

SPRING 2023

THE ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

# ATA Magazine





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# ATA Magazine

SPRING 2023

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# Contributors




## AMANDA CLARK | p. 12

 Amanda Clark has been an elementary music teacher in Leduc for more than 10 years. She teaches in both French and English and also teaches private lessons, including the Music for Young Children program. She completed a bachelor of music at the University of Alberta Augustana Campus in Camrose, a certificate in arts administration from MacEwan University and an after-degree in education at Concordia University in Edmonton. She is the music representative for the Fine Arts Council of the ATA.




## CORY WRIGHT-MALEY | p. 36

 Cory Wright-Maley serves as associate professor and department chair of education at St. Mary's University in Calgary. His varied scholarship includes work on simulations, economic inequality, and issues of diversity and inclusion. He is the editor of the teacher-facing journal *ASSERT: The Annals of Social Studies Education Research for Teachers*, co-host of the *Bluey Bros* podcast and recipient of the 2021/22 ATA Educational Research Award.




## BRIAN HARDER AND TRUDIE LEE | p. 48

 Brian Harder is a Saskatchewan boy turned Calgary photographer, and Trudie Lee is Calgary-raised from a rock-n-roll background. They have seen a lot in their 50-plus years of combined experience and have been photographing Canada's largest industries, portraits, arts and entertainment together for more than 30 years. They own and operate one of the largest photography studios in Calgary. (harderlee.ca)




## CAILYNN KLINGBEIL | p. 48

 Cailynn Klingbeil is a freelance journalist based in Calgary. Her writing has appeared in numerous publications including the *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, the *Globe and Mail* and the *CBC*. Her inclination toward journalism began early: she has fond memories of reporting, writing and designing a newspaper as a Grade 6 student at Hillhurst School.



## KESHINI SENANAYAKE | p. 55

 Keshini Senanayake (she/her) resides on Treaty 7 territory, and is a secondary school music teacher in Calgary. She has taught a combination of instrumental music, concert band, choir, guitar, strings, as well as drama, film, CALM and creative writing. Keshini was selected as the Calgary Board of Education's Edwin Parr Award Nominee in 2018. She is currently a member of the Calgary Local No. 38 Equity and Diversity Committee, Social Media Committee, and a co-organizer of the Local No. 38 Anti-Racist Teachers Network.

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





PHOTO BY RYAN PARKER

## Joni Turville

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

## My final word

**WOW! WHAT A RIDE IT HAS BEEN**, and I can't believe it's almost over. After a teaching career spanning nearly 40 years, I will be moving on to my next chapter. Retirement is what it's called by most, but for me, it will be a continuation of my journey to learn and grow as a person, and to stay connected to the profession I love.


My elementary teacher self would have never dreamed of the opportunities I've had, in particular in my role as editor-in-chief of the *ATA Magazine*. I'm proud that we continue to publish cutting-edge research and thought-provoking pieces to add to the professional knowledge of our members, but also to have Alberta's teachers highlighted and engaged.

To my magazine team colleagues — you inspire and challenge me, and I can't thank you enough for all of the heart and care that goes into every issue.

To my colleagues on staff, members of Provincial Executive Council and all of the many teacher-volunteers I've worked with over the years, you support your colleagues with hours and hours of dedication, and it makes a difference.

My final word is to you, my esteemed teacher colleagues. Thank you, thank you, thank you — for the privilege to serve you, first as a staff officer in Professional Development, and for the last years as associate executive secretary of the Alberta Teachers' Association. I know the work in classrooms can be exhausting and never-ending. In those challenging times, please hold onto the moments of joy that life in a school brings. Know how important you are — you impact your students' lives forever.

My sign off now is the same as it has always been since I began as editor-in-chief many years ago, except now I write with tears of gratitude welling up.

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

## Mon dernier mot

**EH BIEN! CE FUT TOUTE UNE AVENTURE**, et j'ai du mal à croire qu'elle tire à sa fin. Après une carrière de presque 40 ans en enseignement, je m'apprête à passer au chapitre suivant. Nombreux sont ceux qui parlent de « retraite », mais dans mon cas, ce sera l'occasion de continuer à apprendre et à grandir en tant que personne et à conserver des liens avec la profession que j'aime.


L'enseignante à l'élémentaire que j'étais n'aurait jamais osé rêver des occasions qui se sont présentées à moi, notamment dans mon rôle de rédactrice en chef de l'*ATA Magazine*. Je suis fière que nous continuions de publier des recherches de pointe, de même que des articles qui suscitent la réflexion et enrichissent les connaissances professionnelles de nos membres, mais aussi de mettre en valeur les enseignants de l'Alberta et de constater qu'ils s'impliquent activement.

À mes collègues de l'équipe de rédaction : vous m'inspirez et me mettez au défi, et je ne saurais trop vous remercier pour toute l'ardeur et l'attention dont vous faites preuve au moment de préparer chaque numéro.

À mes collègues au sein du personnel, aux membres du Conseil exécutif provincial et aux nombreux enseignants bénévoles avec qui j'ai pu collaborer au fil des ans : vous consacrez des heures et des heures à appuyer vos collègues, et votre dévouement change la donne.

