

FALL 2022

THE ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

# ATA Magazine



## CARING TO THE CORE

Tending to others comes naturally to some, but it also comes at a cost.

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# ATA Magazine

FALL 2022

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## CAROLINE BARLOTT | p. 18



Caroline Barlott is an Edmonton freelance writer whose work has appeared in *Discover*, *Cottage Life* and *Canadian Geographic*, among others. She writes on a variety of topics and is especially interested in education and ecology.



## CHRISTINA PICKLES | p. 14



Christina Pickles has been an environmental educator for 20 years and has worked in wetlands, badlands, forests and streams with students of all ages. She now runs Get Outside and Play, which focuses on supporting early childhood educators, teachers and communities in creating the space, time and permission to let children experience all the benefits of outdoor play. She lives with her family in Calgary, minutes from the Bow River.



## JARED WESLEY | p. 36



Jared Wesley is a professor of political science at the University of Alberta. His Common Ground team studies the norms and values that drive public opinion in the province.



## RISSA REIST | p. 36



Rissa Reist is a PhD candidate in political science at the University of Alberta. Her research focuses on the relationship between political humour and settler-colonial violence.



## NAOMI HOLMES | p. 55



Naomi Holmes has been teaching in Sturgeon School Division for 21 years. She enjoys teaching in collaboration with her co-workers and continues to integrate technology into her classroom. She's enjoyed running the musical theatre program at her school for the last 14 years but also takes time to relax by building Harry Potter Lego.

The Alberta Teachers' Association acknowledges Treaty 6, 7 and 8 territories, the ancestral and traditional territories of the Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Saulteaux, Nakota Sioux, as well as the Blackfoot Confederacy: Kainai, Piikani and Siksika, Tsuu T'ina, First Nation and Stoney Nakoda First Nation. We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples whose footsteps have marked these lands for generations. We are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us. Our recognition of this land is an act of reconciliation and an expression of our gratitude to those on whose territory we print and distribute this publication.



PHOTO BY RYAN PARKER

**Joni Turville**

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

## Caring is central to teaching

**“I’M SPENDING ABOUT** two hours every night just doing email,” lamented a friend while we were enjoying a catch-up session over a cup of coffee. At the time, she was a vice-principal at a large junior high school, and the demands resulting from digital communications, including email, were becoming unmanageable.

This conversation led to what would become a multi-year research project I conducted as part of my doctoral program, exploring how digital communications were impacting the lives of K–12 teachers. My research revealed that checking school communications outside of regular hours had significant consequences for teachers. For instance, when such check-ins involved a note from a student or parent, teachers were immediately thrown back into the classroom. Their concern for a particular student or family might stretch on through the night, with some study participants reporting interruptions to their family life and loss of sleep as a result.

It became clear that the heart of the issue was the care that teachers have for their students. American philosopher Nel Noddings, and her seminal work on the ethics of care, became central to my research and spoke to what it means to be a teacher as a caring professional.

“This is what caring professionals know—that teaching and learning and life itself go better in an atmosphere of care and trust,” Noddings wrote in *Caregiving: Readings in Knowledge, Practice, Ethics, and Politics* (which she co-edited with Suzanne Gordon and Patricia Benner).

Though there is a recognizable drain related to this constant concern, caring is an essential part of what it means to be a teacher and is at the heart of this issue’s feature on caring professions.

As ever, thanks for reading and thanks for all you do for the students of Alberta. 

## La bienveillance est au cœur de l’enseignement

**« TOUS LES SOIRS,** je passe environ deux heures à rédiger des courriels, se lamente une amie alors que nous prenions plaisir à nous retrouver autour d’une tasse de café. » À l’époque, elle était directrice adjointe d’une grande école secondaire premier cycle, et les demandes par communications numériques, y compris les courriels, devenaient impossibles à gérer.

Cette conversation nous a menées à ce qui allait devenir un projet de recherche pluriannuel que j’ai dirigé dans le cadre de mon programme de doctorat : découvrir de quelle manière les communications numériques ont un impact sur la vie des enseignants de la maternelle à la 12<sup>e</sup> année. Ma recherche a mis en évidence que vérifier des communications scolaires en dehors des heures régulières de travail avait d’importantes conséquences sur les enseignants. Par exemple, si le message provenait d’un élève ou d’un parent, on constatait que l’enseignant se retrouvait immédiatement en classe. Et, s’il se préoccupait en particulier d’un élève ou d’une famille, il pouvait facilement s’en préoccuper toute la soirée. D’autres participants à l’étude ont même signalé que leur vie de famille avait été à tel point perturbée qu’ils en avaient perdu le sommeil.

Il devint alors clair que le cœur du problème reposait véritablement sur la bienveillance des enseignants envers leurs élèves. À partir de là, j’ai centré mes recherches sur les travaux précurseurs sur l’éthique de la bienveillance de la philosophe américaine Nel Noddings, et j’ai compris ce que signifie être un enseignant qui agit aussi en tant que professionnel de la bienveillance.

« Voilà ce que les professionnels voués au bien-être des autres savent—que l’enseignement, l’apprentissage et la vie se déroulent mieux dans un climat de bienveillance et de confiance », a écrit Noddings dans *Caregiving: Readings in Knowledge, Practice, Ethics, and Politics* (qu’elle a corédigé avec Suzanne Gordon et Patricia Benner).

Bien que cette préoccupation constante pour autrui soit à l’origine d’un épuisement facilement reconnaissable, être enseignant, c’est aussi être bienveillant, et cette vertu est au cœur de ce numéro spécial qui s’intéresse aux professions dont la bienveillance est de rigueur.

Comme toujours, merci de faire partie de nos fidèles lecteurs, et merci de tout ce que vous faites pour les élèves de l’Alberta. 

# Letters

## We want your feedback

We'd like to hear from you! One of the ways we'd like to engage with teachers is by hearing from you regularly. In several locations throughout this magazine are sections calling for ideas and submissions from teachers. Please watch for these and send us your ideas.

Also please send us

- general feedback,
- your thoughts on items that you particularly liked (or didn't),
- suggestions for future content or
- letters to the editor for possible publication.

We really do want to hear from you. After all, this is your magazine.

Email your feedback to Joni Turville, editor-in-chief, [joni.turville@ata.ab.ca](mailto:joni.turville@ata.ab.ca); or Cory Hare, managing editor, [cory.hare@ata.ab.ca](mailto:cory.hare@ata.ab.ca).

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR — GUIDELINES

**Word limit: 300**

Please include

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

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

## ATA Magazine wins industry award



The feature on anti-Black racism that appeared in the fall 2021 issue of the *ATA Magazine* won first place for “Best Editorial Package” at the 2022 Alberta Magazine Awards in September.

Orchestrated by the Alberta Magazine Publishers Association, the award was based on writing style and engaging voice, content, creativity and originality, engagement and overall impact.

Alberta teachers Gail-Ann Wilson and Andrew Parker not only contributed stories to the feature, but were also instrumental in shaping the entire collection of content in their roles as guest editors. Other Alberta teachers who contributed articles were Rosalind Smith, Jennifer Kelly, Sarah Adomako-Ansah and Maxine Hackett. Illustrator Kyle Smith and photographer Stefan Legacy also applied their talents to the project.

“My gratitude to the *ATA Magazine* for providing a platform for Black voices to resonate. It is an honour to share this accomplishment with so many heroes who worked diligently to prepare this extraordinary feature on Black educators in our province.”

Gail-Ann Wilson

“On behalf of the entire Black Teachers Association of Alberta, we are humbly thankful for this award. Our group has worked very hard as a grassroots collective for two years and this award is a reflection of our collaborations with our allies, family and community. Thank you to the ATA and *ATA Magazine* for giving us this platform to share our stories with our intersectional and intergenerational family in Alberta.”

Andrew Parker

### THANK YOU FROM NEW BRUNSWICK'S FRANCOPHONE TEACHERS

I just wanted to say thanks/congratulations for the outstanding feature in your spring 2022 edition (“Arts education in school helps students grow into fully realized humans.”)

I was happy to share this excellent file with key people in the francophone sector in New Brunswick as we sometimes run out of strong (or new?) arguments—even though we know how important art education is!

—Alain Boisvert

Directeur général, Association des enseignantes et des enseignants francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick





PHOTO BY RYAN PARKER

## FROM THE PRESIDENT MOT DU PRÉSIDENT

### Jason Schilling

President, ATA  
Président de l'ATA

## Running adds life to my days


**IN LIFE WE DO MANY THINGS.** One thing I have done since I was in junior high—Pioneer Middle School in Rocky Mountain House—is run.

I run for many reasons. Fitness, of course, is the primary one, but the simple act of running for me has not only a physical benefit but also helps me maintain my overall health and well-being.

People often ask me what I think about when I run, and I respond that I think about everything and nothing all at once. I like to say there is not one problem I can't solve when on a run. Being outside on a trail or path, exploring the many beautiful parts of our province, is a great way to process the day's events or a problem that may be plaguing me, whether that problem is personal or professional.

One of the benefits of running is that I can pretty much do it anywhere—just need to tie on the shoes and off I go to explore and unwind. Running has served me well in my life, providing that mythical work-life balance we are all trying to incorporate into our lives and helping me relieve the stress that compounds throughout the day.

When I was in the classroom, I sometimes had students ask me when I'd last gone for a run, as they could see that I was a bit tense that day. They also suggested that I go for a run before I marked their latest assignment.

Now you may not be a runner, and that's okay, but I'd encourage you to find those activities that benefit your own well-being. As teachers and school leaders, we need to make sure we are at our best, not only for ourselves, but for our students, friends and families. 

## La course à pied apporte un plus à mes journées


**DANS LA VIE NOUS FAISONS** beaucoup de choses, et celle que je n'ai jamais cessé de faire depuis mon entrée au premier cycle du secondaire à l'école Pioneer Middle à Rocky Mountain House, c'est de courir.

Je cours pour plusieurs raisons. La principale, évidemment, est pour garder la forme, mais au-delà des bienfaits sur le physique, le simple fait de courir m'aide aussi à rester en bonne santé et à me sentir bien dans ma peau.

On me demande souvent à quoi je pense quand je cours, et ma réponse est à tout et à rien à la fois. J'aime à dire qu'aucun problème n'est impossible à résoudre lorsque je cours. Pour moi, courir et explorer par les chemins et sentiers la beauté des paysages de notre province est une excellente façon d'absorber tout événement ou problème personnel ou professionnel qui a pu se passer dans la journée.

L'un des avantages de la course à pied est que je peux pratiquer cette activité pratiquement n'importe où. Il me suffit de lacer mes chaussures et hop me voilà parti, prêt à explorer et à me détendre. La course à pied m'a beaucoup aidé dans la vie, notamment à trouver cet équilibre mythique entre travail et vie privée que nous recherchons tous, et aussi à évacuer le stress accumulé tout au long de la journée.

Lorsque j'enseignais, les élèves me demandaient de temps à autre quelle était la dernière fois où j'étais allé courir. Ils voyaient bien que j'étais un peu tendu ce jour-là. Il leur est même arrivé de me suggérer d'aller courir avant de corriger leur dernier devoir.

Vous n'êtes peut-être pas un coureur, et c'est très bien ainsi, toutefois, je vous encourage à trouver des activités qui contribuent à votre bien-être. En effet, en tant qu'enseignants et leaders scolaires, nous devons veiller à être au mieux de notre forme, non seulement pour nous-mêmes, mais aussi pour nos élèves, nos amis et nos familles. 



# Calm, collected and covered.

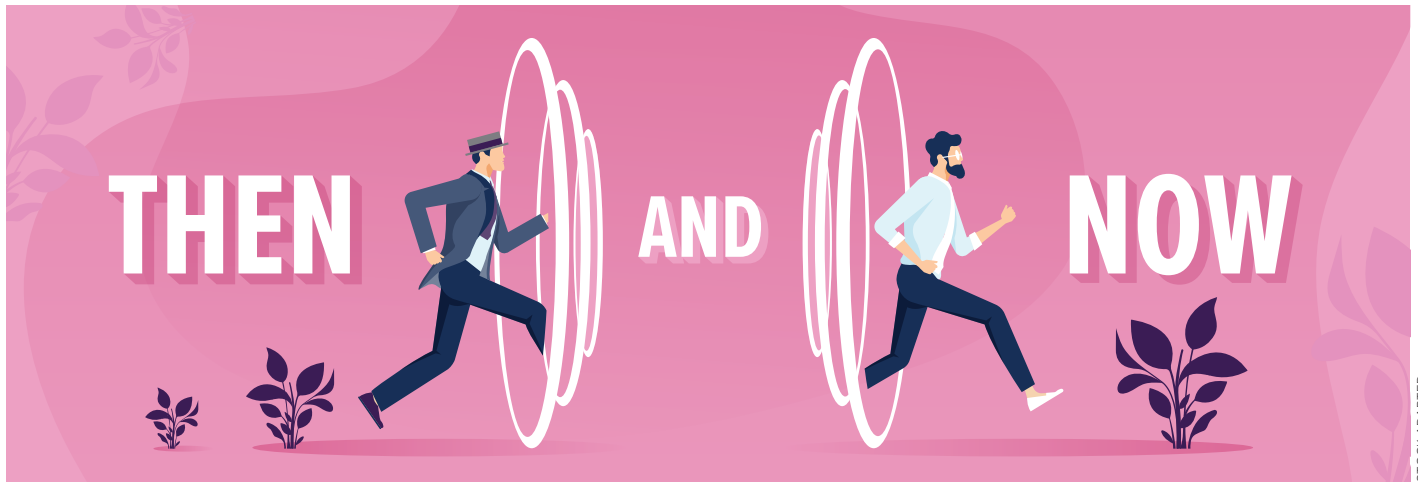
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ISTOCK ADAPTED

## Teachers' commitment to students withstands both time and trends.

**WE DUG INTO THE ARCHIVES** to find tidbits from previous issues of the *ATA Magazine* that are worth another look, either because of their relevance today, or as a reminder of how far we've come. You decide.

Can you match the following excerpts with the year that they were originally published? 1957, 1966, 1973, 2003

### 1. INDEFINITE WONDER

I suggest it is time we claim the phrase “wonder around” for what we do in our classes. Many subjects are best taught when filled with tales and experiences enlivened by wonder. Wondering engages the cynical or pessimistic students who feel their talents are wasted. All students have a capacity to employ their talents to wonder, and they will find it is most engaging when done in a hopeful manner. Wonder should be as central to education as the program of studies.

Your guess: \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. THE NEW MATH

It's not difficult to compare the old and the new methods. Mathematics, from Grade 1 up, used to be taught by drill and rule. If you didn't remember the rule, you couldn't do your sums. You repeated the same thing over and over and hoped it would stick. (Remember the dreary columns of figures we had to add, multiply and divide; the same old 'problems' in different guises, like the bathtub with two holes and the train from A to B.) The most serious fault of this kind of teaching was that children weren't given either the time or the incentive to think. [...]

The new methods of teaching differ markedly. They acknowledge that children can understand mathematical concepts much earlier than we used to think possible. They teach the basic laws instead of the rules: the *why* as well as the *how*.

Your guess: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. THE FUTURISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Social studies teachers might do well to learn something about the new field of futuristics — the study of future possibilities. [...] The futuristic perspective is very important, because students know that they can do nothing about the past. All the glories and horrors of history are fixed and unalterable. It is only in the future that a student's own actions can be effective, and so the future can be intensely meaningful to him. As students begin to consider the various developments that could occur in the future [...] they almost inevitably become involved in deciding which sort of things they want to see realized. As this happens, they may begin to take responsibility for making them happen.

Your guess: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. FASHION FADS

DOES your school allow students to wear dungarees, black leather jackets, engineer's boots, sideburns or duck-tail haircuts? If this be the case, consider this question. Are you satisfied with the behaviour of the youngsters in your school? If your answer to the second question is no, then try this one. Is there any relationship between dress and conduct?

It was observed in one school that there was a significant correlation between fad clothing and behaviour. [...]

A more informal atmosphere pervades the schools today than did in our parents' time. This is certainly all to the good, but when the informality reaches uncontrollable limits, trouble begins to brew. <sup>ATA</sup>

Your guess: \_\_\_\_\_

Answers: 1. "The Wonder of It All," Craig Harding, Spring 2003. 2. "Quick! What's 7/8 Divided by 3/4?" Renate Wilson, May 1966. 3. "Let's Have Less Talk of Problems and More of Solutions," F. O. Schreiber, October 1973. 4. "Can We Outlaw Fad Clothing?" Harvey Handel, December 1957.



ILLUSTRATION BY MATEUSZ NAPIERALSKI

# Looking south

## Research on teacher demographics and shortages may provide lessons for Alberta

**Lisa Everitt**

Executive Staff Officer, ATA

**SCHOLARS HAVE** been researching teacher attraction, retention and shortages in Canada, the U.S. and other countries for some time now. See et al. (2020) explains that “attracting and retaining qualified teachers is a persistent problem that has plagued many countries for decades” (p. 1). Examining trends in teacher demographics is an important component of understanding factors that may drive teacher shortages. This article is the first of a two-part series examining what has been learned in other jurisdictions about teacher demographics over the past 30 years.

The United States, unlike Canada, collects in-depth data about teachers through the National Center for Education

Statistics, which administers a Schools and Staffing Survey and Teacher Follow-Up Survey once every three to four school years. Consequently, in the U.S., there are significant sets of data that scholars have drawn upon to better understand, at a large scale, what trends are impacting the American teaching profession. Ingersoll et al. (2018) analyzed eight cycles of survey data over a 29-year period to identify trends that are impacting the teaching profession in the U.S. Their findings include the following five trends.

**1. The number of teachers has grown** faster than the student population has grown. Ingersoll et al. (2018) suggest

several potential reasons for this: smaller class sizes in elementary schools, more specialist teacher positions being created, an increased focus on special education and the introduction of charter schools. But they acknowledge this is an area that requires further attention by researchers. Naturally, if the complement of teachers in the U.S. has grown to address specific needs in the student population, it is easy to see how pressure may occur to generate enough teachers to fill the teaching positions, particularly for positions that are in high demand.

**2. The teaching force has “gotten older,** and teacher retirements have steadily

increased.” This finding suggests that while retirement comprises a significant component of those who exit the teaching profession in the U.S., there turnover for other reasons in schools and school jurisdictions. The implication is that educational researchers, policy makers and boards of education need to consider why teachers leave their positions and put in place solutions that mitigate teacher turnover.

**3. While the teacher workforce is getting older, it is also getting more inexperienced** because new teachers are often hired to replace retirees and those who leave their positions. While many incoming teachers are young, there are a “significant number that are older but inexperienced beginning teachers” who are “mid-career switching.” School staffs benefit from a range of experiences, from those who have long careers in education to those who are brand new to teaching. Ingersoll et al. (2018) pointed out that new teachers benefit from the mentorship of experienced teachers, and this helps new recruits develop effective teaching practice. The “greening” of the teacher work force at the same time as the “graying” of the teaching work force means school divisions must ensure early career teachers receive supports and mentoring.

**4. There has “been a slow but steady increase in the proportion of public school teachers who are female, from 67 per cent in 1980–81 to over 76 per cent in 2015–16”** (p. 12). The authors suggest this may be due, in part, to more women teaching at the secondary level and more women entering into educational administration. They also suggest that “if the trend continues, we may see a day when eight of 10 teachers will be female” (p. 14). Finally, they raise the question of society’s views of women’s work, asking, “if the feminization of teaching continues, what will it mean for the way this line of work is valued and rewarded?” (p. 14). This is an important question in light of societal norms that still tend to devalue the worth of women’s work. The “pink professions” such as teaching and nursing have long struggled with public recognition of the value of their work and the need to support and compensate the work adequately.

**5. The American teaching force** has become more diverse over the past three decades, but the proportion of racialized teachers has not grown at the same rate as the student population. As such, many students are not being taught by teachers who understand their racial and cultural backgrounds. The authors suggest that work to recruit diverse teachers needs to continue. In addition, Ingersoll et al. (2018) wrote “Minority teachers are two to three times more likely than white teachers to work in hard-to-staff schools serving high-poverty, high-minority, and urban communities” (p. 15) and that the turnover rate of minority teachers has risen by 45 per cent. The implication of this is that the efforts expended to recruit minority teachers are being set back by the high turnover rates. This calls for measures to support teachers to address teacher retention in schools, particularly high-needs schools in urban areas.

Teacher turnover is high—higher than many other occupations—which has been the case for many years. However, the authors point out that within the data, turnover is not evenly distributed. They noted that “almost half of all public school teacher turnover takes place in just one quarter of the population of public school teachers” (p. 18). High-poverty, high-minority urban schools and rural public schools tend to have the highest turnover rates. This trend calls on policy makers to examine how mechanisms can be put in place to attract and retain teachers into making teaching a viable career option.

How do these trends combine with the American educational context to exacerbate concern about teacher shortages? The U.S. has introduced educational reform in stunning ways. Some of the strategies used include blaming teachers for social problems, attacking teacher unions, fragmenting the public education system with the introduction of charter

## TWO-PART SERIES

This is the first part of a two-part series examining teacher shortages in the United States. The second part, which will appear in the winter 2023 issue of the *ATA Magazine*, will explore the American context in further detail, examining the impact of COVID-19 on teachers and teacher shortages as well as policy solutions to the shortages.

schools, mandating high-stakes testing, using high-stakes testing results to evaluate the effectiveness of schools and teachers, and developing alternative pathways to certification for teachers (Ravich 2010). <sup>ATA</sup>

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# Michelle Ranger: Creating space for Indigenous education

**Lindsay Yakimyshyn**

Staff Writer, ATA Magazine

## IMAGINE A SPACE WHERE

students' Indigenous identity is embraced and celebrated, where even the hallways are consciously imbued with Indigenous culture and community. This is the space Michelle Ranger helped create.

"I grew up always knowing and deeply appreciating within that I was Métis," Ranger says. "Both my parents are Métis and my husband is also Métis, but we were only proud of this when we returned home or in our family circles."

Ranger has carried that appreciation into her career in education, a journey that began more than two decades ago, encouraged by the Saskatchewan Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP).

"I liked the concept about learning about pedagogy, curriculum and teaching alongside learning more about who I was as a Métis person and through Indigenous perspectives and ways," she recalls.

In a career with many highlights, one of the most meaningful for Ranger has been serving as the first principal of the Niitsitapi Learning Centre (Niitsitapi li tass ksii nii mat tsoo kop, A Place of Learning for All Indigenous People), an early intervention program in the Calgary Board of Education that embraces Indigenous identity.

With engagement with Elders and Indigenous community agencies, the centre opened in September 2016 with Ranger at the helm. The centre's program for children aged three to seven focuses on improving outcomes for Indigenous students by supporting the whole child through foundational knowledge.


"At Niitsitapi, Indigenous students will only know themselves as being strong, proud and loved," Ranger says.

From the programming to the wrap-around services to the physical space, every aspect of the centre (referred to as NLC), has been approached through the lens of respecting and reflecting the diversity of Indigenous perspectives.

Ranger reflects on the meaning of the centre for not just the students, but for the families and the Indigenous community.

"I will never forget how my heart and spirit felt walking Elders, along with many others, into the ceremonial room within NLC once it was completed," Ranger says. "I was able to share with them all that a provincial school district acknowledged the importance of this space."

Though no longer principal of NLC, Ranger continues to extend the learnings from the centre across the school division through her role as a system principal, Indigenous education lead. She's hopeful about the future.

"In this generation, we are seeing a shift," she says. "My kids are proud to say they are Indigenous; even though we still face racism and discrimination, things are slowly changing. The young people are the catalyst of change." 

► **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](mailto:lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca).

## Michelle Ranger

System Principal,  
School Improvement,  
Indigenous Education,  
Calgary Board of Education

Recipient of a 2020  
Guiding the Journey:  
Indigenous Educator Award  
for Innovative Practice,  
from Indspire

Association Instructor  
(2007–2013)

ILLUSTRATION BY GELA CABRERA LOA



ISTOCK ADAPTED

## Money matters

Financial wellness is part of your overall well-being

### Myra J Rybotycki

Executive Staff Officer, ATA

#### HIGH INFLATION HAS PUSHED THE COST

of basic necessities such as groceries and gas to a point where they feel like luxuries, and Alberta teachers are not immune to feeling the pinch. As household budgets are being stretched to the breaking point, teachers may be finding it more difficult to plan for unexpected expenses. Financial anxiety is one of the most common major stressors. Chronic stress can negatively affect our health, relationships and overall feeling of well-being.

#### WHAT IS FINANCIAL WELLNESS?

Financial wellness is founded on good financial literacy and hygiene, but that is not the entire picture. If you are prepared to deal with a financial emergency, regulating your debt, understanding your cash flow and future-proofing your finances, you are engaged in good practice. However, financial wellness does not simply equate to having “enough” money and knowing how to manage it. Financial wellness supersedes financial literacy and hygiene because financial wellness recognizes that money is not an end goal; rather, money is a means to live our happiest, healthiest, best lives.

