has served have varied — food insecurity, high behavioural or medical needs, or complex community partnerships — and each assignment has become a new opportunity to prove her resolve to support her school community and the individuals in it.



“When a flower doesn’t bloom,
**you fix the environment in which
it grows, not the flower.”**

*A quote from Alexander den Heijer that
inspires Marino every day.*

“When someone’s not having success, whether it’s a student, a parent, a colleague, we have to figure out how to create that fertile environment,” Marino says, “Looking at what we have in that environment to make sure the flower blossoms is a great strategy for making change.”

Principal Christina Jones, who taught alongside Marino years ago, attests to Marino’s commitment to her students’ success.

“She’s a strong champion of kids. She’ll make every effort to find a support for a child,” Jones says.

Jones adds that Marino has been successful in school leadership because her heart is as much with the teachers beside her as with the students and families she serves. And because when Marino talks, people listen.

“She’s fierce,” Jones says. “There are very few as fierce as Jillian is, in a loving, caring, professional way.”


THE TOP OF THEIR GAME

Marino first took the lead because the door was open, and she chose to run through it. Now, she makes sure to keep that door open. This means fostering and engaging in collegial networks to help her colleagues be at the top of their game.

“Leadership can be really lonely — lonely at the top,” she reflects, “So it’s important to have each other and build those networks of support.”

With her own mix of kindness and determination, Marino mentors teachers and other schools leaders in their professional journeys. She remembers that teachers are all humans — no matter how skilled they are at leaving those worries at home in the morning so they can teach, coach and lead.

Now nearly done a master’s degree in counselling, Marino finds fulfillment in working through difficult moments with her colleagues, trying to help them find their moments of brilliance to get through those tough times.

“It really is about those moments of brilliance where you’ve reached that child or supported a parent in their challenges with a child or helped a colleague,” Marino says, “Those are the moments that matter. And when you can collect those, then you know you have had a career of success.” 

ONE MORE MOMENT WITH *Jillian Marino*

With you taking so much on in your personal and professional life, what do you do to take care of yourself?

Honestly, giving back through my work with the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (SACE) and The Family Centre is totally bucket-filling. Also, spending time with my husband, children and friends, sharing meals, skiing in BC, spending time out at the lake, camping or just in our own backyard are ways to refresh, replenish and rejuvenate for all the other tasks.

You have given powerful talks on a traumatic event you experienced. How have you been able to build resilience and move forward with such strength?

It is surprising how each of us has the capacity to dig deep to find the resources and strength to move through challenging times when we are surrounded by people who care. I have been fortunate in my life and my career to be surrounded by a loving family, fabulous friendships and compassionate colleagues.

When tragedy occurs, I like to shift my thoughts from “Why did this happen to me?” to “What do I do with this experience and the new knowledge I have from it?” and the simple answer is to pay it forward to others who may find themselves walking the same path but wearing different shoes.

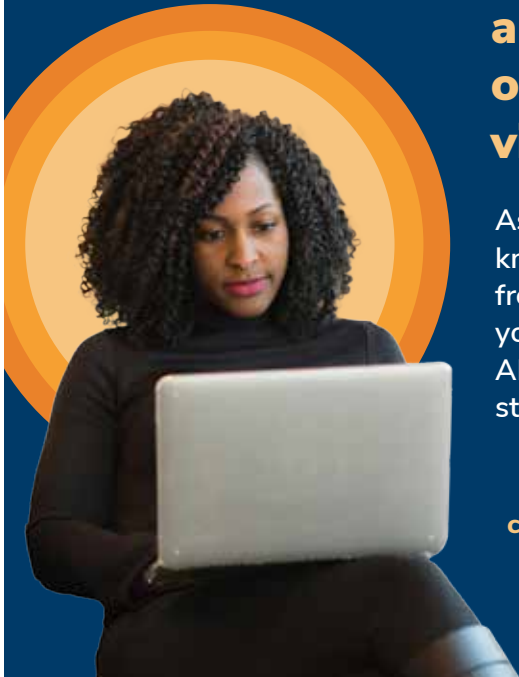
- ▶ **Got an idea?** In Profile features an interesting teacher in each issue of the *ATA Magazine*. If you know of a teacher who would be a good profile subject, please contact managing editor Cory Hare at cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.



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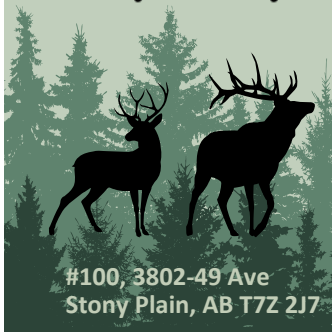
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Lifelong learning

What have you learned recently that made you a better teacher?