Chers collègues enseignants, mon dernier mot, il est pour vous. Merci, merci, merci : pour le privilège de vous servir, d'abord à titre de cadre supérieure au Perfectionnement professionnel, puis au cours des dernières années, en tant que secrétaire exécutive associée de l'Alberta Teachers' Association. Je sais que le travail dans la salle de classe peut être épuisant et interminable. Je vous invite, dans ces moments difficiles, à vous rappeler les instants de joie que procure la vie dans une école. Sachez à quel point vous êtes importants : votre influence sur vos élèves durera toute leur vie.

Je termine en reprenant la formule que j'utilise depuis mon arrivée à titre de rédactrice en chef il y a déjà plusieurs années, à la différence que j'écris ces mots avec des larmes de gratitude dans les yeux.

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
- 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).

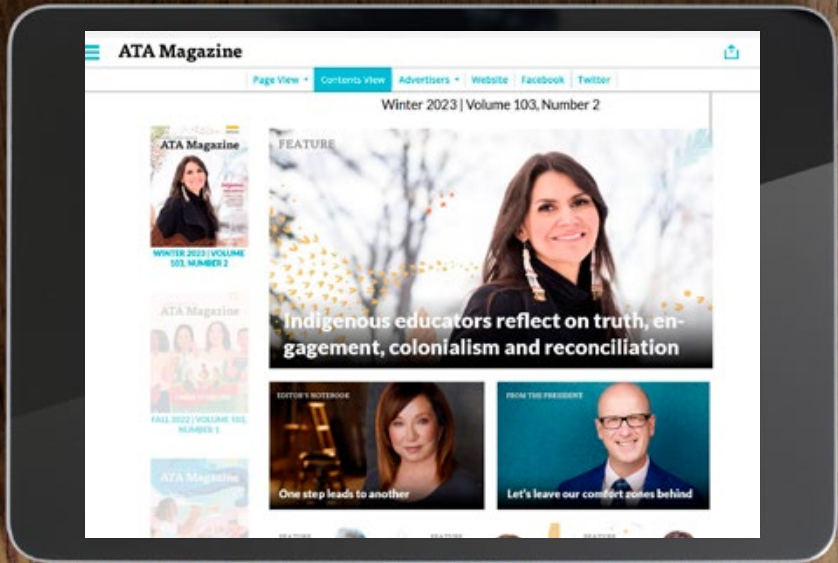
### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR — GUIDELINES

#### 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.



ISTOCK/ADAPTED

## Winter issue is amazing

I picked up a hard copy of the winter 2023 issue of the *ATA Magazine* at a school today. It is amazing!! I am so impressed by all of the contributors' pieces. It is truly an educational and informative issue!

—Janis Weasel Bear

*Well-Being Strategist, Indigenous Education, School Improvement, Calgary Board of Education*

## Read and share online

### The *ATA Magazine* is available online!

Access the digital version of the latest issue by visiting [bit.ly/ATAMag2023](https://bit.ly/ATAMag2023).

Share your favourite articles with colleagues — content is shareable through email, Facebook and Twitter.

## Complete our survey and enter to win \$100

The Alberta Teachers' Association invites members to participate in the following survey about the *ATA Magazine*. Responses will help shape the publication in the years ahead.

Survey participants are eligible to enter a draw for a \$100 gift card from the retailer of their choice.

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<https://surveys.teachers.ab.ca/s3/ATA-News-Reader-Survey-2023>







PHOTO BY RYAN PARKER

## FROM THE PRESIDENT MOT DU PRÉSIDENT

### Jason Schilling

President, ATA  
Président de l'ATA

## Let's keep talking about mental health

**THROUGHOUT THE PANDEMIC**, you would hear people say, time and time again, “take care of yourself” and “it’s okay to not be okay.” Both of those statements are entirely valid — I said them to my colleagues then and continue to say them now, but I also recognize that when we hear this advice repeatedly, it loses its meaning and impact. The problem then becomes, how do we keep from rolling our eyes when someone tells us to take care of ourselves?

One solution is to keep talking about it, as we are with our feature on mental health in this issue of the *ATA Magazine*. The more we talk about mental health and are open about the supports we need to maintain good mental health, the better off we are as a profession and as a society. However, a lot of work remains to be done to eliminate the stigma that is attached to mental health problems and illness.

It’s important to recognize that, when dealing with mental health issues, one size does not fit all. What works for me may not work for another person. Another thing to keep in mind is that good mental health is a daily practice rather than a destination where, upon arrival, you set down your luggage and kick up your feet.

For example, I have always struggled to find work-life balance. I am not even sure it truly exists, but it doesn’t stop me from working toward it. Like many, I like to lace up a pair of runners and explore the trails. It’s not always easy, especially when I’m busy, and there have been many days when I do not manage to run. However, I’ve learned that this is okay — tomorrow is another day, and another chance to try again. <sup>ATA</sup>

## Continuons à parler de santé mentale

**TOUT AU LONG DE LA PANDÉMIE**, on a entendu à répétition : « prenez soin de vous » et « c’est bien normal de ne pas se sentir bien ». Il s’agit, dans les deux cas, de propos tout à fait valables, de choses que j’ai dites à mes collègues à l’époque et que je continue à leur dire. Toutefois, je reconnais que lorsqu’on entend sans cesse ces conseils, leur signification et leur portée se perdent. Le problème qui se pose alors est de savoir comment éviter de lever les yeux au ciel lorsqu’on nous dit de prendre soin de nous.