Money is a token of your life's energy. You earn money with the expenditure of your life's energy and exchange it for goods and services. How you manage, invest and spend your money not only governs your finances but also messages what your life's energy is worth.

### IF YOU ARE FAILING TO PLAN, YOU ARE PLANNING TO FAIL

Financial planning is life planning and is a critical mechanism for self-care as it impacts every other aspect of your life. Your financial well-being is created when you can identify what is ultimately important in your life and how you can effectively achieve your goals.

### YOU NEED TO BUDGET YOUR JOY


A budget regulates how you spend your life's energy. Budgeting your money based on what does and does not bring you joy will reduce stress that comes with spending money and allow you to prioritize experiences that you truly love. While it is important to create a budget, including a financial check-in as part of your weekly routine will make you more aware of how your money is being spent and help you feel more in control of your finances.

### INVEST IN YOURSELF BY PRIORITIZING SAVINGS

It can be difficult to save money when you feel like you are just getting by, but it is important to make saving a priority. Payroll deductions may be available through your employer, but you can easily set up automatic transfers from your chequing account to your savings account so that you are not tempted to spend the money instead. Check out Capital Estate savings plans here: [www.capitalplanning.ca/ata-members/investments](http://www.capitalplanning.ca/ata-members/investments).

### EDUCATION IS THE KEY

Improving your financial literacy can take away a lot of stress. The ATA's Teacher Employment Services program area has many opportunities to continue your learning.

You might be surprised to hear that the end goal of financial wellness is not actually to have a lot of money; rather, it is to spend a lot of money throughout your life so you will be as happy and healthy as possible. Financial wellness goes beyond saving and investing; it addresses money both as a universal stressor and a mechanism to achieve the life to which we aspire. 



## Upcoming workshops

### Financial Wellness+

Save your money, invest your money, budget your money! How do I do all that!?

Financial Wellness+ is all about investing for your future, learning how to save, and managing debt and your budget. Join us for this two-hour session; it's a deep dive into financial wellness and your future!

**Oct. 27, 2022**

3:30 PM to 5:30 PM

**May 3, 2023**

3:30 PM to 5:30 PM

### ATA Q&A sessions

**Jan. 12, 2023**

3:45 PM to 4:45 PM

**March 16, 2023**

3:45 PM to 4:45 PM

## Recommended financial reading list



The following books are available from the ATA library.

- Hallam, A. 2017. *Millionaire Teacher: The Nine Rules of Wealth You Should Have Learned in School*. Toronto, ON: Wiley.
- Harzog, B.B., M. Curphey, E. Lunn, J. Meadway, P. Parker and A. Black. 2017. *How Money Works: The Facts Visually Explained*. New York, NY: DK Publishing.
- Kelly, E.S. 2021. *Get the Hell Out of Debt: The Proven 3-Phase Method That Will Radically Shift Your Relationship to Money*. New York, NY: Post Hill Press.
- Kobliner, B. 2017. *Get a Financial Life: Personal Finance in Your Twenties and Thirties*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Nichols, E. 2016. *Financial Planning for Teachers: The Lesson Plan for Your Financial Future*. Pottstown, PA: EWS Communications.
- Sokunbi, B. 2019. *Clever Girl Finance: Ditch Debt, Save Money and Build Real Wealth*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Wiginton, F. 2012. *How to Eat an Elephant: Achieving Financial Success One Bite at a Time*. Toronto, ON: Wiley.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCE

### THE LITTLE BOOK OF Restorative Teaching Tools



Games, Activities, and Simulations for Understanding Restorative Justice Practices

LINDSEY POINTER, KATHLEEN MCGOEY, AND HALEY FARRAR

THE LITTLE BOOKS OF JUSTICE & PEACEBUILDING



# The merits of sticks and stones

Not all classroom tools need to be high tech

**Dan Grassick**

Executive Staff Officer, ATA

Information also provided by Christina Pickles, founder of Get Outside and Play. Learn more at [getoutsideandplay.ca](http://getoutsideandplay.ca).



## QUICK! WHAT TECHNOLOGIES

do you use to engage your students? Are you thinking about high-tech digital tools and software, or did some “old school” analog devices (whiteboards, thermometers and film cameras) come to mind?

*Technology* isn't only about computerized or mechanical gizmos. From its etymological roots, *tékhne* and *lógos*, *technology* can be defined more broadly as the “craft of making reason.” Through this lens, educational technologies include a wide array of materials that students can use to understand curricular concepts and the larger world, even natural materials like rocks and sticks.

## Foster creativity with loose parts

“Loose parts” is a term coined by architect Simon Nicholson in 1971 to describe found objects and materials that children can gather, organize, stack, combine and repurpose in infinite ways. Unlike purpose-built educational technologies or toys, loose parts don't

come with sets of directions or assembly instructions. They afford imaginative play, on-the-spot engineering and almost unlimited creativity and learning. The same sticks, rope and scraps of fabric can be assembled into a sailboat, a castle, a treasure chest, a superhero costume, a kite and more!

In addition to creativity, research suggests that the use of loose parts can promote the development of problem solving, critical thinking and communication skills. Not only can loose parts be used during unstructured play, they can also be used in activities to explore curricular learning outcomes in multiple subjects at various grade levels.


Here are just a few ideas:

- Make artistic mobiles and sculptures using seasonal materials.
- Build shelters and habitats for small creatures that meet their needs.
- Try to construct the tallest tower, strongest bridge or most buoyant raft.





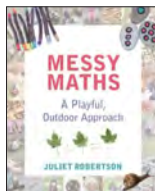
PHOTO BY YUET CHAN

- Build model buildings that explore how sunlight and rainwater can be collected.
- Develop *Flintstones*-style machines using rocks and sticks as wheels, levers, pulleys and gears.
- Create shapes and structures that have specific perimeter, area and volume dimensions.
- Order rocks, pine cones and other materials in various ways (by volume and mass, by colour and texture) and make patterns with them.
- Make a diorama that captures the climax of a story.
- Learn to make splints and emergency shelters for backcountry adventures.
- Construct timekeeping devices like sundials and shadow clocks.
- Create puppets and characters to act out stories.
- Use natural materials such as brushes, stamps or collage materials. 

### Suggested resources



*Loose Parts: Inspiring Play in Young Children*  
Lisa Daly and Miriam Beloglovsky



*Messy Maths: A Playful, Outdoor Approach*  
Juliet Robertson

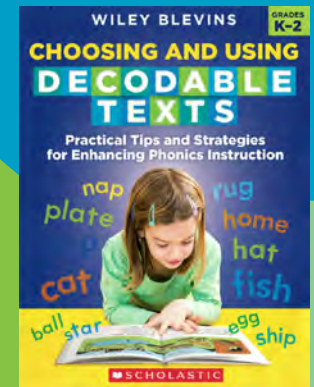
*The above resources are available through the ATA library.*



*Loose Parts Play Toolkit*  
Theresa Casey and Juliet Robertson

*Available as a free download at [outdoorplaycanada.ca/portfolio\\_page/loose-parts-play-toolkit/](http://outdoorplaycanada.ca/portfolio_page/loose-parts-play-toolkit/).*

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCE



### Choosing and Using Decodable Texts: Practical Tips and Strategies for Enhancing Phonics Instruction

Wiley Blevins

How do you select the right texts for your students? You'll find the answer here as the author gives you plenty of practical advice and even talks about what to do if you don't have access to highly decodable texts.

*Available through the ATA library.*

## Did you know ...

The Educational Technology Council (ETC) of the Alberta Teachers' Association supports teachers in using technology to enhance teaching and learning.

The council provides its membership with service and support through professional development opportunities.

For more information, visit [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca).



ILLUSTRATION BY GELA CABRERA LOA

## Age range

Generational diversity provides challenge and opportunity

### Nancy Luyckfassel

Associate Coordinator,  
Professional Development, ATA

### AT ANY GIVEN TIME, TEACHERS

in Alberta schools generally range in age from 21 to 72. This means that, among the teaching staff at many schools, four generations are represented: Baby Boomers (1946–1964), Gen X (1965–1980), Millennials (1981–1996) and Gen Z (1997–2012).

Generational diversity has become a common conversation in workplaces around the country, with the focus often on the differences between the generations. Intergenerational tensions can emerge at work, with some employees dismissing the abilities of their colleagues based on their age. While there is no consensus on the generational labels, generational categories have come to be used—in society, in social media and in workplaces—to explain behaviours and traits.

# Which generation are you at heart?

Select the answer that most sounds like you. Go with your first impulse—it is usually the best!

## Q What is your view of work?

- A** I live to work.
- B** I work to live.
- C** I work smarter, not harder.
- D** For me, work = passion + purpose.

## Q In your workplace, you would prefer feedback to be

- A** minimal
- B** direct
- C** frequent and instantaneous
- D** bite-sized and real time

## Q Which of the following best describes your view of changing jobs?

- A** I will stay in one place as long as I can.
- B** I would change to increase my income.
- C** It is expected.
- D** It will be constant.

## Q Your ideal leader is a

- A** thinker
- B** doer
- C** supporter
- D** collaborator

## Q Your preferred type of professional learning is

- A** structured
- B** participative
- C** interactive
- D** multimodal

### Score your answers:

#### MOSTLY As

You work like a Boomer. In the workplace, you are likely optimistic, enjoy mentoring, have a strong work ethic and are loyal.

#### MOSTLY Bs

You work like a Gen-Xer. In the workplace, you are likely independent, innovative and self-reliant with strong communication skills.

#### MOSTLY Cs

You work like a Millennial. In the workplace, you are likely tech savvy, collaborative, self-directed and focused on the greater good.

#### MOSTLY Ds

You work like a Gen-Zer. In the workplace, you are likely digitally fluent, practical, creative and flourish in diverse environments.

### Did your quiz results match your generation? Do you see yourself in other generations too?

Understanding the motivators and strengths associated with the generational groups can lead to greater appreciation for our own attributes and those of our colleagues. At the same time, focusing on the generalizations about a generation can lead to using labels and perpetuating stereotypes that may be neither accurate nor acceptable. <sup>ATA</sup>

“Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud.”

—Maya Angelou

## A TIME TO REMEMBER

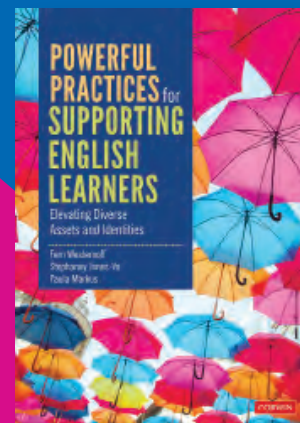
### Transgender Day of Remembrance is recognized

on Nov. 20. What began as a candlelight vigil to mark the 1998 murder of Rita Hester, a trans woman, has become an international, sombre occasion to remember those who've lost their lives due to anti-transgender violence.

### Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor)

Memorial Day, recognized on the fourth Saturday of November each year, is a time to remember the millions of people in Ukraine who were starved to death by the Soviet regime in 1932–33.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



### Powerful Practices for Supporting English Learners: Elevating Diverse Assets and Identities

Fern Westernoff, Stephaney Jones-Vo, Paula Markus.

Available through the ATA library.

I feel like all the circumstances and situations led to me being a teacher. I'm very fortunate. Caring professions each apply knowledge to promote health in individuals and communities in accordance with ethical principles and practices. To be in a position to help people do what they wanted to in their life, I think, is such a gift.



# Caring to the core

Tending to others as an occupation is a life choice that's both satisfying and hazardous



ILLUSTRATION BY CORNELIA LI

## Caroline Barlott

Freelance Contributor

When Kristan Myers was in Grade 1, her best friend struggled in the classroom due to cognitive delays and hearing challenges. Myers spent hours helping him learn. One day, the class went to a pool and Myers encouraged the boy to finally enter the water. On the sidelines, his mom cried with happiness while Myers' mom gained insight into her daughter's future career.

"[She] said: I knew you were going to be a teacher because you just naturally knew how to work with him and how to meet him where he was," says Myers, who now teaches grades 1 and 2 at Académie Saint-Andre in Beaumont.

Myers laughs, explaining that she spent the majority of her 20s avoiding her calling and racking up a dizzyingly varied resume,

including stints in bartending, tutoring and respite care. Finally she ended up teaching first-aid classes, and it was through teaching adults that she acknowledged what those around her already saw: her base skill set, love of a challenge and desire to make an impact made elementary school teaching a natural fit.

"I feel like all the circumstances and situations led to me being a teacher," says Myers. "I'm very fortunate."

Much of what Myers loves about her career — being an integral part of the community, inspiring others and prioritizing their wellness — are aspects her colleagues share. And in the broader sense, those characteristics are common in all caring professionals — individuals whose careers involving caring for others.

## UNDER THE UMBRELLA

Aside from teachers, other careers that fit under the umbrella of caring professions typically include a variety of health-related occupations such as nurses, pharmacists, doctors, physiotherapists, midwives, counsellors and clinical psychologists, to name a few, says Alex Clark, dean of health disciplines at Athabasca University.

Caring professions include generalists and specialists who vary in the way they provide care — in teams or individually, in clinics or online — but the core of the work is the same.

“Caring professions each apply knowledge to promote health in individuals and communities — even including a quality death — in accordance with ethical principles and processes,” says Clark.

These are challenging positions that require both technical and soft skills such as empathy, communication, advocacy and organization, Clark says. It’s more than work; many consider it a lifestyle, with long hours that often bleed into personal time. Caring professionals rarely just go home after work, switch on the TV and forget about the events of the day.

## CAREER MOTIVATIONS

So what draws someone to the caring professions?


That’s a question that Australian researchers Helen Watt and Paul Richardson have been answering for the past 20 years through a research project called FIT-Choice. Through surveys conducted in more than 24 languages, the research team has specifically studied teachers’ motivations, but believes the results are relevant to caring professionals more broadly.

The majority of study participants said they were motivated to pursue their chosen career by a belief that they had the skills to do the job and that they’d enjoy it. Many had similar stories to Myers — they’d held a job that involved some form of teaching and realized they had some innate abilities.

Also cited as a top career motivation was the desire to make a social contribution, work with people and enhance social equity.

“Even at the outset they realized that they weren’t going to make a whole lot of money, nor were they going to be highly valued by society. And it was going to be quite a demanding job,” says Richardson. Still, the majority were passionate and readily put in countless work hours.

That dedication can be a double-edged sword — the researchers found burnout was prevalent. It was not just about fatigue and long hours; it reflected physical and mental depletion resulting from a lack of support, underappreciation and an unmanageable amount of work. Those who felt their voice went unheard were especially at risk. But administrators who listened and made adjustments could really make an impact.



“To be in a position to help people do what they wanted to in their life, I think, is such a gift.”

— Kate Wong

“There is a powerful motivational theory called self-determination theory, which is based on the premise that we all have three core psychological needs that need to be met for any kind of flourishing to happen: the need to belong, the need to feel competent and the need to feel some autonomy,” says Watt. Within a career context, these three factors are critical in providing a sense of satisfaction about one’s vocation.

## SENSE OF SATISFACTION

Kate Wong, a pediatric palliative care nurse at Alberta Health Services, has experienced that satisfaction first-hand. People often tell Wong they would find it too emotionally exhausting to consistently work with families and children who face life-threatening or life-shortening illnesses.

But while she’s there for the traumatic moments, she explains, she’s also there for the exceptionally



PHOTO BY KIM VANDERHELM

happy ones: riding horses for the first time, participating in school programs and going on special trips.

“To be in a position to help people do what they wanted to in their life, I think, is such a gift,” Wong says.

One of Wong’s patients, an eight-year-old girl, was so determined to sing “Let There be Peace on Earth” — believing strongly in the message — in a Remembrance Day ceremony that she did so, despite having only three per cent of her lung capacity. She died just two days after the performance.

Many of Wong’s patients die, and she often experiences grief, as she cares for them deeply. This would seem to put her at high risk for compassion fatigue, which is often referred to as vicarious trauma, resulting from repeated exposure to suffering. It can manifest in symptoms similar to those associated with burnout — hopelessness, feeling overwhelmed and emotional detachment — and it also often arises in those who are overworked, under supported and lack autonomy or a voice.

But Wong believes the nature of her workplace has been protective. She knows many who haven’t been so lucky.

“I think that the pandemic has tipped the scales for a lot of nurses where, before, the rewards and the challenges were balanced, and now it is a different situation,” says Wong.

Wong has strong support through her mentors and administration. She has the ability to take time off if needed; she has dedicated time to devote to each of her patients; and she has enough autonomy to know her input matters.

“I actually think some of compassion fatigue is cumulative grief for the loss of patients,” says Wong. But, she says, when health-care workers are given the time and resources to process that grief properly, their mental health improves.

Wong says she’s able to stay motivated in her job because of the passion she feels for improving her patients’ lives.





## REWARDS AND CHALLENGES

Myers feels a similar passion — it's as strong today as it was when she started teaching nearly a decade ago. Even over the phone, her smile is evident as she speaks about her students.

"I feel like a celebrity to my students. If I need a pick-me-up, all I have to do is show up at school because I have students who tell me every day I am beautiful," says Myers. And hearing of her impact from former students even years later "fills my bucket," she says.

She spends countless hours crafting scrapbooks for each student, preparing for classes and researching the curriculum. Those activities fuel her, but recently there are days she wonders how long she can continue teaching.

Her classroom size has grown by nine kids since she started more than nine years ago, there are fewer resources, and many students need extra support after having missed classes during Covid restrictions. She's also teaching both Grade 1 and Grade 2 simultaneously for the first time, significantly increasing her preparation time.

Meanwhile, she feels like the new Alberta curriculum, that "looms like a dragon," did not take teachers' expertise into consideration.

Myers usually likes a challenge, but this feels different. After she contracted Covid-19 in the fall of 2021, her health hasn't been the same.

"It's hard to know if it's from Covid or just the volume and complexity of what I'm dealing with. I do have a lot of day-to-day stress, so I'm trying to fit it all in," says Myers.

"I can tell you today that the love of my job is winning. But I also know that we've already been told the pot of money that we are pulling from is smaller for next year," she says.

Myers has friends who are social workers, nurses and paramedics, and they are also all struggling.

"I recently learned that it's okay for me to say that my job is hard even though other people have a hard job, too," Myers says. "[I'm] currently trying to take it day by day and do what I can with what I have with where I am." <sup>ATA</sup>



“It’s hard to know if it’s from Covid or just the volume and complexity of what I’m dealing with. I do have a lot of day-to-day stress, so I’m trying to fit it all in.”

— Kristen Myers

*This isn't a job. It's a calling. I went down a different path... was brought back to teaching, and I can't imagine doing the hardest job I've ever done. Job, teacher, study participant... tional Labour and Educator Burnout. The kids are who... with kids rejuvenates me and reminds me about why I do... study participant: Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Labour... a... my partner is a teacher. My partner... her... Despite this she is always asked for more. I r... I get to see... their recovery phase. Despite... always be asked for more. Firm boundaries are the key.*



# The high cost of caring

Education workers are paying a heavy emotional price, research finds

**Cory Hare**  
Managing Editor, ATA Magazine

From 2020 to 2021, the Alberta Teachers' Association partnered with University of Calgary researcher Astrid Kendrick to study the lived experiences of educational workers regarding three phenomena that are inextricably tied to working with people: emotional labour, compassion satisfaction/stress/fatigue and burnout. The study was designed to address a research gap and find meaningful supports for teachers, school leaders, central office leaders and other educational workers.

The following information has been compiled from the study's research reports, which are available at [heartcareeducators.ca](http://heartcareeducators.ca).



## THE THEORY

### Emotional labour and the rules of engagement

Coined by American researcher Arlie Hochschild, the term “emotional labour” is the performance of expected emotional expression in a work environment. In other words, employees are expected to manage their emotions in a manner that matches the organizational “feeling rules”—the spoken or unspoken expectations of how a “good” employee expresses or represses their emotions when working.

Feeling rules apply whether or not the employee genuinely feels the respective emotions, leading to a potential disconnect between the organizational feeling rules and the employee’s authentic emotional state.

Hochschild advances the idea that emotional labour involves deep acting and surface acting.

With deep acting, the employee’s true emotional state aligns with the organizational feeling rules and provides a strong base for the employee to perform the emotional labour. The employee feels a strong connection to their work and can identify with their job role as a part of themselves. In the educational field, this person might feel a strong desire

to positively influence children and youth or create an optimal school–work environment for staff and colleagues. Their individual passions and drive align with the expectations for their profession.

Surface acting is necessary when a worker’s actual emotional state does not align with the organizational feeling rules. Ongoing surface acting has been linked to burnout and compassion fatigue, as it can erode the passion that drives educators to contribute their skills and abilities to create a better and more civil society.

### Compassion satisfaction, stress and fatigue: The price of being empathetic

Compassion satisfaction is the pleasure that caregivers experience from doing their work. Compassion stress and compassion fatigue, on the other hand, exist on opposite ends of a continuum representing the emotional toll that caregivers may experience in the course of doing their work.

**Compassion stress**—People can still manage their daily workload and can rely on individual or workplace strategies to recover.

**Compassion fatigue**—Requires intensive interventions such as professional therapy, medication or a leave of absence from work to fully recover.

For people engaged in helping professions, the toll of performing empathy and compassion when feeling otherwise can be stressful and lead to emotional exhaustion. Research has found that a strong stigma is attached to caregivers admitting to feeling burned out, which can exacerbate the effects of compassion stress and compassion fatigue.

### Burnout: Helping others has long-term impact

Burnout is a career-long process that occurs in caregivers as they help other people. If left unchecked, burnout typically grows in intensity over time. In human service work, individuals who are highly motivated, dedicated and emotionally involved in their work are most vulnerable to burnout, research suggests.

According to the Maslach and Jackson Burnout Scale, there are three main aspects of burnout:

#### Depersonalization

- treating clients as if they were impersonal objects
- becoming more callous toward clients

#### Emotional exhaustion

- feeling tired at the beginning and end of the work day
- feeling frustrated by the job

#### Lack of accomplishment

- lacking energy
- unable to deal effectively with client needs or positively influence their lives



“ Unfortunately, they are sacrificing their own mental and emotional well-being to be strong and confident for their students and school communities, which is not sustainable.”

– Dr. Astrid Kendrick, University of Calgary, study co-leader

## Occupational heartbreak

Occupational heartbreak occurs when a strongly passionate person experiences a loss as the result of a change at work, says researcher Astrid Kendrick.

Education workers and other caregiving professionals tend to enter their professions with honest intentions and a desire to make a difference in students’ lives. When presented

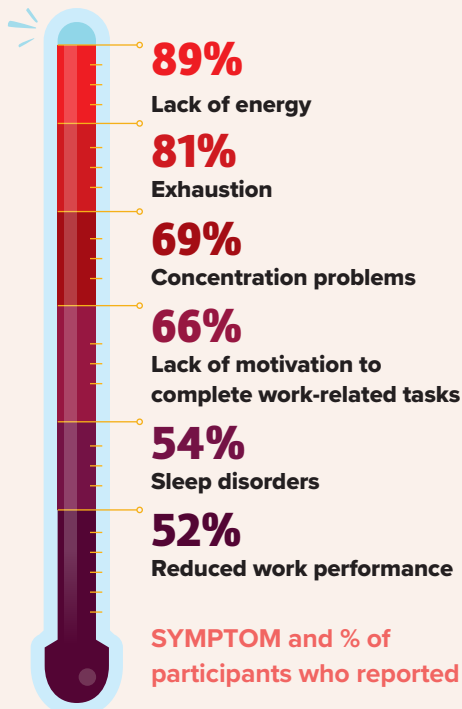
with crisis or trauma work, or when their efforts do not bring about the acknowledgement or success they had hoped for, these workers feel a deep loss, Kendrick has found.

Conversely, when their heartwork is rewarded with student success, workers report that they are able to persevere through crisis or trauma work.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### Teachers are struggling

The ATA/U of C study into the compassion fatigue being experienced by education workers found that most participants were experiencing symptoms of compassion fatigue.



### Express this! Hide that!

**Top three emotions that education workers feel are safe to express at work:**

- Happiness, joy, cheerfulness
- Energy, excitement
- Empathy, concern, compassion

**Top three emotions that education workers keep hidden at work:**

- Anger
- Sadness, depression
- Frustration

### ENERGIZERS

Factors that contribute to **compassion satisfaction:**

- Connections to students
- Career experience
- Inherent good of the work
- Work–life boundaries



### DEFLATORS

Factors that contribute to **compassion stress and fatigue:**

- Separation of personal and professional identity
- Taking on other people’s trauma
- A sense of helplessness
- A perceived lack of acknowledgement of the work’s inherent good



# INTERVENTION

Compassion stress, compassion fatigue and burnout are preventable and treatable. Both individuals and organizations can effectively prevent or treat these phenomena through professional development, self-care plans, effective mentorship and supervision, and the work culture.