For my students to feel happy and safe, I need to feel happy and safe.
– Jennifer Prestash

The importance of modeling responsible AI use for students.
– Thomas Rogers

Focus on the “science of gratitude” and how being gracious can impact the day.
– Courtney Albrecht

Planning hands-on learning connected to curricular outcomes. This helps connect students to the “why” of learning what they learn.
– Adedeji Bowoade

The more students know why they are doing something or learning something, the more they will care, try, put themselves into it, get out of it.
– Joshua Lafleur

Gratitude has helped a lot of students with their mental health. Validating student feelings helps their motivation and willingness to learn.
– Temina Girod

I am not the sole knowledge holder in the room.
– Chelsea Goulet

Teaching is a community practice. Collective teacher efficacy is our most powerful tool. Take the time to connect.
– Adrienne Biever


Classroom management: clear, comprehensive discussions with students regarding consequences.
– Alyssa Bilodeau

▶ See more at facebook.com/ABteachers.



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ISTOCK

Good game, well played

Video games' narrative power connects student experience with curriculum

Thomas Rogers

Assistant Principal,
S. Bruce Smith School, Edmonton

WHILE TEACHING Grade 9 Language Arts during the pandemic, I used the extra time from the cancelled Provincial Achievement Test to introduce a unit I had begun years earlier: “Video Games as Narrative.”

In the early days of video games, the story was an afterthought, but video games' ability to tell stories has evolved significantly over the years, such that they can now tell more complex and compelling interactive stories than traditional mediums. Since video games can tell stories, they are “texts” or “other media

texts,” as referenced in the program of studies for multiple grade levels.

In designing my unit, I chose several games with varying levels of storytelling complexity and spanning the history of gaming. These included classic text-based adventures such as *Zork* and the original *Legend of Zelda* for Nintendo, up to modern platformers like *CrossCode*, *But You Seem Fine*, *The Republica Times* and a game still in development. (Even for teachers who are limited to free games on Chromebooks, there is an excellent selection available.)

I introduced my unit by providing students with a toolkit to analyze video games in an academic context. Students critically analyzed various games and undertook projects in game creation, storytelling, persuasive writing and

presentations. They shared their experiences, demonstrated critical thinking about characters and stories, and debated the validity of video games as an art form and storytelling medium. Their work, including presentations, essays and original stories, demonstrated their learning and curriculum mastery, culminating in a gallery walk.

Video games are a significant part of our students' narrative experiences, as suggested by a 2020 study by the Entertainment Software Association of Canada, which found that 23 million Canadians identified as gamers, equally split between males and females. Let's embrace this digital revolution, view the gaming controller with the same reverence as a book, and dive into the exhilarating world of play. Let the games begin! ^{ATA}

- **Got an Idea?** Teacher Hacks is a place for colleagues to share their awesome ideas. If you have a hack that you'd like to share with your colleagues, please email a summary and photos to managing editor Cory Hare at cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

Hot or cold?

Unexpected response changes tone of potentially disruptive episode

Dan Grassick

Staff Officer, ATA



ILLUSTRATION BY ERIN SOLANO

THE CHALLENGE
Responding to a stressful situation by remaining calm.

IT'S EARLY SPRING.

I'm the school leader in the office of my K-9 school when Jamal is sent down from his Grade 1 class. Jamal has been disruptive and needs a place to reregulate himself. Jamal comes in screaming. I decide to play it cool.

I explain to Jamal that I need a few minutes to finish an email. I tell him that I understand he is upset and wants to talk, but I ask him to please sit quietly until I finish my email. This seems to surprise Jamal. He immediately becomes quiet and remains this way for about three minutes, then he starts making noises to intentionally disrupt me.

"Don't worry, Jamal. I'll talk to you soon," I say without looking up from my laptop. "Please keep your noises to yourself."

This buys me another minute or two of quiet. Finally, Jamal ups the ante.

"You're stupid," he says.

Again, without looking up, I say, "Nice try, Jamal."

“ Jamal comes in screaming. I decide to play it cool.”

A minute later, Jamal doubles down.

"Your mom is stupid," he says.

Well, this is bait I just have to bite. I reach for my desk phone and call my mom, who just happens to be an elementary school principal at another school in the division.

"Good morning, mom," I say into the phone. "I have Jamal from Grade 1 with me here and he just told me you're stupid."

Over the phone, my mom responds, "That's strange. I don't think I know Jamal, but that's not the sort of thing he should be saying."