## Professional development

Preparing educational workers for the likelihood of experiencing compassion fatigue, compassion stress or burnout requires training them to recognize the risk factors for both themselves and their colleagues.

## Self-care planning

Caregivers should develop a strong self-care plan that includes a wide number of coping strategies and resources that an individual can access in times of stress. Leaders in organizations that rely on employees providing emotional labour should work to ensure that each employee has a self-care plan that includes individual, organizational and professional interventions.

## Mentorship and supervision

Providing caregivers with regular access to and communication with peers and mentors who have worked with traumatized clients is another way that organizational leaders can help prevent or treat compassion stress, compassion fatigue and burnout in their employees.


## Workplace culture

Developing a healthy workplace culture includes

- ensuring that employees have access to supports and resources so that they can enact their self-care plan;
- providing training and professional development regarding compassion fatigue, compassion stress and burnout; and
- acknowledging that these phenomena are not individual failings or the results of a personal problem; they are the cost of caring and a consequence of working with traumatized people.

# TOOLS AVAILABLE

Several reliable and validated tools exist that can help an individual to self-identify their compassion fatigue. The ProQOL-Survey Version 5 is considered the strongest measure to assess an individual's proclivity toward compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue. It is available at [proqol.org/proqol-measure](http://proqol.org/proqol-measure).

The ATA/U of C study produced a HEARTcare Planning Tool to help teachers address the emotional challenges of their work. It's available at [heartcareeducators.ca](http://heartcareeducators.ca). 



# RESOURCES

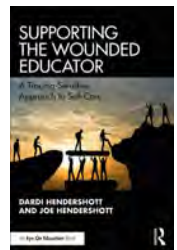
**The Day I Reached My Tipping Point: Compassion Fatigue and Educators**

Daryl B. Sutter



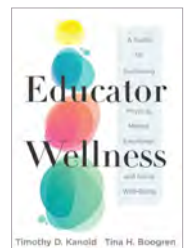
**Supporting the Wounded Educator: A Trauma-Sensitive Care Approach to Self-Care**

Dardi Hendershott, Joe Hendershott



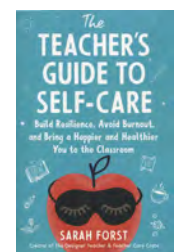
**Educator Wellness: A Guide for Sustaining Physical, Mental, Emotional, and Social Well-Being**

Timothy D. Kanold, Tina H. Boogren



**The Teacher's Guide to Self-Care: Build Resilience, Avoid Burnout, and Bring a Happier and Healthier You to the Classroom**

Sarah Forst



These titles are available through the ATA library [www.teachers.ab.ca/professional-development/ata-library](http://www.teachers.ab.ca/professional-development/ata-library).



**My greatest goal** is to make the broadest and deepest positive impact in the most kids' lives that I can while I'm here, and as long as I do that, I feel like I've been successful.

– Oswald, teacher, study participant: *Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Labour and Educator Burnout*

**When I first started [teaching]** ... I was trying to save the world, and make sure that every kid was getting the best of me all the time. That's not feasible. I've definitely shifted now to [seeing that] I'm part of a web — I'm one person in the student's life, and I can help them when I'm there, but I am my own person, and I need to be healthy, and I need to be here for my children and my mom.

– Betty, teacher, study participant: *Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Labour and Educator Burnout*

**The kids are what keep me going.** The connection with kids rejuvenates me and reminds me about why I do this.

– Becky, school leader, study participant: *Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Labour and Educator Burnout*

**I think being a teacher** is an extremely important job. I enjoy my work, and I love working with kids. I care deeply about them, but I've learned that there has to be balance in my life. I don't get hung up on the things I can't change about my job. I do my best, but I also save some of my energy for my family and my personal life.

– Teacher, study participant: *Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Labour and Educator Burnout*

## “ Insights from caring professionals ”

**I often feel** overwhelmed by the various emotional, behavioural and academic needs of my students, and I feel pressure to address them all, even with limited support. When I can't effectively address my students' needs, I feel guilt and shame that I've failed, and I feel angry at the system for expecting teachers to manage so much and do so much with so little support.

– Teacher, study participant: *Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Labour and Educator Burnout*

**Caring professions** are some of the most rewarding career paths. As a teacher for 15 years and now as a paramedic for 10, I have had the opportunity to impact the lives of students and patients in innumerable ways. Being of service to others is a privilege. However, it can come at a price. It wasn't until leaving education that I realized how I had let it consume my life. I carried that learning into EMS and now focus on prioritizing myself so I am better able to care for others.

– Helene Hamilton, primary care paramedic and former teacher

**Many people are motivated** in these fields by a personal experience. I have observed that this very personal aspect can also be a major pitfall. The work can be triggering in ways you don't expect and aren't equipped for. It's also easy to fall into the trap of taking responsibility for things you can't change and decisions that belong to others. I think it's incredibly important to know yourself, what you can handle and when you need to set boundaries. If you're not OK, your ability to support the people you serve is compromised.

I am a social worker and my partner is a teacher. My partner puts her entire being into her work. Despite this, she is always asked for more. I recently moved to a role where I get to see more clients in their recovery phase. Despite this, it's still hard. You'll always be asked for more. Firm boundaries are the key.

– Kevin, social worker

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— Booklist

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— Mark David Smith, YA Dude Books

## AMONG THE AUTHORS



**CATHERINE INGLIS** is an elementary teacher who has taught for more than 20 years. She lives in Toronto, Ontario.



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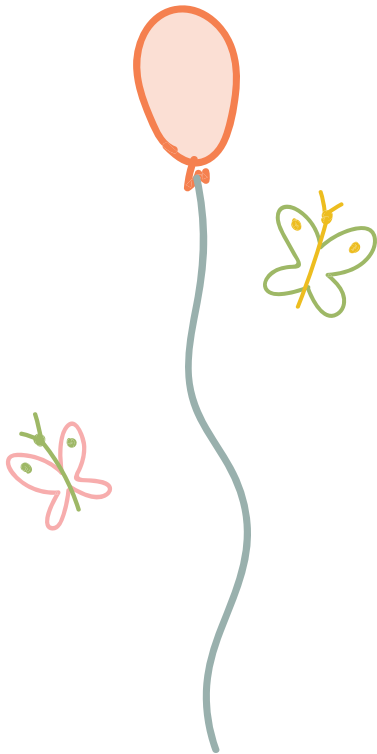
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**Ancillary Programs** which include the Boom discount program, ARTACares program (which provides support to you and your family when navigating the healthcare system), scholarships for family members, social connectedness programs, and much more.

# Hope flows

Leadership is key to creating a hopeful future



## SOURCES OF HOPE

1. witnessing student success and resilience
2. experiencing supportive leaders
3. maintaining trusting relationships with staff

### Phil McRae

Associate Coordinator,  
Research, ATA

“ Hope changes everything. It changes winter into summer, darkness into dawn, descent into ascent, barrenness into creativity, agony into joy. ”

—Daisaku Ikeda

**HOPE IS FOUNDATIONAL** to Alberta teacher and school leader experiences in classrooms, schools and across the educational landscape. It is also a fundamental part of our professional identities: a hopeful future is why we teach.

The Hope: Resilience and Recovery research project was launched in response to findings from the Alberta Teachers' Association's 2021/22 pandemic rapid research (pulse) surveys. In these random stratified surveys, we found a high level of hopelessness among Alberta teachers and school leaders. This was followed in the spring of 2022 with data that showed a high percentage of our teaching population (one in three) indicating a plan to retire, leave the profession or leave Alberta within the next five years. In fact, at one point during the pandemic, Association researchers measured a random stratified sample of the teaching profession and found that more than half felt hopeless.

## BACKGROUND

This study concentrated on both Alberta teachers and school leaders and included five focus group conversations along with a survey of 561 professionals. This Association research study was conducted by the University of Alberta's Dr. Denise Larsen, Dr. Rebecca Hudson-Breen, Dr. Darryl Hunter and doctoral student Veronica Taylor.

The survey instrument, which is the first of its kind attempting to measure hope within the teaching profession, included 29 items designed to address experiences of hope and low hope in the contexts of teaching and school leadership. We will continue using the instrument to better understand how we can support Alberta teachers to navigate a more hopeful future.



ISTOCK ADAPTED

## KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Alberta teachers and school leaders evidenced some strong reservoirs of hope, suggesting that students, classrooms and communities of learning are often hope-fostering sites for public schools. Below are some of the key findings regarding threats to hope, sources of hope and strategic considerations on the road ahead.

### Threats to hope in Alberta

#### Identified by teachers

- workload intensification
- lack of time and resources
- disconnection from senior administrators
- perceived government attacks on teachers
- perceived negative impacts of government decisions on students
- being devalued and misunderstood by the public

#### Identified by school leaders

- witnessing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students
- being targets of parent frustration
- experiencing frustrations with senior administration
- seeing the provincial government as an enemy of public education

**Teachers' experiences of hope** (or threats to hope) are not only psychological. They are also socially constructed—meaning that they are deeply impacted by the broader educational contexts of the classroom, school, school board, government, professional association and even the public. The way we are treated as professionals matters deeply in terms of our experiences of hope/hopelessness.

## Students Inspire Hope

Hope is not only conveyed from teachers to students. Teachers and school leaders are also inspired by students.

### TEACHERS

Teachers, regardless of age, report the inspirational influence of students, and increasingly so as they age.

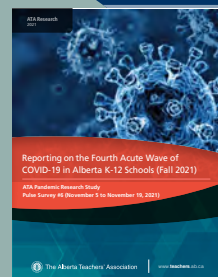
Seventy-three percent of 25-year-old and younger teachers are inspired by students, but by the later stages of their career, the percentages climb to 90 per cent and even 100 per cent.

“To see the positive effects of our teaching on our students (especially when they get to high school),” creates hope for one elementary teacher.

### SCHOOL LEADERS

Similar to teachers, Alberta school leaders are also inspired by students. Nearly 95% of school leaders [in the study] draw inspiration from students.

“We are close to a central element in teachers' and school leaders' reason for being in education, and a core source of hopefulness for these professionals.”



- ▶ The full results and individual summary reports and infographics for all ATA pandemic pulse surveys can be found on the Association's website <https://tinyurl.com/2hddmzyr>.



## Sources of hope in Alberta

### Sources of teacher hope

- witnessing student success and resilience
- recognizing their own agency and professional skills as teachers
- observing that teachers are contributing to good futures
- experiencing supportive leaders

### Sources of school leader hope

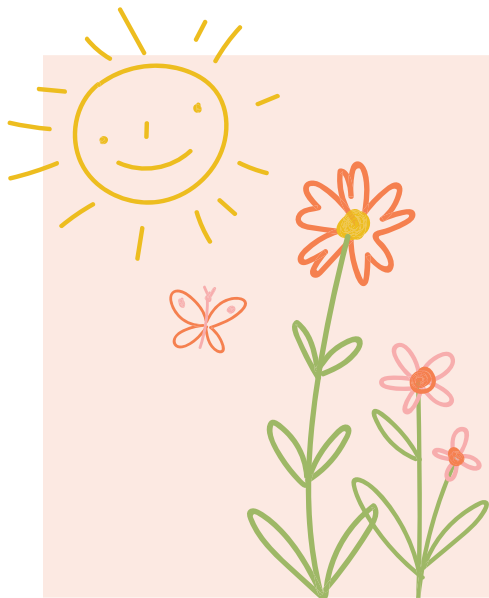
- supporting struggling students to succeed
- moving forward as school communities through the pandemic
- feeling valued as an instructional leader by students and parents
- experiencing supportive leaders
- maintaining trusting relationships with staff

**For both teachers** and school leaders, action or inaction by senior educational leadership often has negative effects on hope. The research identified that Alberta teachers seek leaders' cues and trace their hopes to actions and inactions of school leaders, central office administration, school board trustees and the distant provincial Department of Education, including the current minister of education's comments and action/inaction.

## STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS


The key findings from this study highlight the importance of teacher and school leader hope to health, workplace engagement, motivation and caring for students. They also provide the following strategic considerations with respect to the need to educate those in leadership positions, and education bureaucrats, on the now robust human science of hope.

- Show appreciation to Alberta teachers** and school leaders for their engagement in the profession and work in the classroom.
- Provide periodic evidence** to teachers of individual students' progress and accomplishment in their years ahead, beyond the grade level or their classroom, will have hope fostering effect for educators. Showing them their long-term impact as professionals and explicitly celebrating successes (both small and large) of Alberta teachers are important.
- Alberta school leadership** (at all levels) must be supported in sustaining hope in order to remain a source of hope in their school communities.
- Alberta school leaders** identified in this study that belonging to the same professional association as teachers was an important source of hope. Removing this association would lead to even greater challenges.
- Continue to support** the adoption of school leadership approaches that focus on asking questions rather than making assertions.
- Schools**, school divisions and the Association should proactively support teachers in cultivating/creating ongoing networks of support. Within these networks find ways to support teachers and school leaders in actively and explicitly pursuing hope-fostering practices and provide resources to make this possible.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

The full research report will be published in the fall of 2022 on the Association's website under Research. It will provide a detailed description of the rationale for the project, literature and contextual elements relevant to the project, the findings, a discussion of the findings, and field relevant recommendations. The findings will be mobilized through professional conversations and in policy and practice discussions regarding support for Alberta teachers and school leaders.

It is encouraging to discover the strong reservoirs of hope in Alberta public schools. Now it is up to the rest of us to support school leaders and teachers as they continue to create hope-fostering classrooms and vibrant learning communities. 



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# A matter of identity

## Who do young Albertans think they are?

Jared Wesley and Rissa Reist

Common Ground Initiative,  
University of Alberta

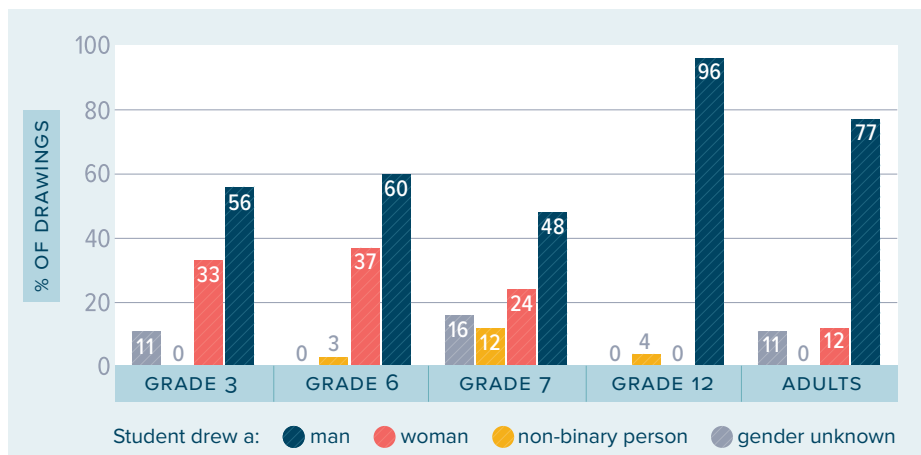
### DRAW ME AN ALBERTAN.

It's a simple activity that reveals a great deal about how our students view our provincial community and their place within it. Who they draw—and who they *don't* depict—tells us who students feel are the typical, quintessential and most influential members of Alberta society.

As part of our Becoming Albertan project, we've been conducting the exercise in schools across the province. From Camrose to Calgary, Spruce Grove to Lethbridge, we've seen younger students draw everything from celebrities (Connor McDavid and Jann Arden top the list) to their parents or teachers. Many children seem to view their province through a personal and localized lens.

The older they get, however, the more likely students are to sketch the more conventional caricatures of Alberta culture. Much like the adults in our broader Common Ground study, teenagers begin to view Alberta politics through a “wild west” lens, perceiving the typical Albertan as a rancher, farmer, or oil and gas worker. Nearly a third of 12th graders in our study made explicit references to their drawn Albertan being a “redneck.” No such references were made at any of the other grade levels. As they progress from Grade 6 to Grade 12, fewer depict women, Indigenous people, people of colour, folks in urban settings or family members when asked to draw an Albertan.

This narrowing view of Alberta identity is concerning to those committed to enhancing equity, diversity and inclusion in this province. If students don't see themselves or people like them as typical members of Alberta society (only two of 87 participants in our pilot study drew themselves), that can impact their willingness to engage in community activities



and discourse. In that sense, the results of our preliminary research are worrying to those who want all of our youth to see themselves in Alberta's future.

Through our Becoming Albertan study, we want to know why this type of socialization occurs. And we need teachers' help to understand how youth develop the common view of Alberta as Canada's “wild west.”

Do children growing up in rural settings have a different conception of the average Albertan than children from urban settings? Do larger school settings encourage different understandings of what it means to be an Albertan? At what precise point do youth internalize the “cowboy myth,” and what are the sources of this shift in thinking? Through this research, we are working toward a greater understanding of how students' personal identities align with community norms across Alberta.

Forging partnerships with schools, our Becoming Albertan study will improve the quality of education in Alberta by providing teachers with resources that will help them understand how their students see themselves in relation to the larger community. Compiling insights from classrooms across the country, we will work with teachers to develop curriculum supports for starting conversations about

how to build a more inclusive vision of what it means to be Albertan.

Together, we can provide students with key skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and historical thinking needed to navigate their place in Alberta society. What is more, the study will reveal who is left out when we think about Alberta and what the ramifications are of thinking about Alberta through the wild west lens.

A team of university researchers and Alberta teachers, we have designed an all-in-one package of short videos, consent forms and other materials to help teachers engage students in the “draw me an Albertan” activity and conduct follow-up conversations about identity. Funded by the Alberta Teachers' Association and approved by the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, the project puts students' safety and learning in the foreground. <sup>ATA</sup>

### PROJECT PARTICIPATION

If you are interested in being a part of the Becoming Albertan project, please contact Dr. Jared Wesley at [jwesley@ualberta.ca](mailto:jwesley@ualberta.ca) or visit [www.commongroundpolitics.ca/becoming-albertan](http://www.commongroundpolitics.ca/becoming-albertan) for more info.



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## 1. *Become the Primary Teacher Everyone Wants to Have: A Guide to Career Success*

New teachers begin their careers with a dream of being the teacher they longed to have or perhaps the one they were lucky enough to have. This book is like having a thoughtful mentor with you who shares experience gleaned from a successful teaching career. You'll get the best advice on becoming the teacher you long to be.

Information provided by ATA librarian Sandra Anderson

## 2. *Science Education Through Multiple Literacies: Project-Based Learning in Elementary School*

Interested in project-based learning but not sure where to start with your elementary students? This book provides you with useful ideas and projects to get project-based learning jump-started in your science lessons.

## 3. *Morning Classroom Conversations: Build Your Students' Social-Emotional, Character, and Communication Skills Every Day*

Structuring a morning classroom conversation in your room will help students to reset for the day so that they are ready to engage in critical thinking, use listening skills and engage with other respectfully.



## Your colleagues recommend

Teachers suggested these reads via Facebook.

### Robin Senger

*The Krubera Conspiracy* and *A Killing Game* by Jeff Buick, a great Calgary author. Unfortunately, only available on Amazon and Kindle. *A Killing Game* won best ebook thriller for North America last summer.

### Kate Moussa

After being ruled by bell times and deadlines, last summer I reached for Carl Honoré's *In Praise of Slow*. True to the title, I didn't finish it before we were back in the classroom 😊! I look forward to finishing it this July.

**4. 40 activités de transition en français : profitez pleinement de chaque minute en classe**

Cet ouvrage présente plus de 40 activités de transition en français divisées selon le moment où elles peuvent avoir lieu. Des conseils en vue d'adapter les activités pour l'enseignement à distance sont également proposés.

**5. *The New Cooking School Cookbook: Fundamentals***

This useful food science book answers many everyday questions that students pose. Eighty focused sections allow teachers to dive into exactly the topic they are covering in class, and infographics throughout the book provide deeper explorations of recipes and ingredients.

**6. *Put a Wet Paper Towel On It: The Weird and Wonderful World of Primary Schools***

A humorous look at life as an elementary school teacher by two UK teachers. Just what you need to help you through the rest of the school year!

**7. *Améliorer sa lecture en lisant des livres plus longs***

Dix-sept ateliers et de nombreuses activités permettent aux élèves d'acquérir autonomie et aisance en lecture. Guidés par leur enseignant, les jeunes lecteurs sont amenés, entre autres, à lire avec fluidité, à comprendre le langage littéraire, à utiliser des stratégies de compréhension pour lire des livres plus longs et plus complexes.

**8. *Dancing With Discomfort: A Framework For Noticing, Naming, And Navigating Our In-Between Moments***

Transitions in life naturally bring discomfort as they are movements through change. Rather than avoiding or rushing through the transition, we are encouraged to sit with our discomfort and discover strategies and techniques for embracing moments of discovery.

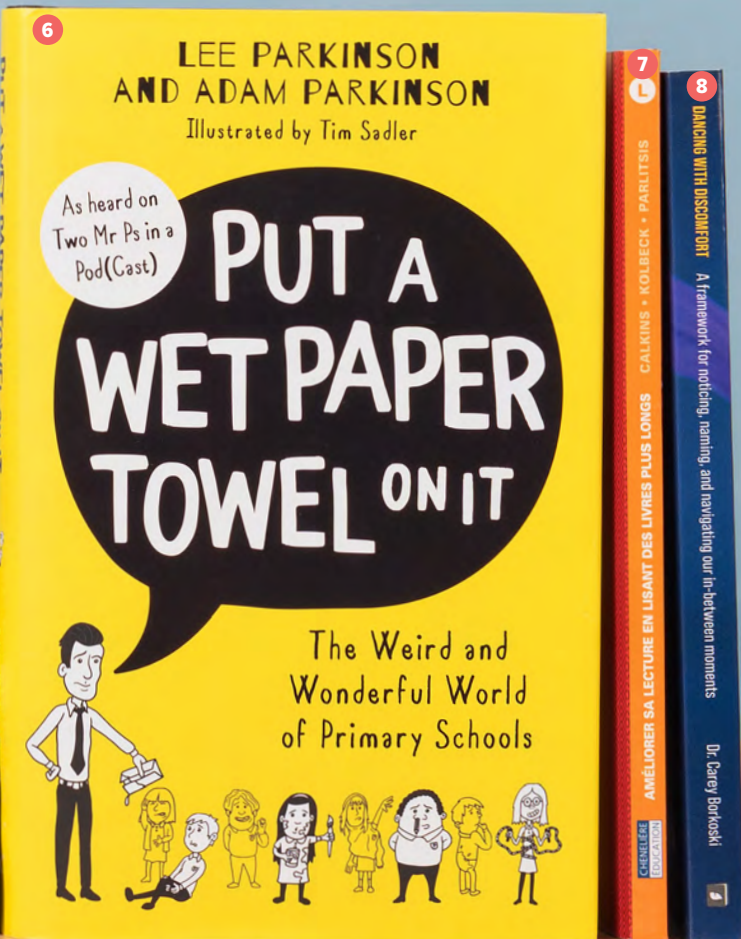


PHOTO BY YUET CHAN

**Katrina Zack**

I loved *The Forest of Vanishing Stars* by Kristin Harmel, because it ticked all the right boxes when I was looking for a book—historical fiction, a little bit of romance, no crying and a happy ending. It is an amazing cross between *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens and *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* by Heather Morris.

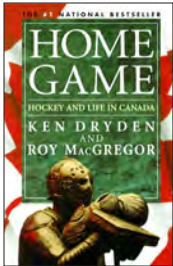
**Andrew Bullen**

I'm reading *Why We Sleep* by Matthew Walker. It's a pretty cool look at fairly current sleep research and is very interesting to boot. I'm thinking I'll use it to make an assignment for my Bio 30 kids in the fall.

**Deb Gerow**

I just finished reading *Red Notice* by Bill Browder. As difficult to put down as a good thriller, but non-fiction. A must read.

# What sports-themed book would you recommend to colleagues for use in the classroom?



**Home Game: Hockey and Life in Canada**

By Ken Dryden and Roy MacGregor.

Mark Breadner



**Reclaiming Tom Longboat: Indigenous Self-determination in Canadian Sport**

I recommend this book by Janice Forsyth coupled with this online resource: [indigenousheroes.ca](http://indigenousheroes.ca).

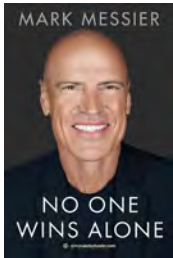
Crystal Clark



**The Boys in the Boat**

By Daniel James Brown, this is a great book about rowing and the value of teamwork and leadership.

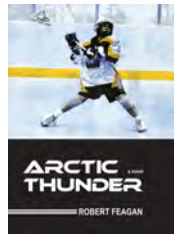
Rick Frey



**No One Wins Alone**

This book by Mark Messier is a great example of leadership.

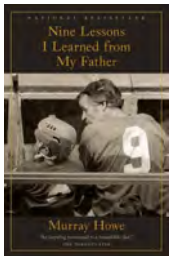
Shaunna Pettigrew



**Arctic Thunder**

This book by Robert Feagan begins in St. Albert and moves to Inuvik. It focuses on lacrosse, with traditional Arctic sports and restorative justice.

Rayanna Tremblay



**Nine Lessons I Learned from my Father**

This book is by Murray Howe, Gordie Howe's son.

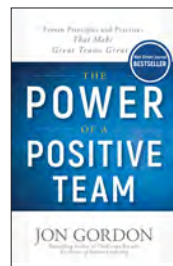
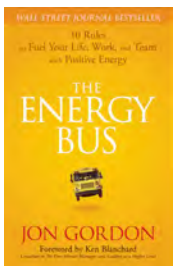
Kim Wouters



**Listen to Legacy: What the All Blacks Can Teach Us About the Business of Life**

By James Kerr on Audible.

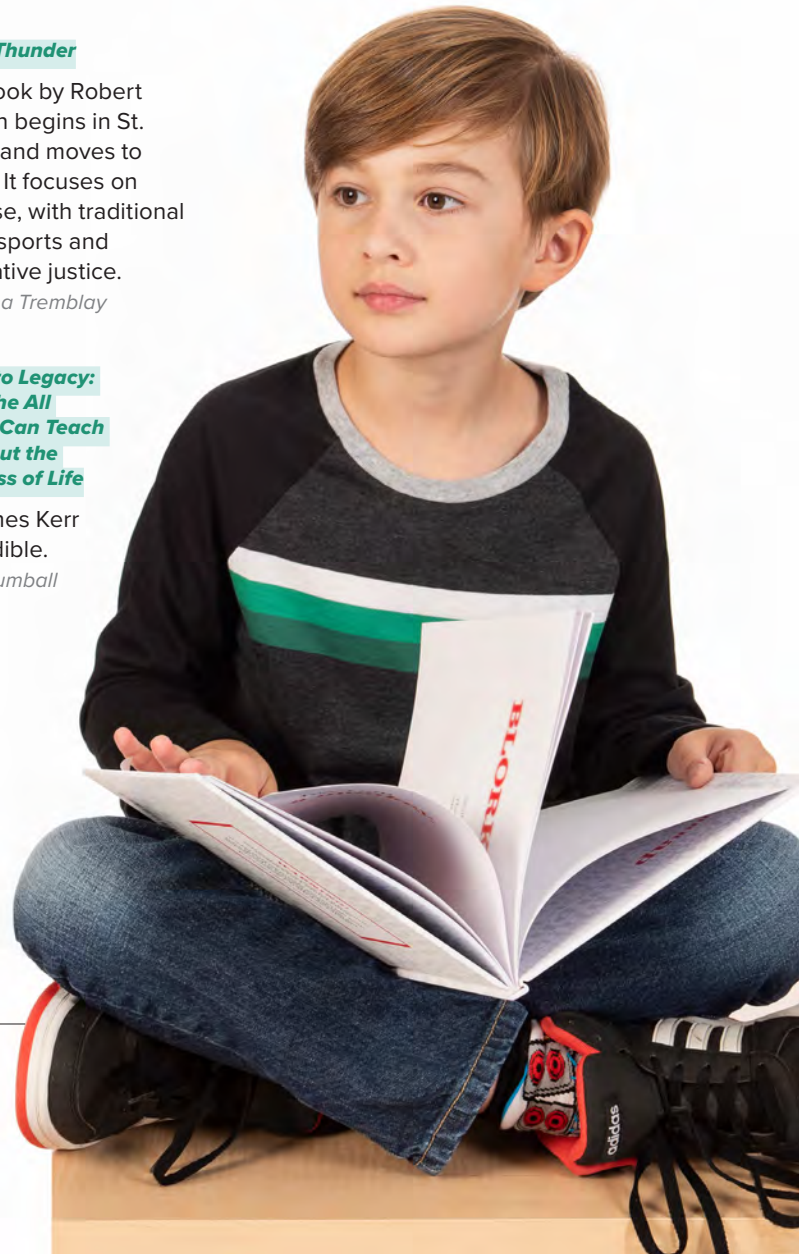
Rose Rumball



**The Energy Bus and The Power of a Positive Team**

I recommend anything by Jon Gordon, but particularly these two books.

Verna Mabin



Teacher recommendations gathered through Facebook

PHOTO BY YUET CHAN

# Renewable Energy and Environment Workshops

Virtual and In-Person Workshops



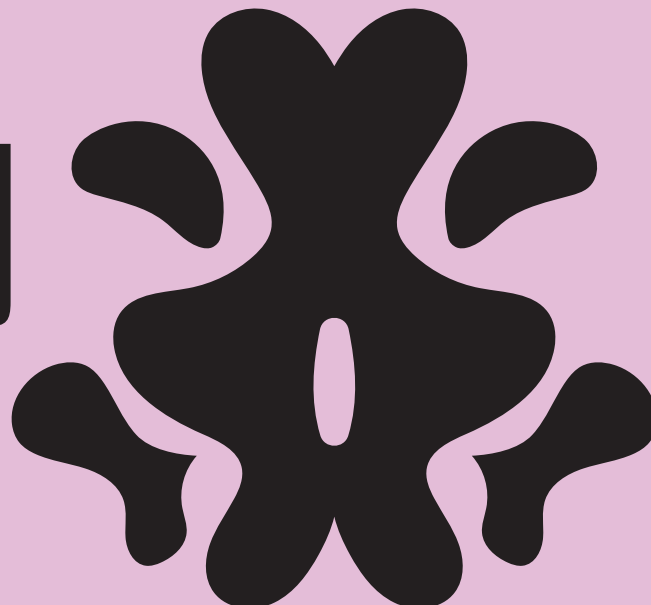
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[www.relayeducation.com/programs](http://www.relayeducation.com/programs)

[info@relayeducation.com](mailto:info@relayeducation.com)



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## Highlighting ATA programs and resources

### Provincial ATA committees embrace members' voices

#### WHAT ARE THEY?

The ATA has a number of standing committees (and some ad hoc ones) on topics of concern to teachers, such as Indigenous education; school leadership; and benefits, pension and insurance. These committees assist in the business of the ATA, and most include practising teachers, school leaders and/or system leaders to ensure that voices from the field are represented and heard.

#### WHAT DO THEY DO?

Standing committees advise Provincial Executive Council on pertinent issues and matters related to the respective committee's mandate. Many committees also plan a conference, a symposium or other professional learning events and provide feedback on resolutions to the Annual Representative Assembly.

#### HOW CAN I BE INVOLVED?

Apply for a committee position! Active and associate members (who hold the highest level of membership available to them) can apply when vacancies arise. Contact your district representative for information about serving on a provincial committee.



For more information, FAQs and current opportunities, check out the ATA website: [www.teachers.ab.ca/membersonly/ProvincialCommittees/Pages/index.aspx](http://www.teachers.ab.ca/membersonly/ProvincialCommittees/Pages/index.aspx).

The Association embraces diversity and inclusion and is committed to representing members belonging to equity-seeking groups. Members belonging to equity-seeking groups are encouraged to apply for committee positions.

#### WHAT'S NEW WITH COMMITTEES?

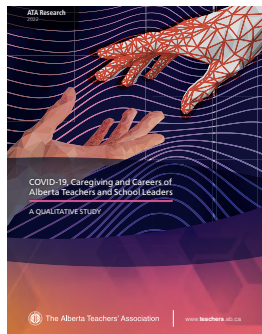
##### **Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee**

###### **Status of Racialized Teachers Working Group**


In 2022, the Status of Racialized Teachers Working Group was established, with strong representation from the field.

Under the direction of the Diversity, Equity and Human Rights (DEHR) Committee, the working group will study and advise the DEHR Committee on matters of concern or interest regarding racialized teachers; make recommendations to the DEHR Committee concerning Association policy related to racialized teachers; make recommendations to the DEHR Committee concerning the work of the Association and supports related to racialized teachers; receive representations from education partners and friends of public education as appropriate; and represent the Association, as authorized, with groups and at events regarding issues of concern or interest to racialized teachers.

##### **Women in Leadership Committee**



###### **Caregiving Research**

A research project entitled *COVID-19, Caregiving and Careers of Alberta Teachers and School Leaders—A Qualitative Study* was published in 2022. Scan the QR code to read the study online. 





# Pleins feux sur les programmes et ressources de l'ATA

## Les comités provinciaux de l'ATA valorisent la voix des membres

### QUE SONT-ILS?

L'ATA compte un certain nombre de comités permanents (et quelques comités ad hoc) sur des sujets qui intéressent particulièrement les enseignants, tels que l'éducation autochtone; le leadership scolaire; et les avantages sociaux, pensions et assurances. Ces comités aident à la conduite des affaires de l'ATA, et la plupart sont composés d'enseignants en exercice, de leaders scolaires et/ou de leaders du système qui veillent à ce que la voix des membres sur le terrain soit représentée et entendue.

### QUE FONT-ILS?

Les comités permanents conseillent le Conseil exécutif provincial sur toute question pertinente ou relative au mandat de chaque comité. De nombreux comités planifient même un congrès, un colloque, ou d'autres événements d'apprentissage professionnel et fournissent une rétroaction sur les résolutions proposées à l'Assemblée représentative annuelle.

### COMMENT PUIS-JE EN FAIRE PARTIE?

Postulez pour un poste au sein du comité! Tout membre actif et associé (possédant le niveau d'adhésion le plus élevé auquel il peut prétendre) peut poser sa candidature dès qu'un poste se libère. Renseignez-vous auprès de votre représentant de district sur les modalités relatives à la participation à un comité provincial.



Pour en savoir plus, consultez le site Web de l'ATA où se trouvent également la FAQ et les postes actuellement vacants. [www.teachers.ab.ca/membersonly/ProvincialCommittees/Pages/index.aspx](http://www.teachers.ab.ca/membersonly/ProvincialCommittees/Pages/index.aspx).

L'ATA valorise la diversité et l'inclusion et s'engage à représenter les membres appartenant à des groupes en quête d'équité. On encourage les membres appartenant à ces groupes à se porter candidats.

### QUOI DE NEUF AVEC LES COMITÉS?

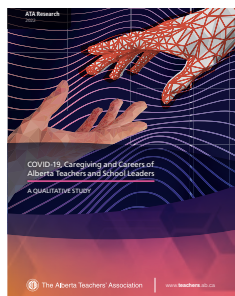
#### ***Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee***

##### **Groupe de travail sur le statut des enseignants racialisés**


En 2022, le groupe de travail sur le statut des enseignants racialisés a été établi. Ce comité est composé en grande partie de membres travaillant sur le terrain.

Sous la direction du *Diversity, Equity and Human Rights (DEHR) Committee*, le groupe de travail conseillera le comité DEHR et se penchera sur les sujets préoccupants ou présentant un intérêt particulier à propos des enseignants racialisés; fera des recommandations au comité DEHR concernant la politique de l'ATA relative aux enseignants racialisés; fera des recommandations au comité DEHR concernant le travail de l'ATA et les soutiens liés aux enseignants racialisés; recevra les représentants des partenaires en éducation et amis de l'éducation publique, au moment opportun; représentera l'ATA, selon les autorisations, auprès de groupes et lors d'événements concernant des questions d'intérêt pour les enseignants racialisés; et représentera l'ATA, lorsqu'il y sera autorisé, auprès de groupes et lors d'événements concernant des questions d'intérêt pour les enseignants racialisés.

#### ***Women in Leadership Committee***



##### **Caregiving Research**

Un projet de recherche intitulé COVID-19, *Caregiving and Careers of Alberta Teachers and School Leaders—A Qualitative Study* a été publié en 2022. Balayez le code QR pour lire l'étude. 





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Eleven-year-old flutist Grace is a proud member of the Youth Orchestra of Northern Alberta. With funding from Edmonton Community Foundation, YONA-Sistema is helping young people living in priority neighborhoods learn social skills, receive support, succeed academically, and gain confidence through music.

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# Two-track mind

Principal Ian McLaren helps others through teaching and firefighting

## Cory Hare

Managing Editor, ATA Magazine

### STANDING IN HIS LIVING ROOM,

watching as the fire department whizzes by in their shiny red trucks, Ian McLaren is like a dog with his paws up against the window — he wants to go so badly.

This was a common scene years ago when McLaren moved to a new town after having been a volunteer firefighter in his previous community.

“My wife joked that I was going to leave nose prints on the front window if I kept staring out of it every time I heard a siren,” McLaren writes in his memoir.

### DOUBLE LIFE

McLaren first joined a volunteer fire department when he was five years into his teaching career and living in Black Diamond. Unlike the many other hobbies he tried and lost interest in, firefighting stuck.

For more than two decades, McLaren has juggled the dual roles of volunteer firefighter and teacher/school administrator, attending more than 1,500 emergency calls and becoming the chief of the Bentley District Fire Department and principal of Eckville Elementary School. Both roles help him fulfill a deep-seated need to make a difference.

“I like being a teacher ... [and] principal,” McLaren says. “As much as I love firefighting, I wouldn’t want to give up my teaching role. That’s equally a part of who I am.”

In his self-published memoir *Not My Emergency: The Double Life of a Volunteer Firefighter*, McLaren explains that he doesn’t want bad things to happen to

people, but he does get restless if a week or two goes by without an emergency call.

“Every time the pager goes off there’s always that ‘what if’ moment: what if this is the big call?” he says.

McLaren explains that volunteer firefighters undergo the same intense training as career firefighters. (There’s no such thing as volunteer fires). The volunteer department in Bentley averages about 90 calls per year, the bulk of which are motor vehicle collisions, grass fires, water rescues, medical assists and false alarms — only about seven or eight of the calls are structure fires.

“It’s not like the movies where they’re running out to two or three per day,” McLaren says.

### UPS AND DOWNS

In his book, McLaren describes the shock of having a fire pager awaken him from the deepest part of sleep, the fear that comes with entering a smoke-filled building, how indescribably black a fire is and how hot it is inside a burning building.

He also relates how volunteer firefighting is full of ups and downs for firefighters and their families, who are often faced with an empty chair during family meals and special occasions. One of McLaren’s toughest moments came on a Father’s Day, when he responded to a call that took him away from the activities his own family had planned. The call was to recover the body of a man who had committed suicide by hanging—the father of a 12-year-old former student.




“Not knowing what else to do, I just wrap my arms around [his] shoulders and hold him as he sobs,” McLaren recounts in his book.

While some emergency calls just don’t have a positive result despite responders’ best efforts, the feeling that comes from making a positive difference is like nothing else McLaren has ever experienced.

“There is the very rewarding feeling of having arrived on a scene that is the lowest point in people’s lives ... and 10 minutes later, if things go well, you have dramatically improved their situation,” McLaren says. “It’s this feeling of accomplishment that is very profound.”

While the rewards of teaching often come after seeing children develop over the course of months and years, firefighting provides more immediate feedback, which McLaren says fits his short attention span.

“We teach because we get those occasional flashes of aha moments where we know we’ve really impacted a child’s life,” he says. “It’s a very similar thing to being on the fire department. I crave those moments where I know that my life has impacted somebody else’s life in a positive way.” 

## ON THE SCENE WITH

### Ian McLaren

#### How would you describe yourself as a teacher?

I am more about the art than the science of teaching. I focus on a positive classroom dynamic, building relationships with my students and ensuring they feel safe in my classroom.

#### Which hobby have you tried that was the most disastrous or ill-fitting? Why?

When I was in high school, I became obsessed with rock climbing. I read everything I could about the sport, but there were two reasons I never really got into it. First of all, it is a very expensive hobby and I was very poor at the time. More importantly, though, it turns out I am not all that crazy about heights.

#### What is it like to ride in a fire truck regularly?

Honestly, it never gets boring riding the BRT (big red truck). And in case you are wondering, yes, we will blow the horn if you pump your arm at us to do so. (And we love it.)

#### Is there a particular aspect of firefighting that you’ve become most expert in during your career?

Most volunteer firefighters hone in on one area that they will become experts in. My two are vehicle extrication and ice rescue. While ice rescues are rare, we attend many vehicle accidents each year and extricating trapped and injured patients is critical to our job.

#### Which will you retire from first, firefighting or teaching?

Definitely teaching. I very much hope to pursue some sort of work in emergency services after I retire from teaching. If anyone knows of a small department in need of a part-time chief, I will be available in about five years!

- **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](mailto:cory.hare@ata.ab.ca).

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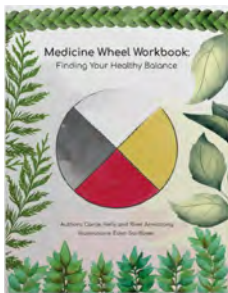
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## Creative colleagues

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



#### **Medicine Wheel Workbook: Finding Your Healthy Balance**

For her latest book, *Medicine Wheel Workbook: Finding Your Healthy Balance*, Carrie Armstrong collaborated with her sister and daughter to create an interactive workbook that encourages children to find their healthy balance. Also check out *Mother Earth Plants for Health & Beauty: Indigenous Plants, Traditions and Recipes* (Eschia Books Ltd.), in which Armstrong shares recipes based on her own grandmother's traditions. A proud Métis woman, Armstrong has created books and a company—Mother Earth Essentials—to increase awareness of the beauty of the Indigenous culture.

**CARRIE ARMSTRONG**

*amiskwaciy Academy, Edmonton  
Medicine Wheel Education*



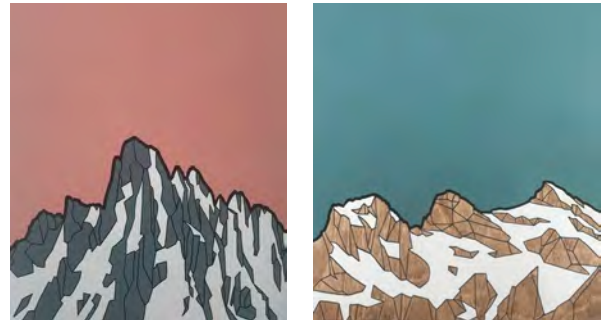
### SPORTS

Grade 5 teacher Cody Huseby keeps busy on and off the ice as a Western Hockey League official and head coach of the Red Deer U11 A+ Phone Experts Chiefs. With his experience coaching and officiating games, he was selected as a linesperson for the World Junior Hockey Championship in 2022. Huseby was also recently named Hockey Alberta's coach of the month.

**CODY HUSEBY**

*Father Henri Voisin, Red Deer  
Instagram and Twitter @huseby88*

### ART



When not in the art room at school, Sheena Priddle is often creating commissioned hand-lettered details for wedding planners and local vendors or custom paintings for clients through her Instagram and Etsy store. Her most recent series of paintings combines her love of climbing with a modern geometric esthetic—familiar peaks from local ranges and her dream climbing destinations are contrasted with colour-blocked skies.

**SHEENA PRIDDLE**

*Lorne Akins Junior High, St. Albert  
Instagram and Etsy @doodle.pretty*

### TELEVISION



In 2022, Justin Gabinet, a foods teacher and professional human ecologist, was featured on an episode of Food Network Canada's *Wall of Bakers*. After being encouraged by colleagues to apply, Gabinet navigated the

audition process—during the pandemic, no less!—and filmed the show in summer 2021. Gabinet describes the filming as a “heart-warming experience” and fondly recalls the judges complimenting his savory rosemary scones with crème anglaise, as well as judge chef Shobna Kannusamy thanking him for his service as a teacher.

**JUSTIN GABINET**

*Archbishop Jordan Catholic High School, Sherwood Park  
@gabinatrix*

- ▶ **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 section editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn at [lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca](mailto:lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca).

# 5 minutes!

You have five minutes before the end of the day.  
How do you spend that time?

**Lorelei Gertz-Cummins**

A talk circle where students can just talk about what's on their minds. It's a good way to connect on a personal level and problem solve issues that arise. It also gives students time to have a voice when they often feel unheard.

**Karlee Hren**

I have a few go-to activities: We have a class clean up and dance party. Our special Friday song is "Celebration" by Kool and the Gang. We also have extra share time because my kids love to share about their lives with their peers.

**Rayanna May**

Shylock Fox mysteries!! My kids love trying to solve them.

**Tara Kwasney**

Riddles, read aloud, or make up a silly story together. "Once upon a time there was a \_\_\_\_\_ who wanted \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_."

**Vikki Lynn**

Chatting about life and my students' interests or playing a game as a class.

**Reta Yvonne**

Sometimes a humorous read aloud, sometimes a student reads their book to the class, sometimes we just tell jokes and laugh.

**Megan Yibba**

LOL time—we watch bloopers, share jokes, tell funny stories. We always end the day with a laugh.

**Kristina Veronica**

Mystery number!  
"I am thinking of the product of five and seven."  
"I am thinking of the estimate of 424 and 219."  
"I am thinking of the sum of 378 and 276."  
Squeeze in any mental math I can.

**Chelsea Ramsey**

Pit and peak of the day! Everyone shares their high and low of the day.

**Joy de Nance**

Action and movement songs like "The Goldfish Song" by Laurie Breckner.

**Stephanie Lefebvre**

Reading to my students. We always have a book on the go.

► See more at [facebook.com/ABteachers](https://www.facebook.com/ABteachers).

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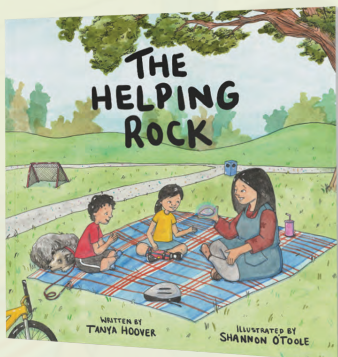
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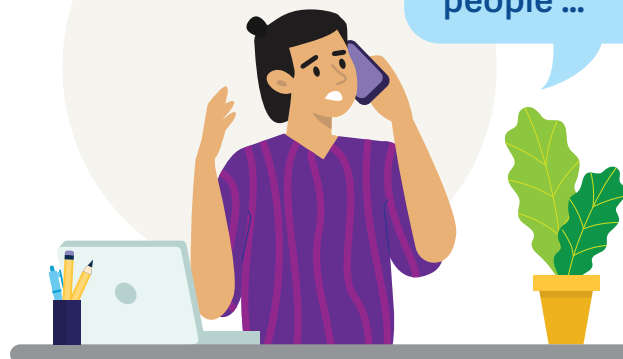


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ISTOCK

# A tale of four houses

## Stepping back leads to students stepping up

**Naomi Holmes**

Grade 3, Sturgeon Heights School, St. Albert

**AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH** school year, I always place my students into four organizational “house groups.” Then I assign things like class jobs weekly to a house group and I don’t micromanage anything. As long as the job is done right, I don’t care if the whole group does it, they take turns, etc. This way, I eliminate any worry about someone being absent, as there are usually about six kids per house group.

Yes, I’m a Harry Potter fan, but I also spent two years teaching in England, where I experienced house groups and their benefits first-hand! This system creates natural leaders and encourages everyone to recognize that each

individual plays a part in the larger community and must pull their own weight. Some years the kids create the groups and some years I do.

This year, I grouped them into four Disney groups: pink Minnie Mouse, purple Daisy Duck, blue Donald Duck and peach Mickey Mouse. This system has worked for every classroom I’ve been in for the last 12 years of my 28 years of teaching. I believe the reason it has worked is that children want to be seen and heard, and when they have expectations that are routine, they will always step up to the plate. The moment they realize the classroom belongs to them, not me “the teacher,” then the magic can happen.

I’ve also enjoyed watching the “unexpected,” when a quiet child steps in to help a fellow group member or a child who struggles with organization

and suddenly realizes they need to be responsible so that their group can rely on them. Students experience so many life skills in the simple act of me letting go of being “in charge.”

Reaching all these goals takes some practice and patience, but every year, by the end of September, I can generally take a step back and allow the system to run. <sup>ATA</sup>

“This system creates natural leaders and encourages everyone to recognize that each individual plays a part in the larger community.”

- ▶ **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](mailto:cory.hare@ata.ab.ca).

# The story of teaching

Lesson in history becomes a key to the future

**Cory Schoffer**

Executive Staff Officer, ATA



ILLUSTRATION BY ERIN SOLANO

## THE CHALLENGE

As the new “kid,” how to connect with students who’ve spent their entire lives together.

## MY GRADE 12 HISTORY

teacher was one of my favourites and a role model for me as I became a teacher. He asked us to identify a political song and to break down the lyrics into an analysis of its time. I picked a late Cold War era song, “Put Down That Weapon” by Midnight Oil.

Jump ahead a few years, and my education adventure sees me in the Peace Country and a small rural school with two multigrade classrooms: the Big Room and the Little Room. I taught in the Big Room.

Small schools like this are really just an extended family. I, however, was the newly adopted kid. I was the only one the students didn’t know, and I didn’t know them. I assigned a variation from my Grade 12 history class a few years earlier. Instead of asking upper elementary and junior high students to break down anti-war anthems, I asked them to dig into their own catalogues. I wanted to get to know them in their space through their music.