I ask Jamal if he wants to talk to my mom and hand him the handset. He practically becomes two dimensional as he tries to disappear into

the back of his chair. I tell my mom that it doesn't look like Jamal wants to say anything else, so I thank her and hang up the phone.

After that, Jamal and I have a quiet and respectful talk about how people like to be communicated with, about feelings, and positive ways he can go about getting help if he is having a not-so-great day.

Reflecting on this situation now after 12 years, I'm glad I handled it the way I did, with one exception—I wish I had put my mom on speakerphone. ^{ATA}

► **Got an idea?** Summarize it in up to 300 words and email it to managing editor Cory Hare at cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.



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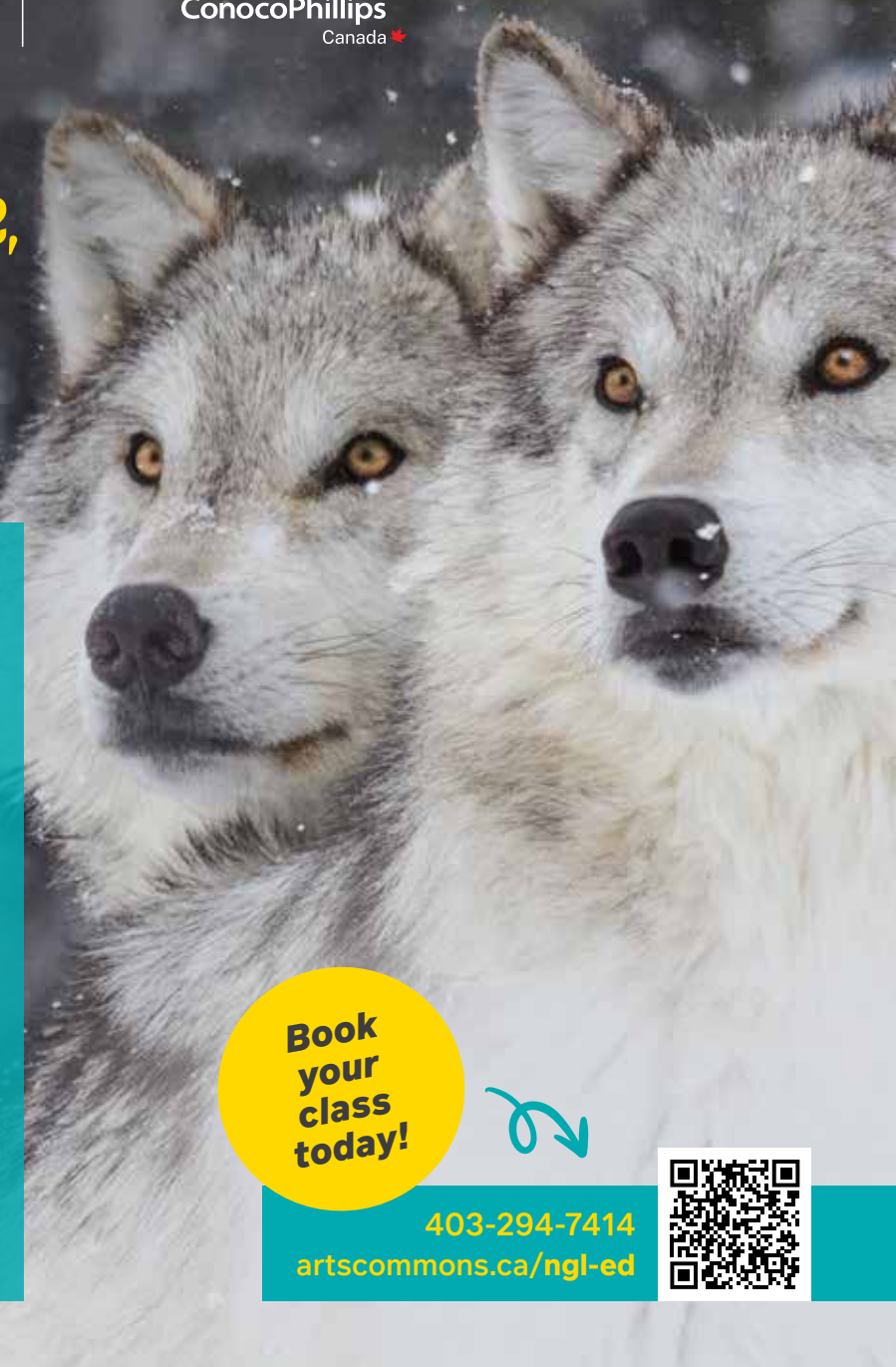
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