Through that activity, I started to get to know my

“ I started to get to know my students and they got to know more about themselves too.”

students, and, interestingly, these children who grew up in such a small community, many knowing each other since birth, got to know a bit more about themselves too. I like to think that the activity allowed them to get to know a bit about their new teacher too, as I also picked a song to present to them (I’m pretty sure I picked “The River” by Garth Brooks).

I reached out to some former students to see if they had any recollections they could share, and this activity was mentioned by someone who is now a teacher herself. Her song was “4am” by Our Lady Peace.

“I loved hearing everyone’s song choices, and you made us feel like our selections were so wise,” she said. “I felt like I was

able to be myself, with all that preteen angst. Great lesson.”

A few years ago when I came across my Grade 12 history teacher, I told him how I morphed his political song activity into something a bit different. From one teacher, passed on to another and then on to another. It really is the story of teaching. <sup>ATA</sup>

► **Got an idea?** Maybe you created a lesson that totally flopped or were on the receiving end of a lesson that was truly inspiring. Whatever your story, please summarize it in up to 300 words and email it to managing editor Cory Hare at [cory.hare@ata.ab.ca](mailto:cory.hare@ata.ab.ca).

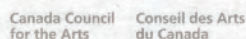
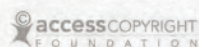
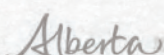
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# ATA Magazine

FALL 2022

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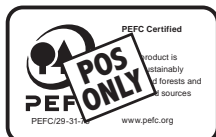
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 Caroline Barlott is an Edmonton freelance writer whose work has appeared in *Discover*, *Cottage Life* and *Canadian Geographic*, among others. She writes on a variety of topics and is especially interested in education and ecology.




## CHRISTINA PICKLES | p. 14

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## NAOMI HOLMES | p. 55

 Naomi Holmes has been teaching in Sturgeon School Division for 21 years. She enjoys teaching in collaboration with her co-workers and continues to integrate technology into her classroom. She's enjoyed running the musical theatre program at her school for the last 14 years but also takes time to relax by building Harry Potter Lego.

The Alberta Teachers' Association acknowledges Treaty 6, 7 and 8 territories, the ancestral and traditional territories of the Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Saulteaux, Nakota Sioux, as well as the Blackfoot Confederacy: Kainai, Piikani and Siksika, Tsuu T'ina, First Nation and Stoney Nakoda First Nation. We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples whose footsteps have marked these lands for generations. We are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us. Our recognition of this land is an act of reconciliation and an expression of our gratitude to those on whose territory we print and distribute this publication.





PHOTO BY RYAN PARKER

**Joni Turville**

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

## Caring is central to teaching

**“I’M SPENDING ABOUT** two hours every night just doing email,” lamented a friend while we were enjoying a catch-up session over a cup of coffee. At the time, she was a vice-principal at a large junior high school, and the demands resulting from digital communications, including email, were becoming unmanageable.

This conversation led to what would become a multi-year research project I conducted as part of my doctoral program, exploring how digital communications were impacting the lives of K–12 teachers. My research revealed that checking school communications outside of regular hours had significant consequences for teachers. For instance, when such check-ins involved a note from a student or parent, teachers were immediately thrown back into the classroom. Their concern for a particular student or family might stretch on through the night, with some study participants reporting interruptions to their family life and loss of sleep as a result.

It became clear that the heart of the issue was the care that teachers have for their students. American philosopher Nel Noddings, and her seminal work on the ethics of care, became central to my research and spoke to what it means to be a teacher as a caring professional.

“This is what caring professionals know—that teaching and learning and life itself go better in an atmosphere of care and trust,” Noddings wrote in *Caregiving: Readings in Knowledge, Practice, Ethics, and Politics* (which she co-edited with Suzanne Gordon and Patricia Benner).

Though there is a recognizable drain related to this constant concern, caring is an essential part of what it means to be a teacher and is at the heart of this issue’s feature on caring professions.

As ever, thanks for reading and thanks for all you do for the students of Alberta. 

## La bienveillance est au cœur de l’enseignement

**« TOUS LES SOIRS,** je passe environ deux heures à rédiger des courriels, se lamente une amie alors que nous prenions plaisir à nous retrouver autour d’une tasse de café. » À l’époque, elle était directrice adjointe d’une grande école secondaire premier cycle, et les demandes par communications numériques, y compris les courriels, devenaient impossibles à gérer.

Cette conversation nous a menées à ce qui allait devenir un projet de recherche pluriannuel que j’ai dirigé dans le cadre de mon programme de doctorat : découvrir de quelle manière les communications numériques ont un impact sur la vie des enseignants de la maternelle à la 12<sup>e</sup> année. Ma recherche a mis en évidence que vérifier des communications scolaires en dehors des heures régulières de travail avait d’importantes conséquences sur les enseignants. Par exemple, si le message provenait d’un élève ou d’un parent, on constatait que l’enseignant se retrouvait immédiatement en classe. Et, s’il se préoccupait en particulier d’un élève ou d’une famille, il pouvait facilement s’en préoccuper toute la soirée. D’autres participants à l’étude ont même signalé que leur vie de famille avait été à tel point perturbée qu’ils en avaient perdu le sommeil.

Il devint alors clair que le cœur du problème reposait véritablement sur la bienveillance des enseignants envers leurs élèves. À partir de là, j’ai centré mes recherches sur les travaux précurseurs sur l’éthique de la bienveillance de la philosophe américaine Nel Noddings, et j’ai compris ce que signifie être un enseignant qui agit aussi en tant que professionnel de la bienveillance.

« Voilà ce que les professionnels voués au bien-être des autres savent—que l’enseignement, l’apprentissage et la vie se déroulent mieux dans un climat de bienveillance et de confiance », a écrit Noddings dans *Caregiving: Readings in Knowledge, Practice, Ethics, and Politics* (qu’elle a corédigé avec Suzanne Gordon et Patricia Benner).

Bien que cette préoccupation constante pour autrui soit à l’origine d’un épuisement facilement reconnaissable, être enseignant, c’est aussi être bienveillant, et cette vertu est au cœur de ce numéro spécial qui s’intéresse aux professions dont la bienveillance est de rigueur.

Comme toujours, merci de faire partie de nos fidèles lecteurs, et merci de tout ce que vous faites pour les élèves de l’Alberta. 

# Letters

## We want your feedback

We'd like to hear from you! One of the ways we'd like to engage with teachers is by hearing from you regularly. In several locations throughout this magazine are sections calling for ideas and submissions from teachers. Please watch for these and send us your ideas.

Also please send us

- general feedback,
- your thoughts on items that you particularly liked (or didn't),
- suggestions for future content or
- letters to the editor for possible publication.

We really do want to hear from you. After all, this is your magazine.

Email your feedback to Joni Turville, editor-in-chief, [joni.turville@ata.ab.ca](mailto:joni.turville@ata.ab.ca); or Cory Hare, managing editor, [cory.hare@ata.ab.ca](mailto:cory.hare@ata.ab.ca).

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR — GUIDELINES

Word limit: 300

Please include

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

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

## ATA Magazine wins industry award



The feature on anti-Black racism that appeared in the fall 2021 issue of the *ATA Magazine* won first place for “Best Editorial Package” at the 2022 Alberta Magazine Awards in September.

Orchestrated by the Alberta Magazine Publishers Association, the award was based on writing style and engaging voice, content, creativity and originality, engagement and overall impact.

Alberta teachers Gail-Ann Wilson and Andrew Parker not only contributed stories to the feature, but were also instrumental in shaping the entire collection of content in their roles as guest editors. Other Alberta teachers who contributed articles were Rosalind Smith, Jennifer Kelly, Sarah Adomako-Ansah and Maxine Hackett. Illustrator Kyle Smith and photographer Stefan Legacy also applied their talents to the project.

“My gratitude to the *ATA Magazine* for providing a platform for Black voices to resonate. It is an honour to share this accomplishment with so many heroes who worked diligently to prepare this extraordinary feature on Black educators in our province.”

Gail-Ann Wilson

“On behalf of the entire Black Teachers Association of Alberta, we are humbly thankful for this award. Our group has worked very hard as a grassroots collective for two years and this award is a reflection of our collaborations with our allies, family and community. Thank you to the ATA and *ATA Magazine* for giving us this platform to share our stories with our intersectional and intergenerational family in Alberta.”

Andrew Parker

### THANK YOU FROM NEW BRUNSWICK'S FRANCOPHONE TEACHERS

I just wanted to say thanks/congratulations for the outstanding feature in your spring 2022 edition (“Arts education in school helps students grow into fully realized humans.”)

I was happy to share this excellent file with key people in the francophone sector in New Brunswick as we sometimes run out of strong (or new?) arguments—even though we know how important art education is!

—Alain Boisvert

Directeur général, Association des enseignantes et des enseignants francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick





PHOTO BY RYAN PARKER

## FROM THE PRESIDENT MOT DU PRÉSIDENT

### Jason Schilling

President, ATA  
Président de l'ATA

## Running adds life to my days


**IN LIFE WE DO MANY THINGS.** One thing I have done since I was in junior high—Pioneer Middle School in Rocky Mountain House—is run.

I run for many reasons. Fitness, of course, is the primary one, but the simple act of running for me has not only a physical benefit but also helps me maintain my overall health and well-being.

People often ask me what I think about when I run, and I respond that I think about everything and nothing all at once. I like to say there is not one problem I can't solve when on a run. Being outside on a trail or path, exploring the many beautiful parts of our province, is a great way to process the day's events or a problem that may be plaguing me, whether that problem is personal or professional.

One of the benefits of running is that I can pretty much do it anywhere—just need to tie on the shoes and off I go to explore and unwind. Running has served me well in my life, providing that mythical work-life balance we are all trying to incorporate into our lives and helping me relieve the stress that compounds throughout the day.

When I was in the classroom, I sometimes had students ask me when I'd last gone for a run, as they could see that I was a bit tense that day. They also suggested that I go for a run before I marked their latest assignment.

Now you may not be a runner, and that's okay, but I'd encourage you to find those activities that benefit your own well-being. As teachers and school leaders, we need to make sure we are at our best, not only for ourselves, but for our students, friends and families. 

## La course à pied apporte un plus à mes journées


**DANS LA VIE NOUS FAISONS** beaucoup de choses, et celle que je n'ai jamais cessé de faire depuis mon entrée au premier cycle du secondaire à l'école Pioneer Middle à Rocky Mountain House, c'est de courir.

Je cours pour plusieurs raisons. La principale, évidemment, est pour garder la forme, mais au-delà des bienfaits sur le physique, le simple fait de courir m'aide aussi à rester en bonne santé et à me sentir bien dans ma peau.

On me demande souvent à quoi je pense quand je cours, et ma réponse est à tout et à rien à la fois. J'aime à dire qu'aucun problème n'est impossible à résoudre lorsque je cours. Pour moi, courir et explorer par les chemins et sentiers la beauté des paysages de notre province est une excellente façon d'absorber tout événement ou problème personnel ou professionnel qui a pu se passer dans la journée.

L'un des avantages de la course à pied est que je peux pratiquer cette activité pratiquement n'importe où. Il me suffit de lacer mes chaussures et hop me voilà parti, prêt à explorer et à me détendre. La course à pied m'a beaucoup aidé dans la vie, notamment à trouver cet équilibre mythique entre travail et vie privée que nous recherchons tous, et aussi à évacuer le stress accumulé tout au long de la journée.

Lorsque j'enseignais, les élèves me demandaient de temps à autre quelle était la dernière fois où j'étais allé courir. Ils voyaient bien que j'étais un peu tendu ce jour-là. Il leur est même arrivé de me suggérer d'aller courir avant de corriger leur dernier devoir.

Vous n'êtes peut-être pas un coureur, et c'est très bien ainsi, toutefois, je vous encourage à trouver des activités qui contribuent à votre bien-être. En effet, en tant qu'enseignants et leaders scolaires, nous devons veiller à être au mieux de notre forme, non seulement pour nous-mêmes, mais aussi pour nos élèves, nos amis et nos familles. 

# Calm, collected and covered.

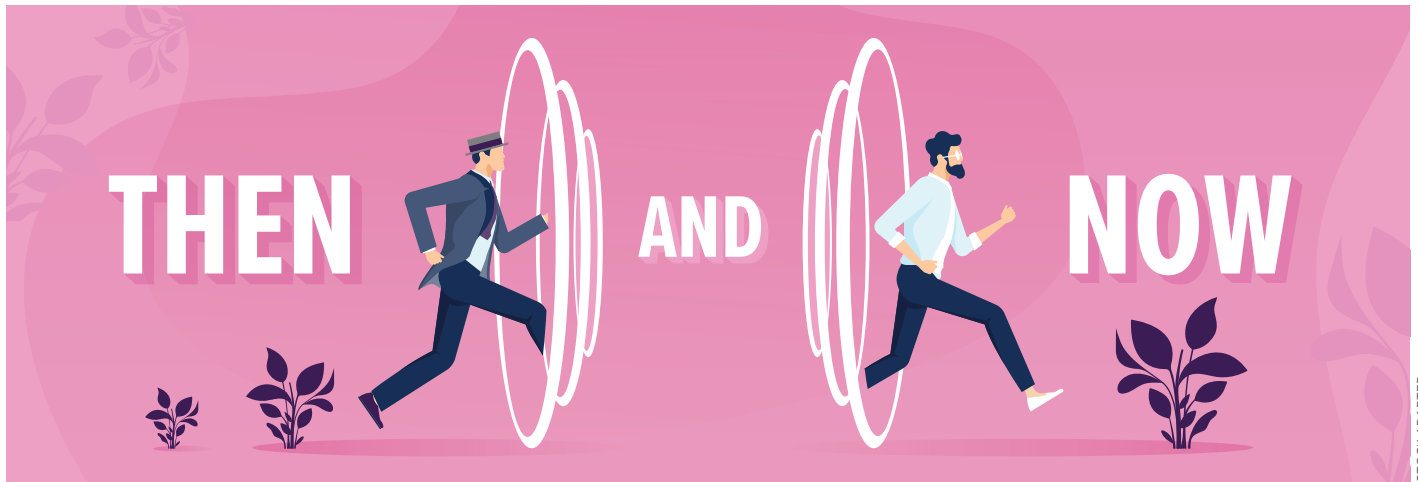
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ISTOCK ADAPTED

## Teachers' commitment to students withstands both time and trends.

**WE DUG INTO THE ARCHIVES** to find tidbits from previous issues of the *ATA Magazine* that are worth another look, either because of their relevance today, or as a reminder of how far we've come. You decide.

Can you match the following excerpts with the year that they were originally published? 1957, 1966, 1973, 2003

### 1. INDEFINITE WONDER

I suggest it is time we claim the phrase “wonder around” for what we do in our classes. Many subjects are best taught when filled with tales and experiences enlivened by wonder. Wondering engages the cynical or pessimistic students who feel their talents are wasted. All students have a capacity to employ their talents to wonder, and they will find it is most engaging when done in a hopeful manner. Wonder should be as central to education as the program of studies.

Your guess: \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. THE NEW MATH

It's not difficult to compare the old and the new methods. Mathematics, from Grade 1 up, used to be taught by drill and rule. If you didn't remember the rule, you couldn't do your sums. You repeated the same thing over and over and hoped it would stick. (Remember the dreary columns of figures we had to add, multiply and divide; the same old 'problems' in different guises, like the bathtub with two holes and the train from A to B.) The most serious fault of this kind of teaching was that children weren't given either the time or the incentive to think. [...]

The new methods of teaching differ markedly. They acknowledge that children can understand mathematical concepts much earlier than we used to think possible. They teach the basic laws instead of the rules: the *why* as well as the *how*.

Your guess: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. THE FUTURISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Social studies teachers might do well to learn something about the new field of futuristics — the study of future possibilities. [...] The futuristic perspective is very important, because students know that they can do nothing about the past. All the glories and horrors of history are fixed and unalterable. It is only in the future that a student's own actions can be effective, and so the future can be intensely meaningful to him. As students begin to consider the various developments that could occur in the future [...] they almost inevitably become involved in deciding which sort of things they want to see realized. As this happens, they may begin to take responsibility for making them happen.

Your guess: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. FASHION FADS

DOES your school allow students to wear dungarees, black leather jackets, engineer's boots, sideburns or duck-tail haircuts? If this be the case, consider this question. Are you satisfied with the behaviour of the youngsters in your school? If your answer to the second question is no, then try this one. Is there any relationship between dress and conduct?

It was observed in one school that there was a significant correlation between fad clothing and behaviour. [...]

A more informal atmosphere pervades the schools today than did in our parents' time. This is certainly all to the good, but when the informality reaches uncontrollable limits, trouble begins to brew. <sup>ATA</sup>

Your guess: \_\_\_\_\_

Answers: 1. "The Wonder of It All," Craig Harding, Spring 2003. 2. "Quick! What's 7/8 Divided by 3/4?" Renate Wilson, May 1966. 3. "Let's Have Less Talk of Problems and More of Solutions," F. O. Schreiber, October 1973. 4. "Can We Outlaw Fad Clothing?" Harvey Handel, December 1957.



ILLUSTRATION BY MATEUSZ NAPIERALSKI

# Looking south

## Research on teacher demographics and shortages may provide lessons for Alberta

**Lisa Everitt**

Executive Staff Officer, ATA

**SCHOLARS HAVE** been researching teacher attraction, retention and shortages in Canada, the U.S. and other countries for some time now. See et al. (2020) explains that “attracting and retaining qualified teachers is a persistent problem that has plagued many countries for decades” (p. 1). Examining trends in teacher demographics is an important component of understanding factors that may drive teacher shortages. This article is the first of a two-part series examining what has been learned in other jurisdictions about teacher demographics over the past 30 years.

The United States, unlike Canada, collects in-depth data about teachers through the National Center for Education

Statistics, which administers a Schools and Staffing Survey and Teacher Follow-Up Survey once every three to four school years. Consequently, in the U.S., there are significant sets of data that scholars have drawn upon to better understand, at a large scale, what trends are impacting the American teaching profession. Ingersoll et al. (2018) analyzed eight cycles of survey data over a 29-year period to identify trends that are impacting the teaching profession in the U.S. Their findings include the following five trends.

**1. The number of teachers has grown** faster than the student population has grown. Ingersoll et al. (2018) suggest

several potential reasons for this: smaller class sizes in elementary schools, more specialist teacher positions being created, an increased focus on special education and the introduction of charter schools. But they acknowledge this is an area that requires further attention by researchers. Naturally, if the complement of teachers in the U.S. has grown to address specific needs in the student population, it is easy to see how pressure may occur to generate enough teachers to fill the teaching positions, particularly for positions that are in high demand.

**2. The teaching force has “gotten older,** and teacher retirements have steadily

increased.” This finding suggests that while retirement comprises a significant component of those who exit the teaching profession in the U.S., there turnover for other reasons in schools and school jurisdictions. The implication is that educational researchers, policy makers and boards of education need to consider why teachers leave their positions and put in place solutions that mitigate teacher turnover.

**3. While the teacher workforce is getting older, it is also getting more inexperienced** because new teachers are often hired to replace retirees and those who leave their positions. While many incoming teachers are young, there are a “significant number that are older but inexperienced beginning teachers” who are “mid-career switching.” School staffs benefit from a range of experiences, from those who have long careers in education to those who are brand new to teaching. Ingersoll et al. (2018) pointed out that new teachers benefit from the mentorship of experienced teachers, and this helps new recruits develop effective teaching practice. The “greening” of the teacher work force at the same time as the “graying” of the teaching work force means school divisions must ensure early career teachers receive supports and mentoring.

**4. There has “been a slow but steady increase in the proportion of public school teachers who are female, from 67 per cent in 1980–81 to over 76 per cent in 2015–16”** (p. 12). The authors suggest this may be due, in part, to more women teaching at the secondary level and more women entering into educational administration. They also suggest that “if the trend continues, we may see a day when eight of 10 teachers will be female” (p. 14). Finally, they raise the question of society’s views of women’s work, asking, “if the feminization of teaching continues, what will it mean for the way this line of work is valued and rewarded?” (p. 14). This is an important question in light of societal norms that still tend to devalue the worth of women’s work. The “pink professions” such as teaching and nursing have long struggled with public recognition of the value of their work and the need to support and compensate the work adequately.

**5. The American teaching force** has become more diverse over the past three decades, but the proportion of racialized teachers has not grown at the same rate as the student population. As such, many students are not being taught by teachers who understand their racial and cultural backgrounds. The authors suggest that work to recruit diverse teachers needs to continue. In addition, Ingersoll et al. (2018) wrote “Minority teachers are two to three times more likely than white teachers to work in hard-to-staff schools serving high-poverty, high-minority, and urban communities” (p. 15) and that the turnover rate of minority teachers has risen by 45 per cent. The implication of this is that the efforts expended to recruit minority teachers are being set back by the high turnover rates. This calls for measures to support teachers to address teacher retention in schools, particularly high-needs schools in urban areas.

Teacher turnover is high—higher than many other occupations—which has been the case for many years. However, the authors point out that within the data, turnover is not evenly distributed. They noted that “almost half of all public school teacher turnover takes place in just one quarter of the population of public school teachers” (p. 18). High-poverty, high-minority urban schools and rural public schools tend to have the highest turnover rates. This trend calls on policy makers to examine how mechanisms can be put in place to attract and retain teachers into making teaching a viable career option.

How do these trends combine with the American educational context to exacerbate concern about teacher shortages? The U.S. has introduced educational reform in stunning ways. Some of the strategies used include blaming teachers for social problems, attacking teacher unions, fragmenting the public education system with the introduction of charter

## TWO-PART SERIES

This is the first part of a two-part series examining teacher shortages in the United States. The second part, which will appear in the winter 2023 issue of the *ATA Magazine*, will explore the American context in further detail, examining the impact of COVID-19 on teachers and teacher shortages as well as policy solutions to the shortages.

schools, mandating high-stakes testing, using high-stakes testing results to evaluate the effectiveness of schools and teachers, and developing alternative pathways to certification for teachers (Ravich 2010). <sup>ATA</sup>

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# Michelle Ranger: Creating space for Indigenous education

**Lindsay Yakimyshyn**

Staff Writer, ATA Magazine

## IMAGINE A SPACE WHERE

students' Indigenous identity is embraced and celebrated, where even the hallways are consciously imbued with Indigenous culture and community. This is the space Michelle Ranger helped create.

"I grew up always knowing and deeply appreciating within that I was Métis," Ranger says. "Both my parents are Métis and my husband is also Métis, but we were only proud of this when we returned home or in our family circles."

Ranger has carried that appreciation into her career in education, a journey that began more than two decades ago, encouraged by the Saskatchewan Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP).

"I liked the concept about learning about pedagogy, curriculum and teaching alongside learning more about who I was as a Métis person and through Indigenous perspectives and ways," she recalls.

In a career with many highlights, one of the most meaningful for Ranger has been serving as the first principal of the Niitsitapi Learning Centre (Niitsitapi li tass ksii nii mat tsoo kop, A Place of Learning for All Indigenous People), an early intervention program in the Calgary Board of Education that embraces Indigenous identity.

With engagement with Elders and Indigenous community agencies, the centre opened in September 2016 with Ranger at the helm. The centre's program for children aged three to seven focuses on improving outcomes for Indigenous students by supporting the whole child through foundational knowledge.


"At Niitsitapi, Indigenous students will only know themselves as being strong, proud and loved," Ranger says.

From the programming to the wrap-around services to the physical space, every aspect of the centre (referred to as NLC), has been approached through the lens of respecting and reflecting the diversity of Indigenous perspectives.

Ranger reflects on the meaning of the centre for not just the students, but for the families and the Indigenous community.

"I will never forget how my heart and spirit felt walking Elders, along with many others, into the ceremonial room within NLC once it was completed," Ranger says. "I was able to share with them all that a provincial school district acknowledged the importance of this space."

Though no longer principal of NLC, Ranger continues to extend the learnings from the centre across the school division through her role as a system principal, Indigenous education lead. She's hopeful about the future.

"In this generation, we are seeing a shift," she says. "My kids are proud to say they are Indigenous; even though we still face racism and discrimination, things are slowly changing. The young people are the catalyst of change." 

► **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](mailto:lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca).

## Michelle Ranger

System Principal,  
School Improvement,  
Indigenous Education,  
Calgary Board of Education

Recipient of a 2020  
Guiding the Journey:  
Indigenous Educator Award  
for Innovative Practice,  
from Indspire

Association Instructor  
(2007–2013)

ILLUSTRATION BY GELA CABRERA LOA



ISTOCK ADAPTED

## Money matters

Financial wellness is part of your overall well-being

### Myra J Rybotycki

Executive Staff Officer, ATA

#### HIGH INFLATION HAS PUSHED THE COST

of basic necessities such as groceries and gas to a point where they feel like luxuries, and Alberta teachers are not immune to feeling the pinch. As household budgets are being stretched to the breaking point, teachers may be finding it more difficult to plan for unexpected expenses. Financial anxiety is one of the most common major stressors. Chronic stress can negatively affect our health, relationships and overall feeling of well-being.

#### WHAT IS FINANCIAL WELLNESS?

Financial wellness is founded on good financial literacy and hygiene, but that is not the entire picture. If you are prepared to deal with a financial emergency, regulating your debt, understanding your cash flow and future-proofing your finances, you are engaged in good practice. However, financial wellness does not simply equate to having “enough” money and knowing how to manage it. Financial wellness supersedes financial literacy and hygiene because financial wellness recognizes that money is not an end goal; rather, money is a means to live our happiest, healthiest, best lives.

Money is a token of your life's energy. You earn money with the expenditure of your life's energy and exchange it for goods and services. How you manage, invest and spend your money not only governs your finances but also messages what your life's energy is worth.

### IF YOU ARE FAILING TO PLAN, YOU ARE PLANNING TO FAIL

Financial planning is life planning and is a critical mechanism for self-care as it impacts every other aspect of your life. Your financial well-being is created when you can identify what is ultimately important in your life and how you can effectively achieve your goals.

### YOU NEED TO BUDGET YOUR JOY


A budget regulates how you spend your life's energy. Budgeting your money based on what does and does not bring you joy will reduce stress that comes with spending money and allow you to prioritize experiences that you truly love. While it is important to create a budget, including a financial check-in as part of your weekly routine will make you more aware of how your money is being spent and help you feel more in control of your finances.

### INVEST IN YOURSELF BY PRIORITIZING SAVINGS

It can be difficult to save money when you feel like you are just getting by, but it is important to make saving a priority. Payroll deductions may be available through your employer, but you can easily set up automatic transfers from your chequing account to your savings account so that you are not tempted to spend the money instead. Check out Capital Estate savings plans here: [www.capitalplanning.ca/ata-members/investments](http://www.capitalplanning.ca/ata-members/investments).

### EDUCATION IS THE KEY

Improving your financial literacy can take away a lot of stress. The ATA's Teacher Employment Services program area has many opportunities to continue your learning.

You might be surprised to hear that the end goal of financial wellness is not actually to have a lot of money; rather, it is to spend a lot of money throughout your life so you will be as happy and healthy as possible. Financial wellness goes beyond saving and investing; it addresses money both as a universal stressor and a mechanism to achieve the life to which we aspire. 



## Upcoming workshops

### Financial Wellness+

Save your money, invest your money, budget your money! How do I do all that!?

Financial Wellness+ is all about investing for your future, learning how to save, and managing debt and your budget. Join us for this two-hour session; it's a deep dive into financial wellness and your future!

**Oct. 27, 2022**

3:30 PM to 5:30 PM

**May 3, 2023**

3:30 PM to 5:30 PM

### ATA Q&A sessions

**Jan. 12, 2023**

3:45 PM to 4:45 PM

**March 16, 2023**

3:45 PM to 4:45 PM

## Recommended financial reading list



The following books are available from the ATA library.

- Hallam, A. 2017. *Millionaire Teacher: The Nine Rules of Wealth You Should Have Learned in School*. Toronto, ON: Wiley.
- Harzog, B.B., M. Curphey, E. Lunn, J. Meadway, P. Parker and A. Black. 2017. *How Money Works: The Facts Visually Explained*. New York, NY: DK Publishing.
- Kelly, E.S. 2021. *Get the Hell Out of Debt: The Proven 3-Phase Method That Will Radically Shift Your Relationship to Money*. New York, NY: Post Hill Press.
- Kobliner, B. 2017. *Get a Financial Life: Personal Finance in Your Twenties and Thirties*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Nichols, E. 2016. *Financial Planning for Teachers: The Lesson Plan for Your Financial Future*. Pottstown, PA: EWS Communications.
- Sokunbi, B. 2019. *Clever Girl Finance: Ditch Debt, Save Money and Build Real Wealth*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Wiginton, F. 2012. *How to Eat an Elephant: Achieving Financial Success One Bite at a Time*. Toronto, ON: Wiley.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCE

### THE LITTLE BOOK OF Restorative Teaching Tools



Games, Activities, and Simulations for Understanding Restorative Justice Practices

LINDSEY POINTER, KATHLEEN MCGOEY, AND HALEY FARRAR

THE LITTLE BOOKS OF JUSTICE & PEACEBUILDING

# The merits of sticks and stones

Not all classroom tools need to be high tech

**Dan Grassick**

Executive Staff Officer, ATA

Information also provided by Christina Pickles, founder of Get Outside and Play. Learn more at [getoutsideandplay.ca](http://getoutsideandplay.ca).



## QUICK! WHAT TECHNOLOGIES

do you use to engage your students? Are you thinking about high-tech digital tools and software, or did some “old school” analog devices (whiteboards, thermometers and film cameras) come to mind?

*Technology* isn't only about computerized or mechanical gizmos. From its etymological roots, *tékhne* and *lógos*, *technology* can be defined more broadly as the “craft of making reason.” Through this lens, educational technologies include a wide array of materials that students can use to understand curricular concepts and the larger world, even natural materials like rocks and sticks.

## Foster creativity with loose parts

“Loose parts” is a term coined by architect Simon Nicholson in 1971 to describe found objects and materials that children can gather, organize, stack, combine and repurpose in infinite ways. Unlike purpose-built educational technologies or toys, loose parts don't

come with sets of directions or assembly instructions. They afford imaginative play, on-the-spot engineering and almost unlimited creativity and learning. The same sticks, rope and scraps of fabric can be assembled into a sailboat, a castle, a treasure chest, a superhero costume, a kite and more!

In addition to creativity, research suggests that the use of loose parts can promote the development of problem solving, critical thinking and communication skills. Not only can loose parts be used during unstructured play, they can also be used in activities to explore curricular learning outcomes in multiple subjects at various grade levels.

Here are just a few ideas:

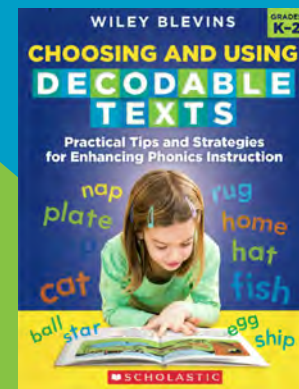
- Make artistic mobiles and sculptures using seasonal materials.
- Build shelters and habitats for small creatures that meet their needs.
- Try to construct the tallest tower, strongest bridge or most buoyant raft.





PHOTO BY YUET CHAN

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCE



### Choosing and Using Decodable Texts: Practical Tips and Strategies for Enhancing Phonics Instruction

Wiley Blevins

How do you select the right texts for your students? You'll find the answer here as the author gives you plenty of practical advice and even talks about what to do if you don't have access to highly decodable texts.


Available through the ATA library.

## Did you know ...

The Educational Technology Council (ETC) of the Alberta Teachers' Association supports teachers in using technology to enhance teaching and learning.

The council provides its membership with service and support through professional development opportunities.

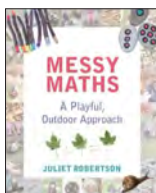
For more information, visit [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca).

- Build model buildings that explore how sunlight and rainwater can be collected.
- Develop *Flintstones*-style machines using rocks and sticks as wheels, levers, pulleys and gears.
- Create shapes and structures that have specific perimeter, area and volume dimensions.
- Order rocks, pine cones and other materials in various ways (by volume and mass, by colour and texture) and make patterns with them.
- Make a diorama that captures the climax of a story.
- Learn to make splints and emergency shelters for backcountry adventures.
- Construct timekeeping devices like sundials and shadow clocks.
- Create puppets and characters to act out stories.
- Use natural materials such as brushes, stamps or collage materials. 

### Suggested resources



*Loose Parts: Inspiring Play in Young Children*  
Lisa Daly and Miriam Beloglovsky



*Messy Maths: A Playful, Outdoor Approach*  
Juliet Robertson

*The above resources are available through the ATA library.*



*Loose Parts Play Toolkit*  
Theresa Casey and Juliet Robertson

*Available as a free download at [outdoorplaycanada.ca/portfolio\\_page/loose-parts-play-toolkit/](http://outdoorplaycanada.ca/portfolio_page/loose-parts-play-toolkit/).*



ILLUSTRATION BY GELA CABRERA LOA

## Age range

Generational diversity provides challenge and opportunity

### Nancy Luyckfassel

Associate Coordinator,  
Professional Development, ATA

### AT ANY GIVEN TIME, TEACHERS

in Alberta schools generally range in age from 21 to 72. This means that, among the teaching staff at many schools, four generations are represented: Baby Boomers (1946–1964), Gen X (1965–1980), Millennials (1981–1996) and Gen Z (1997–2012).

Generational diversity has become a common conversation in workplaces around the country, with the focus often on the differences between the generations. Intergenerational tensions can emerge at work, with some employees dismissing the abilities of their colleagues based on their age. While there is no consensus on the generational labels, generational categories have come to be used—in society, in social media and in workplaces—to explain behaviours and traits.

# Which generation are you at heart?

Select the answer that most sounds like you. Go with your first impulse—it is usually the best!

**Q** What is your view of work?

- A** I live to work.
- B** I work to live.
- C** I work smarter, not harder.
- D** For me, work = passion + purpose.

**Q** In your workplace, you would prefer feedback to be

- A** minimal
- B** direct
- C** frequent and instantaneous
- D** bite-sized and real time

**Q** Which of the following best describes your view of changing jobs?

- A** I will stay in one place as long as I can.
- B** I would change to increase my income.
- C** It is expected.
- D** It will be constant.

**Q** Your ideal leader is a

- A** thinker
- B** doer
- C** supporter
- D** collaborator

**Q** Your preferred type of professional learning is

- A** structured
- B** participative
- C** interactive
- D** multimodal

**Score your answers:**

## **MOSTLY As**

You work like a Boomer. In the workplace, you are likely optimistic, enjoy mentoring, have a strong work ethic and are loyal.

## **MOSTLY Bs**

You work like a Gen-Xer. In the workplace, you are likely independent, innovative and self-reliant with strong communication skills.

## **MOSTLY Cs**

You work like a Millennial. In the workplace, you are likely tech savvy, collaborative, self-directed and focused on the greater good.

## **MOSTLY Ds**

You work like a Gen-Zer. In the workplace, you are likely digitally fluent, practical, creative and flourish in diverse environments.

**Did your quiz results match your generation? Do you see yourself in other generations too?**

Understanding the motivators and strengths associated with the generational groups can lead to greater appreciation for our own attributes and those of our colleagues. At the same time, focusing on the generalizations about a generation can lead to using labels and perpetuating stereotypes that may be neither accurate nor acceptable. <sup>ATA</sup>

“Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud.”

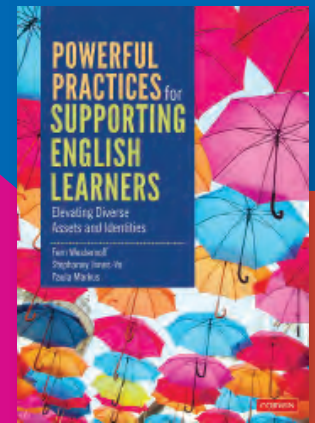
—Maya Angelou

## A TIME TO REMEMBER

**Transgender Day of Remembrance is recognized on Nov. 20.** What began as a candlelight vigil to mark the 1998 murder of Rita Hester, a trans woman, has become an international, sombre occasion to remember those who've lost their lives due to anti-transgender violence.

**Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day,** recognized on the fourth Saturday of November each year, is a time to remember the millions of people in Ukraine who were starved to death by the Soviet regime in 1932–33.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



**Powerful Practices for Supporting English Learners: Elevating Diverse Assets and Identities**

Fern Westernoff, Stephaney Jones-Vo, Paula Markus.

Available through the ATA library.

*I feel like all the circumstances and situations led to me being a teacher. I'm very fortunate. Caring professions each apply knowledge to promote health in individuals and communities in accordance with ethical principles and practices. To be in a position to help people do what they wanted to in their life, I think, is such a gift.*



# Caring to the core

Tending to others as an occupation is a life choice that's both satisfying and hazardous





ILLUSTRATION BY CORNELIA LI

## Caroline Barlott

Freelance Contributor

When Kristan Myers was in Grade 1, her best friend struggled in the classroom due to cognitive delays and hearing challenges. Myers spent hours helping him learn. One day, the class went to a pool and Myers encouraged the boy to finally enter the water. On the sidelines, his mom cried with happiness while Myers' mom gained insight into her daughter's future career.

"[She] said: I knew you were going to be a teacher because you just naturally knew how to work with him and how to meet him where he was," says Myers, who now teaches grades 1 and 2 at Académie Saint-Andre in Beaumont.

Myers laughs, explaining that she spent the majority of her 20s avoiding her calling and racking up a dizzyingly varied resume,

including stints in bartending, tutoring and respite care. Finally she ended up teaching first-aid classes, and it was through teaching adults that she acknowledged what those around her already saw: her base skill set, love of a challenge and desire to make an impact made elementary school teaching a natural fit.

"I feel like all the circumstances and situations led to me being a teacher," says Myers. "I'm very fortunate."

Much of what Myers loves about her career — being an integral part of the community, inspiring others and prioritizing their wellness — are aspects her colleagues share. And in the broader sense, those characteristics are common in all caring professionals — individuals whose careers involving caring for others.

## UNDER THE UMBRELLA

Aside from teachers, other careers that fit under the umbrella of caring professions typically include a variety of health-related occupations such as nurses, pharmacists, doctors, physiotherapists, midwives, counsellors and clinical psychologists, to name a few, says Alex Clark, dean of health disciplines at Athabasca University.

Caring professions include generalists and specialists who vary in the way they provide care — in teams or individually, in clinics or online — but the core of the work is the same.

“Caring professions each apply knowledge to promote health in individuals and communities — even including a quality death — in accordance with ethical principles and processes,” says Clark.

These are challenging positions that require both technical and soft skills such as empathy, communication, advocacy and organization, Clark says. It’s more than work; many consider it a lifestyle, with long hours that often bleed into personal time. Caring professionals rarely just go home after work, switch on the TV and forget about the events of the day.

## CAREER MOTIVATIONS

So what draws someone to the caring professions?


That’s a question that Australian researchers Helen Watt and Paul Richardson have been answering for the past 20 years through a research project called FIT-Choice. Through surveys conducted in more than 24 languages, the research team has specifically studied teachers’ motivations, but believes the results are relevant to caring professionals more broadly.

The majority of study participants said they were motivated to pursue their chosen career by a belief that they had the skills to do the job and that they’d enjoy it. Many had similar stories to Myers — they’d held a job that involved some form of teaching and realized they had some innate abilities.

Also cited as a top career motivation was the desire to make a social contribution, work with people and enhance social equity.

“Even at the outset they realized that they weren’t going to make a whole lot of money, nor were they going to be highly valued by society. And it was going to be quite a demanding job,” says Richardson. Still, the majority were passionate and readily put in countless work hours.

That dedication can be a double-edged sword — the researchers found burnout was prevalent. It was not just about fatigue and long hours; it reflected physical and mental depletion resulting from a lack of support, underappreciation and an unmanageable amount of work. Those who felt their voice went unheard were especially at risk. But administrators who listened and made adjustments could really make an impact.



“To be in a position to help people do what they wanted to in their life, I think, is such a gift.”

— Kate Wong

“There is a powerful motivational theory called self-determination theory, which is based on the premise that we all have three core psychological needs that need to be met for any kind of flourishing to happen: the need to belong, the need to feel competent and the need to feel some autonomy,” says Watt. Within a career context, these three factors are critical in providing a sense of satisfaction about one’s vocation.

## SENSE OF SATISFACTION

Kate Wong, a pediatric palliative care nurse at Alberta Health Services, has experienced that satisfaction first-hand. People often tell Wong they would find it too emotionally exhausting to consistently work with families and children who face life-threatening or life-shortening illnesses.

But while she’s there for the traumatic moments, she explains, she’s also there for the exceptionally



PHOTO BY KIM VANDERHELM

happy ones: riding horses for the first time, participating in school programs and going on special trips.

“To be in a position to help people do what they wanted to in their life, I think, is such a gift,” Wong says.

One of Wong’s patients, an eight-year-old girl, was so determined to sing “Let There be Peace on Earth” — believing strongly in the message — in a Remembrance Day ceremony that she did so, despite having only three per cent of her lung capacity. She died just two days after the performance.

Many of Wong’s patients die, and she often experiences grief, as she cares for them deeply. This would seem to put her at high risk for compassion fatigue, which is often referred to as vicarious trauma, resulting from repeated exposure to suffering. It can manifest in symptoms similar to those associated with burnout — hopelessness, feeling overwhelmed and emotional detachment — and it also often arises in those who are overworked, under supported and lack autonomy or a voice.

But Wong believes the nature of her workplace has been protective. She knows many who haven’t been so lucky.

“I think that the pandemic has tipped the scales for a lot of nurses where, before, the rewards and the challenges were balanced, and now it is a different situation,” says Wong.

Wong has strong support through her mentors and administration. She has the ability to take time off if needed; she has dedicated time to devote to each of her patients; and she has enough autonomy to know her input matters.

“I actually think some of compassion fatigue is cumulative grief for the loss of patients,” says Wong. But, she says, when health-care workers are given the time and resources to process that grief properly, their mental health improves.

Wong says she’s able to stay motivated in her job because of the passion she feels for improving her patients’ lives.



## REWARDS AND CHALLENGES

Myers feels a similar passion — it's as strong today as it was when she started teaching nearly a decade ago. Even over the phone, her smile is evident as she speaks about her students.

"I feel like a celebrity to my students. If I need a pick-me-up, all I have to do is show up at school because I have students who tell me every day I am beautiful," says Myers. And hearing of her impact from former students even years later "fills my bucket," she says.

She spends countless hours crafting scrapbooks for each student, preparing for classes and researching the curriculum. Those activities fuel her, but recently there are days she wonders how long she can continue teaching.

Her classroom size has grown by nine kids since she started more than nine years ago, there are fewer resources, and many students need extra support after having missed classes during Covid restrictions. She's also teaching both Grade 1 and Grade 2 simultaneously for the first time, significantly increasing her preparation time.

Meanwhile, she feels like the new Alberta curriculum, that "looms like a dragon," did not take teachers' expertise into consideration.

Myers usually likes a challenge, but this feels different. After she contracted Covid-19 in the fall of 2021, her health hasn't been the same.

"It's hard to know if it's from Covid or just the volume and complexity of what I'm dealing with. I do have a lot of day-to-day stress, so I'm trying to fit it all in," says Myers.

"I can tell you today that the love of my job is winning. But I also know that we've already been told the pot of money that we are pulling from is smaller for next year," she says.

Myers has friends who are social workers, nurses and paramedics, and they are also all struggling.

"I recently learned that it's okay for me to say that my job is hard even though other people have a hard job, too," Myers says. "[I'm] currently trying to take it day by day and do what I can with what I have with where I am." <sup>ATA</sup>



“It’s hard to know if it’s from Covid or just the volume and complexity of what I’m dealing with. I do have a lot of day-to-day stress, so I’m trying to fit it all in.”

— Kristen Myers

*This isn't a job. It's a calling. I went down a different path... was brought back to teaching, and I can't imagine doing the hardest job I've ever done. Job, teacher, study particip... tional Labour and Educator Burnout. The kids are who with kids rejuvenates me and reminds me about why I do study particip... t: Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Labour a s... ker and my partner is a teacher. My partner her... Despite this she is always asked for more. I r... I get to see me... their recovery phase. Despite always be asked for more. Firm boundaries are the key.*



# The high cost of caring

Education workers are paying a heavy emotional price, research finds

**Cory Hare**

Managing Editor, ATA Magazine

From 2020 to 2021, the Alberta Teachers' Association partnered with University of Calgary researcher Astrid Kendrick to study the lived experiences of educational workers regarding three phenomena that are inextricably tied to working with people: emotional labour, compassion satisfaction/stress/fatigue and burnout. The study was designed to address a research gap and find meaningful supports for teachers, school leaders, central office leaders and other educational workers.

The following information has been compiled from the study's research reports, which are available at [heartcareeducators.ca](http://heartcareeducators.ca).



## THE THEORY

### Emotional labour and the rules of engagement

Coined by American researcher Arlie Hochschild, the term “emotional labour” is the performance of expected emotional expression in a work environment. In other words, employees are expected to manage their emotions in a manner that matches the organizational “feeling rules”—the spoken or unspoken expectations of how a “good” employee expresses or represses their emotions when working.

Feeling rules apply whether or not the employee genuinely feels the respective emotions, leading to a potential disconnect between the organizational feeling rules and the employee’s authentic emotional state.

Hochschild advances the idea that emotional labour involves deep acting and surface acting.

With deep acting, the employee’s true emotional state aligns with the organizational feeling rules and provides a strong base for the employee to perform the emotional labour. The employee feels a strong connection to their work and can identify with their job role as a part of themselves. In the educational field, this person might feel a strong desire

to positively influence children and youth or create an optimal school–work environment for staff and colleagues. Their individual passions and drive align with the expectations for their profession.

Surface acting is necessary when a worker’s actual emotional state does not align with the organizational feeling rules. Ongoing surface acting has been linked to burnout and compassion fatigue, as it can erode the passion that drives educators to contribute their skills and abilities to create a better and more civil society.

### Compassion satisfaction, stress and fatigue: The price of being empathetic

Compassion satisfaction is the pleasure that caregivers experience from doing their work. Compassion stress and compassion fatigue, on the other hand, exist on opposite ends of a continuum representing the emotional toll that caregivers may experience in the course of doing their work.

**Compassion stress**—People can still manage their daily workload and can rely on individual or workplace strategies to recover.

**Compassion fatigue**—Requires intensive interventions such as professional therapy, medication or a leave of absence from work to fully recover.

For people engaged in helping professions, the toll of performing empathy and compassion when feeling otherwise can be stressful and lead to emotional exhaustion. Research has found that a strong stigma is attached to caregivers admitting to feeling burned out, which can exacerbate the effects of compassion stress and compassion fatigue.

### Burnout: Helping others has long-term impact

Burnout is a career-long process that occurs in caregivers as they help other people. If left unchecked, burnout typically grows in intensity over time. In human service work, individuals who are highly motivated, dedicated and emotionally involved in their work are most vulnerable to burnout, research suggests.

According to the Maslach and Jackson Burnout Scale, there are three main aspects of burnout:

#### Depersonalization

- treating clients as if they were impersonal objects
- becoming more callous toward clients

#### Emotional exhaustion

- feeling tired at the beginning and end of the work day
- feeling frustrated by the job

#### Lack of accomplishment

- lacking energy
- unable to deal effectively with client needs or positively influence their lives



“ Unfortunately, they are sacrificing their own mental and emotional well-being to be strong and confident for their students and school communities, which is not sustainable.”

– Dr. Astrid Kendrick, University of Calgary, study co-leader

## Occupational heartbreak

Occupational heartbreak occurs when a strongly passionate person experiences a loss as the result of a change at work, says researcher Astrid Kendrick.

Education workers and other caregiving professionals tend to enter their professions with honest intentions and a desire to make a difference in students’ lives. When presented

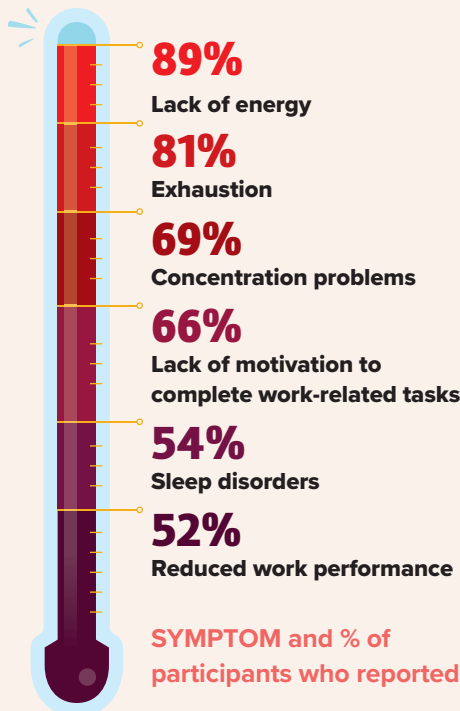
with crisis or trauma work, or when their efforts do not bring about the acknowledgement or success they had hoped for, these workers feel a deep loss, Kendrick has found.

Conversely, when their heartwork is rewarded with student success, workers report that they are able to persevere through crisis or trauma work.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### Teachers are struggling

The ATA/U of C study into the compassion fatigue being experienced by education workers found that most participants were experiencing symptoms of compassion fatigue.



### Express this! Hide that!

**Top three emotions that education workers feel are safe to express at work:**

- Happiness, joy, cheerfulness
- Energy, excitement
- Empathy, concern, compassion

**Top three emotions that education workers keep hidden at work:**

- Anger
- Sadness, depression
- Frustration

### ENERGIZERS

Factors that contribute to **compassion satisfaction:**

- Connections to students
- Career experience
- Inherent good of the work
- Work–life boundaries



### DEFLATORS

Factors that contribute to **compassion stress and fatigue:**

- Separation of personal and professional identity
- Taking on other people’s trauma
- A sense of helplessness
- A perceived lack of acknowledgement of the work’s inherent good





# INTERVENTION

Compassion stress, compassion fatigue and burnout are preventable and treatable. Both individuals and organizations can effectively prevent or treat these phenomena through professional development, self-care plans, effective mentorship and supervision, and the work culture.

## Professional development

Preparing educational workers for the likelihood of experiencing compassion fatigue, compassion stress or burnout requires training them to recognize the risk factors for both themselves and their colleagues.

## Self-care planning

Caregivers should develop a strong self-care plan that includes a wide number of coping strategies and resources that an individual can access in times of stress. Leaders in organizations that rely on employees providing emotional labour should work to ensure that each employee has a self-care plan that includes individual, organizational and professional interventions.

## Mentorship and supervision

Providing caregivers with regular access to and communication with peers and mentors who have worked with traumatized clients is another way that organizational leaders can help prevent or treat compassion stress, compassion fatigue and burnout in their employees.


## Workplace culture

Developing a healthy workplace culture includes

- ensuring that employees have access to supports and resources so that they can enact their self-care plan;
- providing training and professional development regarding compassion fatigue, compassion stress and burnout; and
- acknowledging that these phenomena are not individual failings or the results of a personal problem; they are the cost of caring and a consequence of working with traumatized people.

# TOOLS AVAILABLE

Several reliable and validated tools exist that can help an individual to self-identify their compassion fatigue. The ProQOL-Survey Version 5 is considered the strongest measure to assess an individual's proclivity toward compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue. It is available at [proqol.org/proqol-measure](http://proqol.org/proqol-measure).

The ATA/U of C study produced a HEARTcare Planning Tool to help teachers address the emotional challenges of their work. It's available at [heartcareeducators.ca](http://heartcareeducators.ca). 



# RESOURCES

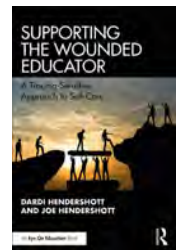
**The Day I Reached My Tipping Point: Compassion Fatigue and Educators**

Daryl B. Sutter



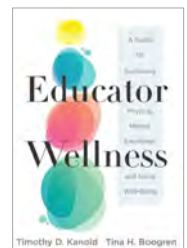
**Supporting the Wounded Educator: A Trauma-Sensitive Care Approach to Self-Care**

Dardi Hendershott, Joe Hendershott



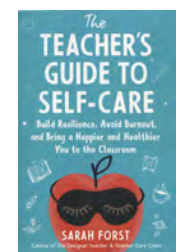
**Educator Wellness: A Guide for Sustaining Physical, Mental, Emotional, and Social Well-Being**

Timothy D. Kanold, Tina H. Boogren



**The Teacher's Guide to Self-Care: Build Resilience, Avoid Burnout, and Bring a Happier and Healthier You to the Classroom**

Sarah Forst



These titles are available through the ATA library [www.teachers.ab.ca/professional-development/ata-library](http://www.teachers.ab.ca/professional-development/ata-library).



**My greatest goal** is to make the broadest and deepest positive impact in the most kids' lives that I can while I'm here, and as long as I do that, I feel like I've been successful.

– Oswald, teacher, study participant: *Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Labour and Educator Burnout*

**When I first started [teaching]** ... I was trying to save the world, and make sure that every kid was getting the best of me all the time. That's not feasible. I've definitely shifted now to [seeing that] I'm part of a web — I'm one person in the student's life, and I can help them when I'm there, but I am my own person, and I need to be healthy, and I need to be here for my children and my mom.

– Betty, teacher, study participant: *Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Labour and Educator Burnout*

**The kids are what keep me going.** The connection with kids rejuvenates me and reminds me about why I do this.

– Becky, school leader, study participant: *Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Labour and Educator Burnout*

**I think being a teacher** is an extremely important job. I enjoy my work, and I love working with kids. I care deeply about them, but I've learned that there has to be balance in my life. I don't get hung up on the things I can't change about my job. I do my best, but I also save some of my energy for my family and my personal life.

– Teacher, study participant: *Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Labour and Educator Burnout*

## “ Insights from caring professionals ”

**I often feel** overwhelmed by the various emotional, behavioural and academic needs of my students, and I feel pressure to address them all, even with limited support. When I can't effectively address my students' needs, I feel guilt and shame that I've failed, and I feel angry at the system for expecting teachers to manage so much and do so much with so little support.

– Teacher, study participant: *Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Labour and Educator Burnout*

**Caring professions** are some of the most rewarding career paths. As a teacher for 15 years and now as a paramedic for 10, I have had the opportunity to impact the lives of students and patients in innumerable ways. Being of service to others is a privilege. However, it can come at a price. It wasn't until leaving education that I realized how I had let it consume my life. I carried that learning into EMS and now focus on prioritizing myself so I am better able to care for others.

– Helene Hamilton, primary care paramedic and former teacher

**Many people are motivated** in these fields by a personal experience. I have observed that this very personal aspect can also be a major pitfall. The work can be triggering in ways you don't expect and aren't equipped for. It's also easy to fall into the trap of taking responsibility for things you can't change and decisions that belong to others. I think it's incredibly important to know yourself, what you can handle and when you need to set boundaries. If you're not OK, your ability to support the people you serve is compromised.

I am a social worker and my partner is a teacher. My partner puts her entire being into her work. Despite this, she is always asked for more. I recently moved to a role where I get to see more clients in their recovery phase. Despite this, it's still hard. You'll always be asked for more. Firm boundaries are the key.

– Kevin, social worker

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— Booklist

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— Mark David Smith, YA Dude Books

## AMONG THE AUTHORS



**CATHERINE INGLIS** is an elementary teacher who has taught for more than 20 years. She lives in Toronto, Ontario.



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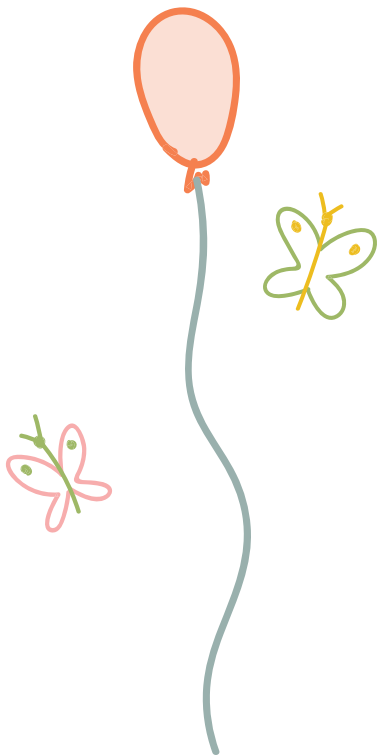
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**Ancillary Programs** which include the Boom discount program, ARTACares program (which provides support to you and your family when navigating the healthcare system), scholarships for family members, social connectedness programs, and much more.

# Hope flows

Leadership is key to creating a hopeful future



## SOURCES OF HOPE

1. witnessing student success and resilience
2. experiencing supportive leaders
3. maintaining trusting relationships with staff

## Phil McRae

Associate Coordinator,  
Research, ATA

“ Hope changes everything. It changes winter into summer, darkness into dawn, descent into ascent, barrenness into creativity, agony into joy. ”

—Daisaku Ikeda

**HOPE IS FOUNDATIONAL** to Alberta teacher and school leader experiences in classrooms, schools and across the educational landscape. It is also a fundamental part of our professional identities: a hopeful future is why we teach.

The Hope: Resilience and Recovery research project was launched in response to findings from the Alberta Teachers' Association's 2021/22 pandemic rapid research (pulse) surveys. In these random stratified surveys, we found a high level of hopelessness among Alberta teachers and school leaders. This was followed in the spring of 2022 with data that showed a high percentage of our teaching population (one in three) indicating a plan to retire, leave the profession or leave Alberta within the next five years. In fact, at one point during the pandemic, Association researchers measured a random stratified sample of the teaching profession and found that more than half felt hopeless.

## BACKGROUND

This study concentrated on both Alberta teachers and school leaders and included five focus group conversations along with a survey of 561 professionals. This Association research study was conducted by the University of Alberta's Dr. Denise Larsen, Dr. Rebecca Hudson-Breen, Dr. Darryl Hunter and doctoral student Veronica Taylor.

The survey instrument, which is the first of its kind attempting to measure hope within the teaching profession, included 29 items designed to address experiences of hope and low hope in the contexts of teaching and school leadership. We will continue using the instrument to better understand how we can support Alberta teachers to navigate a more hopeful future.



ISTOCK ADAPTED

## KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Alberta teachers and school leaders evidenced some strong reservoirs of hope, suggesting that students, classrooms and communities of learning are often hope-fostering sites for public schools. Below are some of the key findings regarding threats to hope, sources of hope and strategic considerations on the road ahead.

### Threats to hope in Alberta

#### Identified by teachers

- workload intensification
- lack of time and resources
- disconnection from senior administrators
- perceived government attacks on teachers
- perceived negative impacts of government decisions on students
- being devalued and misunderstood by the public

#### Identified by school leaders

- witnessing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students
- being targets of parent frustration
- experiencing frustrations with senior administration
- seeing the provincial government as an enemy of public education

**Teachers' experiences of hope** (or threats to hope) are not only psychological. They are also socially constructed—meaning that they are deeply impacted by the broader educational contexts of the classroom, school, school board, government, professional association and even the public. The way we are treated as professionals matters deeply in terms of our experiences of hope/hopelessness.

## Students Inspire Hope

Hope is not only conveyed from teachers to students. Teachers and school leaders are also inspired by students.

### TEACHERS

Teachers, regardless of age, report the inspirational influence of students, and increasingly so as they age.

Seventy-three percent of 25-year-old and younger teachers are inspired by students, but by the later stages of their career, the percentages climb to 90 per cent and even 100 per cent.

“To see the positive effects of our teaching on our students (especially when they get to high school),” creates hope for one elementary teacher.

### SCHOOL LEADERS

Similar to teachers, Alberta school leaders are also inspired by students. Nearly 95% of school leaders [in the study] draw inspiration from students.

“We are close to a central element in teachers' and school leaders' reason for being in education, and a core source of hopefulness for these professionals.”



- ▶ The full results and individual summary reports and infographics for all ATA pandemic pulse surveys can be found on the Association's website <https://tinyurl.com/2hddmzr>.



## Sources of hope in Alberta

### Sources of teacher hope

- witnessing student success and resilience
- recognizing their own agency and professional skills as teachers
- observing that teachers are contributing to good futures
- experiencing supportive leaders

### Sources of school leader hope

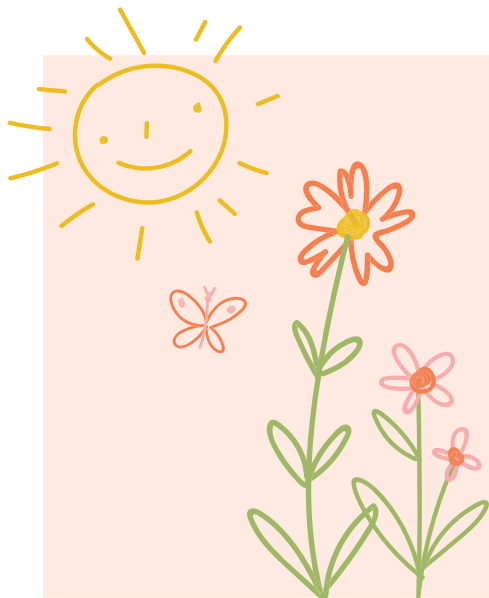
- supporting struggling students to succeed
- moving forward as school communities through the pandemic
- feeling valued as an instructional leader by students and parents
- experiencing supportive leaders
- maintaining trusting relationships with staff

**For both teachers** and school leaders, action or inaction by senior educational leadership often has negative effects on hope. The research identified that Alberta teachers seek leaders' cues and trace their hopes to actions and inactions of school leaders, central office administration, school board trustees and the distant provincial Department of Education, including the current minister of education's comments and action/inaction.

## STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS


The key findings from this study highlight the importance of teacher and school leader hope to health, workplace engagement, motivation and caring for students. They also provide the following strategic considerations with respect to the need to educate those in leadership positions, and education bureaucrats, on the now robust human science of hope.

- Show appreciation to Alberta teachers** and school leaders for their engagement in the profession and work in the classroom.
- Provide periodic evidence** to teachers of individual students' progress and accomplishment in their years ahead, beyond the grade level or their classroom, will have hope fostering effect for educators. Showing them their long-term impact as professionals and explicitly celebrating successes (both small and large) of Alberta teachers are important.
- Alberta school leadership** (at all levels) must be supported in sustaining hope in order to remain a source of hope in their school communities.
- Alberta school leaders** identified in this study that belonging to the same professional association as teachers was an important source of hope. Removing this association would lead to even greater challenges.
- Continue to support** the adoption of school leadership approaches that focus on asking questions rather than making assertions.
- Schools**, school divisions and the Association should proactively support teachers in cultivating/creating ongoing networks of support. Within these networks find ways to support teachers and school leaders in actively and explicitly pursuing hope-fostering practices and provide resources to make this possible.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

The full research report will be published in the fall of 2022 on the Association's website under Research. It will provide a detailed description of the rationale for the project, literature and contextual elements relevant to the project, the findings, a discussion of the findings, and field relevant recommendations. The findings will be mobilized through professional conversations and in policy and practice discussions regarding support for Alberta teachers and school leaders.

It is encouraging to discover the strong reservoirs of hope in Alberta public schools. Now it is up to the rest of us to support school leaders and teachers as they continue to create hope-fostering classrooms and vibrant learning communities. 





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# A matter of identity

## Who do young Albertans think they are?

Jared Wesley and Rissa Reist

Common Ground Initiative,  
University of Alberta

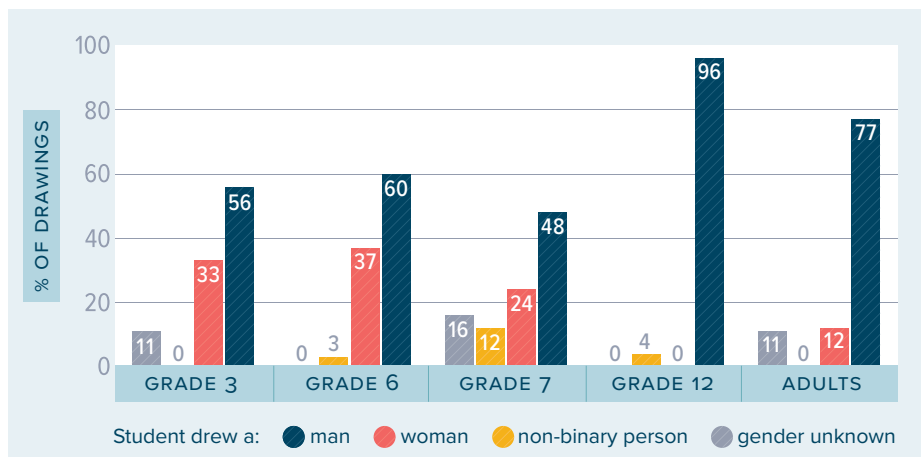
### DRAW ME AN ALBERTAN.

It's a simple activity that reveals a great deal about how our students view our provincial community and their place within it. Who they draw—and who they don't depict—tells us who students feel are the typical, quintessential and most influential members of Alberta society.

As part of our Becoming Albertan project, we've been conducting the exercise in schools across the province. From Camrose to Calgary, Spruce Grove to Lethbridge, we've seen younger students draw everything from celebrities (Connor McDavid and Jann Arden top the list) to their parents or teachers. Many children seem to view their province through a personal and localized lens.

The older they get, however, the more likely students are to sketch the more conventional caricatures of Alberta culture. Much like the adults in our broader Common Ground study, teenagers begin to view Alberta politics through a “wild west” lens, perceiving the typical Albertan as a rancher, farmer, or oil and gas worker. Nearly a third of 12th graders in our study made explicit references to their drawn Albertan being a “redneck.” No such references were made at any of the other grade levels. As they progress from Grade 6 to Grade 12, fewer depict women, Indigenous people, people of colour, folks in urban settings or family members when asked to draw an Albertan.

This narrowing view of Alberta identity is concerning to those committed to enhancing equity, diversity and inclusion in this province. If students don't see themselves or people like them as typical members of Alberta society (only two of 87 participants in our pilot study drew themselves), that can impact their willingness to engage in community activities



and discourse. In that sense, the results of our preliminary research are worrying to those who want all of our youth to see themselves in Alberta's future.

Through our Becoming Albertan study, we want to know why this type of socialization occurs. And we need teachers' help to understand how youth develop the common view of Alberta as Canada's “wild west.”

Do children growing up in rural settings have a different conception of the average Albertan than children from urban settings? Do larger school settings encourage different understandings of what it means to be an Albertan? At what precise point do youth internalize the “cowboy myth,” and what are the sources of this shift in thinking? Through this research, we are working toward a greater understanding of how students' personal identities align with community norms across Alberta.

Forging partnerships with schools, our Becoming Albertan study will improve the quality of education in Alberta by providing teachers with resources that will help them understand how their students see themselves in relation to the larger community. Compiling insights from classrooms across the country, we will work with teachers to develop curriculum supports for starting conversations about

how to build a more inclusive vision of what it means to be Albertan.

Together, we can provide students with key skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and historical thinking needed to navigate their place in Alberta society. What is more, the study will reveal who is left out when we think about Alberta and what the ramifications are of thinking about Alberta through the wild west lens.

A team of university researchers and Alberta teachers, we have designed an all-in-one package of short videos, consent forms and other materials to help teachers engage students in the “draw me an Albertan” activity and conduct follow-up conversations about identity. Funded by the Alberta Teachers' Association and approved by the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, the project puts students' safety and learning in the foreground. <sup>ATA</sup>

### PROJECT PARTICIPATION

If you are interested in being a part of the Becoming Albertan project, please contact Dr. Jared Wesley at [jwesley@ualberta.ca](mailto:jwesley@ualberta.ca) or visit [www.commongroundpolitics.ca/becoming-albertan](http://www.commongroundpolitics.ca/becoming-albertan) for more info.



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## 1. *Become the Primary Teacher Everyone Wants to Have: A Guide to Career Success*

New teachers begin their careers with a dream of being the teacher they longed to have or perhaps the one they were lucky enough to have. This book is like having a thoughtful mentor with you who shares experience gleaned from a successful teaching career. You'll get the best advice on becoming the teacher you long to be.

Information provided by ATA librarian Sandra Anderson

## 2. *Science Education Through Multiple Literacies: Project-Based Learning in Elementary School*

Interested in project-based learning but not sure where to start with your elementary students? This book provides you with useful ideas and projects to get project-based learning jump-started in your science lessons.

## 3. *Morning Classroom Conversations: Build Your Students' Social-Emotional, Character, and Communication Skills Every Day*

Structuring a morning classroom conversation in your room will help students to reset for the day so that they are ready to engage in critical thinking, use listening skills and engage with other respectfully.



## Your colleagues recommend

Teachers suggested these reads via Facebook.

### Robin Senger

*The Krubera Conspiracy* and *A Killing Game* by Jeff Buick, a great Calgary author. Unfortunately, only available on Amazon and Kindle. *A Killing Game* won best ebook thriller for North America last summer.

### Kate Moussa

After being ruled by bell times and deadlines, last summer I reached for Carl Honoré's *In Praise of Slow*. True to the title, I didn't finish it before we were back in the classroom 😊! I look forward to finishing it this July.

**4. 40 activités de transition en français : profitez pleinement de chaque minute en classe**

Cet ouvrage présente plus de 40 activités de transition en français divisées selon le moment où elles peuvent avoir lieu. Des conseils en vue d'adapter les activités pour l'enseignement à distance sont également proposés.

**5. *The New Cooking School Cookbook: Fundamentals***

This useful food science book answers many everyday questions that students pose. Eighty focused sections allow teachers to dive into exactly the topic they are covering in class, and infographics throughout the book provide deeper explorations of recipes and ingredients.

**6. *Put a Wet Paper Towel On It: The Weird and Wonderful World of Primary Schools***

A humorous look at life as an elementary school teacher by two UK teachers. Just what you need to help you through the rest of the school year!

**7. *Améliorer sa lecture en lisant des livres plus longs***

Dix-sept ateliers et de nombreuses activités permettent aux élèves d'acquérir autonomie et aisance en lecture. Guidés par leur enseignant, les jeunes lecteurs sont amenés, entre autres, à lire avec fluidité, à comprendre le langage littéraire, à utiliser des stratégies de compréhension pour lire des livres plus longs et plus complexes.

**8. *Dancing With Discomfort: A Framework For Noticing, Naming, And Navigating Our In-Between Moments***

Transitions in life naturally bring discomfort as they are movements through change. Rather than avoiding or rushing through the transition, we are encouraged to sit with our discomfort and discover strategies and techniques for embracing moments of discovery.

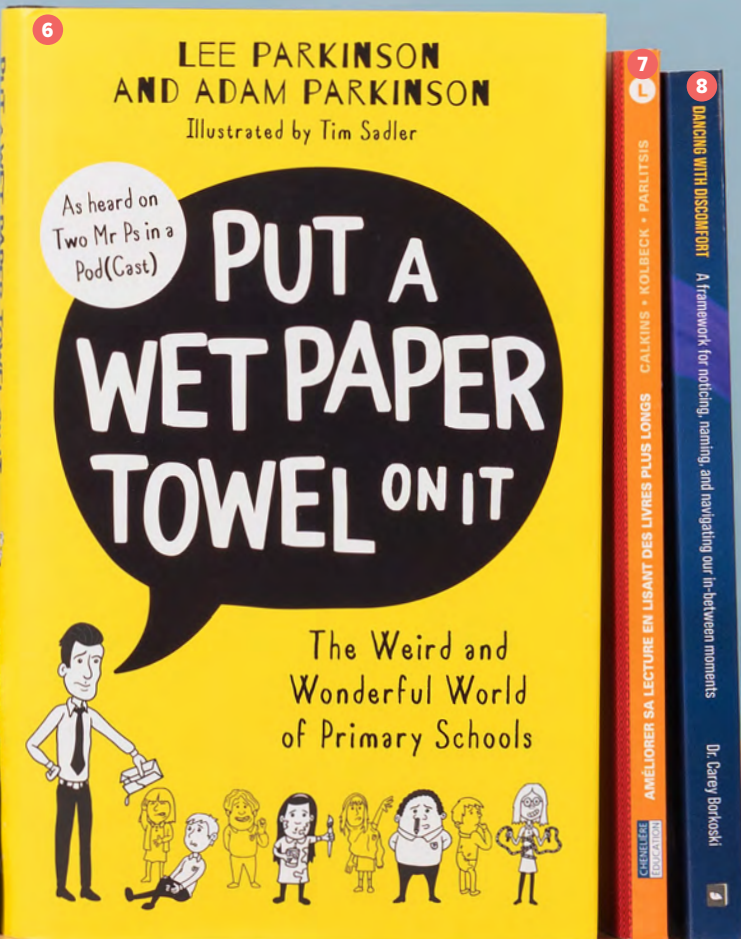


PHOTO BY YUET CHAN

**Katrina Zack**

I loved *The Forest of Vanishing Stars* by Kristin Harmel, because it ticked all the right boxes when I was looking for a book—historical fiction, a little bit of romance, no crying and a happy ending. It is an amazing cross between *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens and *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* by Heather Morris.

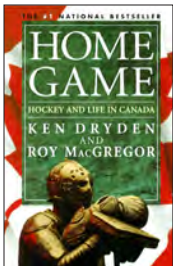
**Andrew Bullen**

I'm reading *Why We Sleep* by Matthew Walker. It's a pretty cool look at fairly current sleep research and is very interesting to boot. I'm thinking I'll use it to make an assignment for my Bio 30 kids in the fall.

**Deb Gerow**

I just finished reading *Red Notice* by Bill Browder. As difficult to put down as a good thriller, but non-fiction. A must read.

# What sports-themed book would you recommend to colleagues for use in the classroom?



**Home Game: Hockey and Life in Canada**

By Ken Dryden and Roy MacGregor.

Mark Breadner



**Reclaiming Tom Longboat: Indigenous Self-determination in Canadian Sport**

I recommend this book by Janice Forsyth coupled with this online resource: [indigenousheroes.ca](http://indigenousheroes.ca).

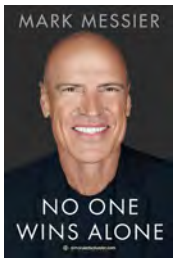
Crystal Clark



**The Boys in the Boat**

By Daniel James Brown, this is a great book about rowing and the value of teamwork and leadership.

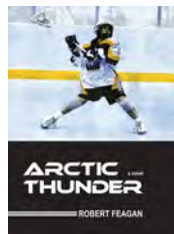
Rick Frey



**No One Wins Alone**

This book by Mark Messier is a great example of leadership.

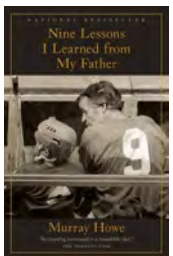
Shaunna Pettigrew



**Arctic Thunder**

This book by Robert Feagan begins in St. Albert and moves to Inuvik. It focuses on lacrosse, with traditional Arctic sports and restorative justice.

Rayanna Tremblay



**Nine Lessons I Learned from my Father**

This book is by Murray Howe, Gordie Howe's son.

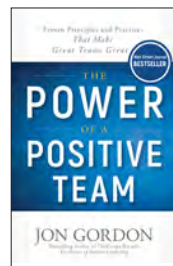
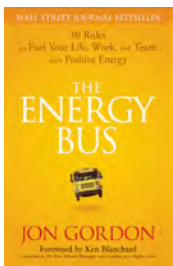
Kim Wouters



**Listen to Legacy: What the All Blacks Can Teach Us About the Business of Life**

By James Kerr on Audible.

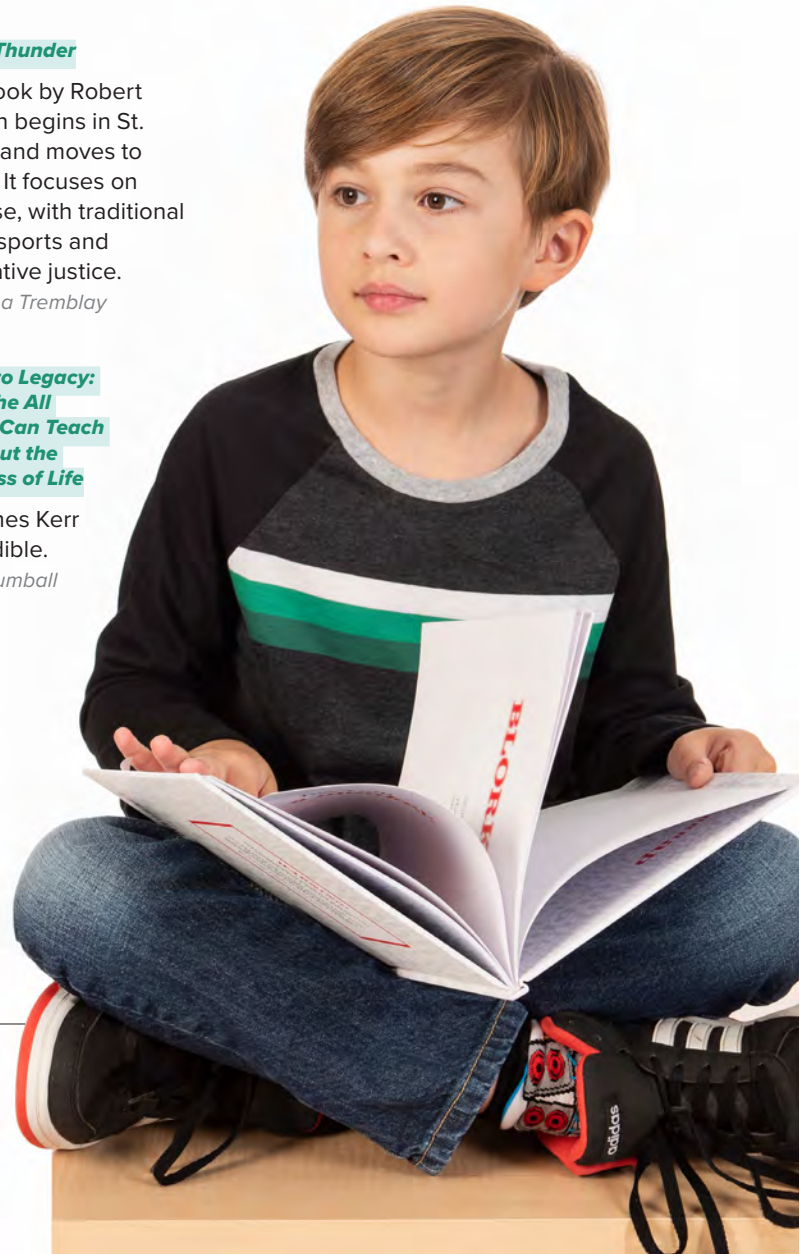
Rose Rumball



**The Energy Bus and The Power of a Positive Team**

I recommend anything by Jon Gordon, but particularly these two books.

Verna Mabin



Teacher recommendations gathered through Facebook

PHOTO BY YUET CHAN

# Renewable Energy and Environment Workshops

Virtual and In-Person Workshops



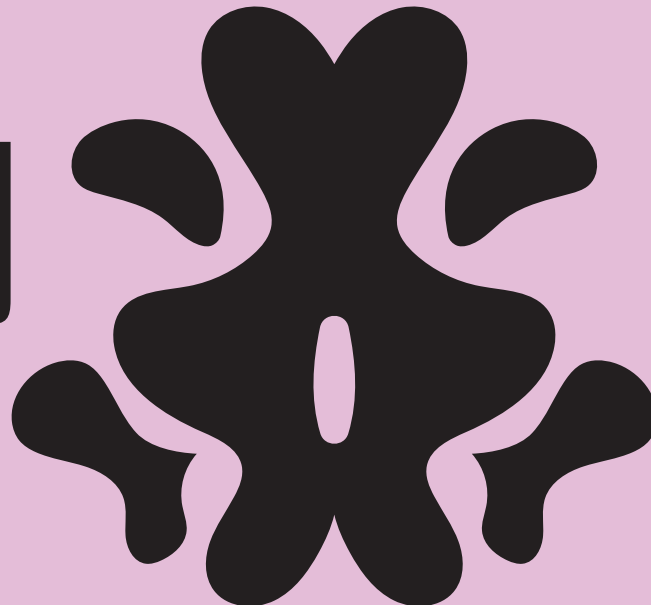
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[www.relayeducation.com/programs](http://www.relayeducation.com/programs)

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# Highlighting ATA programs and resources

## Provincial ATA committees embrace members' voices

### WHAT ARE THEY?

The ATA has a number of standing committees (and some ad hoc ones) on topics of concern to teachers, such as Indigenous education; school leadership; and benefits, pension and insurance. These committees assist in the business of the ATA, and most include practising teachers, school leaders and/or system leaders to ensure that voices from the field are represented and heard.

### WHAT DO THEY DO?

Standing committees advise Provincial Executive Council on pertinent issues and matters related to the respective committee's mandate. Many committees also plan a conference, a symposium or other professional learning events and provide feedback on resolutions to the Annual Representative Assembly.

### HOW CAN I BE INVOLVED?

Apply for a committee position! Active and associate members (who hold the highest level of membership available to them) can apply when vacancies arise. Contact your district representative for information about serving on a provincial committee.



For more information, FAQs and current opportunities, check out the ATA website: [www.teachers.ab.ca/membersonly/ProvincialCommittees/Pages/index.aspx](http://www.teachers.ab.ca/membersonly/ProvincialCommittees/Pages/index.aspx).

The Association embraces diversity and inclusion and is committed to representing members belonging to equity-seeking groups. Members belonging to equity-seeking groups are encouraged to apply for committee positions.

### WHAT'S NEW WITH COMMITTEES?

#### Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee

##### Status of Racialized Teachers Working Group


In 2022, the Status of Racialized Teachers Working Group was established, with strong representation from the field.

Under the direction of the Diversity, Equity and Human Rights (DEHR) Committee, the working group will study and advise the DEHR Committee on matters of concern or interest regarding racialized teachers; make recommendations to the DEHR Committee concerning Association policy related to racialized teachers; make recommendations to the DEHR Committee concerning the work of the Association and supports related to racialized teachers; receive representations from education partners and friends of public education as appropriate; and represent the Association, as authorized, with groups and at events regarding issues of concern or interest to racialized teachers.

#### Women in Leadership Committee



##### Caregiving Research

A research project entitled *COVID-19, Caregiving and Careers of Alberta Teachers and School Leaders—A Qualitative Study* was published in 2022. Scan the QR code to read the study online. 





# Pleins feux sur les programmes et ressources de l'ATA

## Les comités provinciaux de l'ATA valorisent la voix des membres

### QUE SONT-ILS?

L'ATA compte un certain nombre de comités permanents (et quelques comités ad hoc) sur des sujets qui intéressent particulièrement les enseignants, tels que l'éducation autochtone; le leadership scolaire; et les avantages sociaux, pensions et assurances. Ces comités aident à la conduite des affaires de l'ATA, et la plupart sont composés d'enseignants en exercice, de leaders scolaires et/ou de leaders du système qui veillent à ce que la voix des membres sur le terrain soit représentée et entendue.

### QUE FONT-ILS?

Les comités permanents conseillent le Conseil exécutif provincial sur toute question pertinente ou relative au mandat de chaque comité. De nombreux comités planifient même un congrès, un colloque, ou d'autres événements d'apprentissage professionnel et fournissent une rétroaction sur les résolutions proposées à l'Assemblée représentative annuelle.

### COMMENT PUIS-JE EN FAIRE PARTIE?

Postulez pour un poste au sein du comité! Tout membre actif et associé (possédant le niveau d'adhésion le plus élevé auquel il peut prétendre) peut poser sa candidature dès qu'un poste se libère. Renseignez-vous auprès de votre représentant de district sur les modalités relatives à la participation à un comité provincial.



Pour en savoir plus, consultez le site Web de l'ATA où se trouvent également la FAQ et les postes actuellement vacants. [www.teachers.ab.ca/membersonly/ProvincialCommittees/Pages/index.aspx](http://www.teachers.ab.ca/membersonly/ProvincialCommittees/Pages/index.aspx).

L'ATA valorise la diversité et l'inclusion et s'engage à représenter les membres appartenant à des groupes en quête d'équité. On encourage les membres appartenant à ces groupes à se porter candidats.

### QUOI DE NEUF AVEC LES COMITÉS?

#### ***Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee***

##### **Groupe de travail sur le statut des enseignants racialisés**


En 2022, le groupe de travail sur le statut des enseignants racialisés a été établi. Ce comité est composé en grande partie de membres travaillant sur le terrain.

Sous la direction du *Diversity, Equity and Human Rights (DEHR) Committee*, le groupe de travail conseillera le comité DEHR et se penchera sur les sujets préoccupants ou présentant un intérêt particulier à propos des enseignants racialisés; fera des recommandations au comité DEHR concernant la politique de l'ATA relative aux enseignants racialisés; fera des recommandations au comité DEHR concernant le travail de l'ATA et les soutiens liés aux enseignants racialisés; recevra les représentants des partenaires en éducation et amis de l'éducation publique, au moment opportun; représentera l'ATA, selon les autorisations, auprès de groupes et lors d'événements concernant des questions d'intérêt pour les enseignants racialisés; et représentera l'ATA, lorsqu'il y sera autorisé, auprès de groupes et lors d'événements concernant des questions d'intérêt pour les enseignants racialisés.

#### ***Women in Leadership Committee***



##### ***Caregiving Research***

Un projet de recherche intitulé *COVID-19, Caregiving and Careers of Alberta Teachers and School Leaders—A Qualitative Study* a été publié en 2022. Balayez le code QR pour lire l'étude. 





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# Two-track mind

Principal Ian McLaren helps others through teaching and firefighting

**Cory Hare**

Managing Editor, ATA Magazine

## **STANDING IN HIS LIVING ROOM,**

watching as the fire department whizzes by in their shiny red trucks, Ian McLaren is like a dog with his paws up against the window — he wants to go so badly.

This was a common scene years ago when McLaren moved to a new town after having been a volunteer firefighter in his previous community.

“My wife joked that I was going to leave nose prints on the front window if I kept staring out of it every time I heard a siren,” McLaren writes in his memoir.

## **DOUBLE LIFE**

McLaren first joined a volunteer fire department when he was five years into his teaching career and living in Black Diamond. Unlike the many other hobbies he tried and lost interest in, firefighting stuck.

For more than two decades, McLaren has juggled the dual roles of volunteer firefighter and teacher/school administrator, attending more than 1,500 emergency calls and becoming the chief of the Bentley District Fire Department and principal of Eckville Elementary School. Both roles help him fulfill a deep-seated need to make a difference.

“I like being a teacher ... [and] principal,” McLaren says. “As much as I love firefighting, I wouldn’t want to give up my teaching role. That’s equally a part of who I am.”

In his self-published memoir *Not My Emergency: The Double Life of a Volunteer Firefighter*, McLaren explains that he doesn’t want bad things to happen to

people, but he does get restless if a week or two goes by without an emergency call.

“Every time the pager goes off there’s always that ‘what if’ moment: what if this is the big call?” he says.

McLaren explains that volunteer firefighters undergo the same intense training as career firefighters. (There’s no such thing as volunteer fires). The volunteer department in Bentley averages about 90 calls per year, the bulk of which are motor vehicle collisions, grass fires, water rescues, medical assists and false alarms — only about seven or eight of the calls are structure fires.

“It’s not like the movies where they’re running out to two or three per day,” McLaren says.

## **UPS AND DOWNS**

In his book, McLaren describes the shock of having a fire pager awaken him from the deepest part of sleep, the fear that comes with entering a smoke-filled building, how indescribably black a fire is and how hot it is inside a burning building.

He also relates how volunteer firefighting is full of ups and downs for firefighters and their families, who are often faced with an empty chair during family meals and special occasions. One of McLaren’s toughest moments came on a Father’s Day, when he responded to a call that took him away from the activities his own family had planned. The call was to recover the body of a man who had committed suicide by hanging—the father of a 12-year-old former student.




“Not knowing what else to do, I just wrap my arms around [his] shoulders and hold him as he sobs,” McLaren recounts in his book.

While some emergency calls just don't have a positive result despite responders' best efforts, the feeling that comes from making a positive difference is like nothing else McLaren has ever experienced.

“There is the very rewarding feeling of having arrived on a scene that is the lowest point in people's lives ... and 10 minutes later, if things go well, you have dramatically improved their situation,” McLaren says. “It's this feeling of accomplishment that is very profound.”

While the rewards of teaching often come after seeing children develop over the course of months and years, firefighting provides more immediate feedback, which McLaren says fits his short attention span.

“We teach because we get those occasional flashes of aha moments where we know we've really impacted a child's life,” he says. “It's a very similar thing to being on the fire department. I crave those moments where I know that my life has impacted somebody else's life in a positive way.” 

## ON THE SCENE WITH

### Ian McLaren

#### How would you describe yourself as a teacher?

I am more about the art than the science of teaching. I focus on a positive classroom dynamic, building relationships with my students and ensuring they feel safe in my classroom.

#### Which hobby have you tried that was the most disastrous or ill-fitting? Why?

When I was in high school, I became obsessed with rock climbing. I read everything I could about the sport, but there were two reasons I never really got into it. First of all, it is a very expensive hobby and I was very poor at the time. More importantly, though, it turns out I am not all that crazy about heights.

#### What is it like to ride in a fire truck regularly?

Honestly, it never gets boring riding the BRT (big red truck). And in case you are wondering, yes, we will blow the horn if you pump your arm at us to do so. (And we love it.)

#### Is there a particular aspect of firefighting that you've become most expert in during your career?

Most volunteer firefighters hone in on one area that they will become experts in. My two are vehicle extrication and ice rescue. While ice rescues are rare, we attend many vehicle accidents each year and extricating trapped and injured patients is critical to our job.

#### Which will you retire from first, firefighting or teaching?

Definitely teaching. I very much hope to pursue some sort of work in emergency services after I retire from teaching. If anyone knows of a small department in need of a part-time chief, I will be available in about five years!

- **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](mailto:cory.hare@ata.ab.ca).

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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



#### **Medicine Wheel Workbook: Finding Your Healthy Balance**

For her latest book, *Medicine Wheel Workbook: Finding Your Healthy Balance*, Carrie Armstrong collaborated with her sister and daughter to create an interactive workbook that encourages children to find their healthy balance. Also check out *Mother Earth Plants for Health & Beauty: Indigenous Plants, Traditions and Recipes* (Eschia Books Ltd.), in which Armstrong shares recipes based on her own grandmother's traditions. A proud Métis woman, Armstrong has created books and a company—Mother Earth Essentials—to increase awareness of the beauty of the Indigenous culture.

**CARRIE ARMSTRONG**

*amiskwaciy Academy, Edmonton  
Medicine Wheel Education*



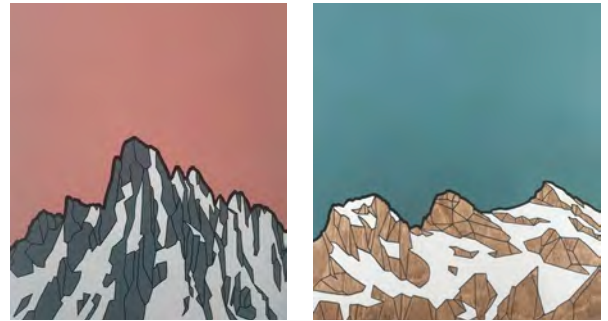
### SPORTS

Grade 5 teacher Cody Huseby keeps busy on and off the ice as a Western Hockey League official and head coach of the Red Deer U11 A+ Phone Experts Chiefs. With his experience coaching and officiating games, he was selected as a linesperson for the World Junior Hockey Championship in 2022. Huseby was also recently named Hockey Alberta's coach of the month.

**CODY HUSEBY**

*Father Henri Voisin, Red Deer  
Instagram and Twitter @huseby88*

### ART



When not in the art room at school, Sheena Priddle is often creating commissioned hand-lettered details for wedding planners and local vendors or custom paintings for clients through her Instagram and Etsy store. Her most recent series of paintings combines her love of climbing with a modern geometric esthetic—familiar peaks from local ranges and her dream climbing destinations are contrasted with colour-blocked skies.

**SHEENA PRIDDLE**

*Lorne Akins Junior High, St. Albert  
Instagram and Etsy @doodle.pretty*

### TELEVISION



In 2022, Justin Gabinet, a foods teacher and professional human ecologist, was featured on an episode of Food Network Canada's *Wall of Bakers*. After being encouraged by colleagues to apply, Gabinet navigated the

audition process—during the pandemic, no less!—and filmed the show in summer 2021. Gabinet describes the filming as a “heart-warming experience” and fondly recalls the judges complimenting his savory rosemary scones with crème anglaise, as well as judge chef Shobna Kannusamy thanking him for his service as a teacher.

**JUSTIN GABINET**

*Archbishop Jordan Catholic High School, Sherwood Park  
@gabinatrix*

- **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 section editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn at [lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca](mailto:lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca).

# 5 minutes!

You have five minutes before the end of the day.  
How do you spend that time?

**Lorelei Gertz-Cummins**

A talk circle where students can just talk about what's on their minds. It's a good way to connect on a personal level and problem solve issues that arise. It also gives students time to have a voice when they often feel unheard.

**Karlee Hren**

I have a few go-to activities: We have a class clean up and dance party. Our special Friday song is "Celebration" by Kool and the Gang. We also have extra share time because my kids love to share about their lives with their peers.

**Rayanna May**

Shylock Fox mysteries!! My kids love trying to solve them.

**Tara Kwasney**

Riddles, read aloud, or make up a silly story together. "Once upon a time there was a \_\_\_\_\_ who wanted \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_."

**Vikki Lynn**

Chatting about life and my students' interests or playing a game as a class.

**Reta Yvonne**

Sometimes a humorous read aloud, sometimes a student reads their book to the class, sometimes we just tell jokes and laugh.

**Megan Yibba**

LOL time—we watch bloopers, share jokes, tell funny stories. We always end the day with a laugh.

**Kristina Veronica**

Mystery number!  
"I am thinking of the product of five and seven."  
"I am thinking of the estimate of 424 and 219."  
"I am thinking of the sum of 378 and 276."  
Squeeze in any mental math I can.

**Chelsea Ramsey**

Pit and peak of the day! Everyone shares their high and low of the day.

**Joy de Nance**

Action and movement songs like "The Goldfish Song" by Laurie Breckner.

**Stephanie Lefebvre**

Reading to my students. We always have a book on the go.

▶ See more at [facebook.com/ABteachers](https://www.facebook.com/ABteachers).

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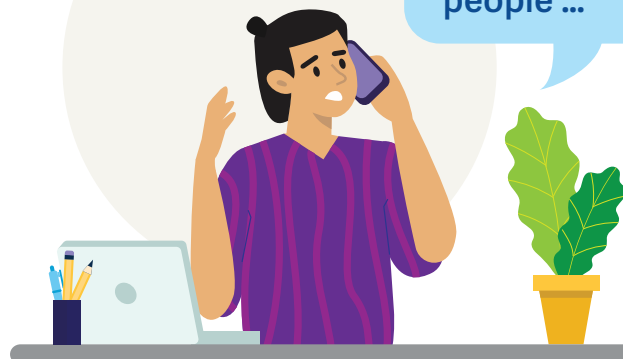


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ISTOCK

# A tale of four houses

## Stepping back leads to students stepping up

**Naomi Holmes**

Grade 3, Sturgeon Heights School, St. Albert

**AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH** school year, I always place my students into four organizational “house groups.” Then I assign things like class jobs weekly to a house group and I don’t micromanage anything. As long as the job is done right, I don’t care if the whole group does it, they take turns, etc. This way, I eliminate any worry about someone being absent, as there are usually about six kids per house group.

Yes, I’m a Harry Potter fan, but I also spent two years teaching in England, where I experienced house groups and their benefits first-hand! This system creates natural leaders and encourages everyone to recognize that each

individual plays a part in the larger community and must pull their own weight. Some years the kids create the groups and some years I do.

This year, I grouped them into four Disney groups: pink Minnie Mouse, purple Daisy Duck, blue Donald Duck and peach Mickey Mouse. This system has worked for every classroom I’ve been in for the last 12 years of my 28 years of teaching. I believe the reason it has worked is that children want to be seen and heard, and when they have expectations that are routine, they will always step up to the plate. The moment they realize the classroom belongs to them, not me “the teacher,” then the magic can happen.

I’ve also enjoyed watching the “unexpected,” when a quiet child steps in to help a fellow group member or a child who struggles with organization

and suddenly realizes they need to be responsible so that their group can rely on them. Students experience so many life skills in the simple act of me letting go of being “in charge.”

Reaching all these goals takes some practice and patience, but every year, by the end of September, I can generally take a step back and allow the system to run. <sup>ATA</sup>

“This system creates natural leaders and encourages everyone to recognize that each individual plays a part in the larger community.”

- ▶ **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](mailto:cory.hare@ata.ab.ca).

# The story of teaching

Lesson in history becomes a key to the future

**Cory Schoffer**

Executive Staff Officer, ATA



ILLUSTRATION BY ERIN SOLANO

## THE CHALLENGE

As the new “kid,” how to connect with students who’ve spent their entire lives together.

## MY GRADE 12 HISTORY

teacher was one of my favourites and a role model for me as I became a teacher. He asked us to identify a political song and to break down the lyrics into an analysis of its time. I picked a late Cold War era song, “Put Down That Weapon” by Midnight Oil.

Jump ahead a few years, and my education adventure sees me in the Peace Country and a small rural school with two multigrade classrooms: the Big Room and the Little Room. I taught in the Big Room.

Small schools like this are really just an extended family. I, however, was the newly adopted kid. I was the only one the students didn’t know, and I didn’t know them. I assigned a variation from my Grade 12 history class a few years earlier. Instead of asking upper elementary and junior high students to break down anti-war anthems, I asked them to dig into their own catalogues. I wanted to get to know them in their space through their music.

Through that activity, I started to get to know my

“ I started to get to know my students and they got to know more about themselves too.”

students, and, interestingly, these children who grew up in such a small community, many knowing each other since birth, got to know a bit more about themselves too. I like to think that the activity allowed them to get to know a bit about their new teacher too, as I also picked a song to present to them (I’m pretty sure I picked “The River” by Garth Brooks).

I reached out to some former students to see if they had any recollections they could share, and this activity was mentioned by someone who is now a teacher herself. Her song was “4am” by Our Lady Peace.

“I loved hearing everyone’s song choices, and you made us feel like our selections were so wise,” she said. “I felt like I was

able to be myself, with all that preteen angst. Great lesson.”

A few years ago when I came across my Grade 12 history teacher, I told him how I morphed his political song activity into something a bit different. From one teacher, passed on to another and then on to another. It really is the story of teaching. <sup>ATA</sup>

► **Got an idea?** Maybe you created a lesson that totally flopped or were on the receiving end of a lesson that was truly inspiring. Whatever your story, please summarize it in up to 300 words and email it to managing editor Cory Hare at [cory.hare@ata.ab.ca](mailto:cory.hare@ata.ab.ca).

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