Une solution possible est de continuer à en parler, comme nous le faisons dans ce numéro de l’*ATA Magazine* grâce à notre dossier spécial sur la santé mentale. Plus nous parlerons de santé mentale et plus nous discuterons ouvertement des mesures de soutien nécessaires au maintien d’une bonne santé mentale, mieux ce sera pour nous en tant que profession et en tant que société. Cependant, il reste beaucoup à faire pour déstigmatiser les troubles de santé mentale et la maladie mentale.

Il est important de reconnaître que les solutions universelles aux problèmes de santé mentale n’existent pas. Ce qui me convient peut ne pas convenir à quelqu’un d’autre. Un autre point à garder à l’esprit est qu’une bonne santé mentale demande des efforts quotidiens; ce n’est pas une destination qu’il suffit d’atteindre pour y poser nos bagages et s’y installer confortablement.

À titre d’exemple, j’ai toujours eu de la difficulté à concilier travail et vie personnelle. En fait, je ne suis pas entièrement convaincu que ce soit possible, mais cela ne m’empêche pas de continuer à y travailler. Comme bien d’autres, j’aime enfile mes souliers de course et partir à la découverte des sentiers. Ce n’est pas toujours facile, surtout quand je suis occupé, et les jours où je ne trouve pas le temps de courir sont nombreux. Néanmoins, j’ai appris que c’est bien normal. Après tout, demain est un jour nouveau et une nouvelle occasion d’y parvenir. <sup>ATA</sup>



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## The ever-elusive work–life balance.

**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? 1956, 1963, 1992, 2018

### 1. “DICKENSIAN” HOURS

Driven by fear for their jobs in tough economic times, or blind ambition which necessitates climbing the promotional ladder to reach for the elusive brass ring, or perhaps just through plain loyalty to hard-pressed colleagues and institutional policy, more and more professionals are putting in hours that a generation ago would have been derisively termed “Dickensian.”

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

### 2. FUN–PLAY TIME!

Amusement also has its place. While there is little therapeutic benefit from watching movies, television, ballet, or baseball, they do provide some degree of relaxation.

Real therapeutic fun, however, is active fun–play. Ten-year-olds play tag and have a whale of a time. They find it fun to chase and be chased, yet no one wins and no one ever really loses. That’s the type of games adults should have, say the experts.

Among ideal adult games: square dancing, splash parties, picnics, hiking—anything, in fact, that keeps people moving and laughing.

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

### 3. CONCENTRATED EFFORT

Teaching involves intense and prolonged periods of concentrated effort in the field of human relationships, which can fatigue the most vigorous person. A dynamic working situation must be maintained during the school day with from 25 to 35 lively human beings. ... Other load factors are found in the external environment in which the teaching is carried out such as class size, social setting of the school, type of administration in the school, and class achievement levels, as well as the teacher’s physical health, personality, motivation, and enthusiasm.

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

### 4. MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS

While school does not constitute the entirety of our lives, it does constitute a significant portion of awake time for all members of the school community. Students spend a third of their waking hours in school. Teachers and nonteaching staff spend even more time in the workplace than students. Because of this, mental health must be supported in school as part of our “whole” lives. <sup>ATA</sup>

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

Answers: 1. “The Expanding Workday,” Peter Clump, April 1992. 2. “Your Job Doesn’t Have to Drive You Nuts!—If You Take Time to Play,” Donald Gordon and Jon Kemm, January 1956. 3. “A Teacher’s Work Week,” J. D. McFetridge, May 1963. 4. “Mental Health: A Changing Landscape,” David Grauwler, Winter 2018.



ILLUSTRATION BY MATEUSZ NAPIERALSKI

# Looking south

Why are teachers leaving the profession and what can be done about it?

**Lisa Everitt**

Executive Staff Officer, ATA

**IN THE UNITED STATES DURING** the 2022/23 school year, the lack of teachers to fill jobs is grabbing headlines nationwide. This is not a new problem. For example, in 2016, Sutchter et al. pointed out that “between 1989 and 2005, attrition rates increased by 50%, and they have stayed high since then” (p. 39). At this time, it is not known how the COVID-19 pandemic will impact teacher attrition over the long term, but Diliberti et al. (2023) found in a nationally representative sample of school districts that “10 percent of their teachers retired or resigned at some point during or after the 2021–2022 school year, which is a 4 percentage point increase” (p. 2) over

previous years. Troublingly, school district leaders noted even higher turnover among principals. “District leaders estimated that 16 percent of their principals retired or resigned in 2021–2022” (Diliberti et al. 2023, 3), doubling from the school year prior. Consequently, there is deep concern about teacher shortages across the U.S. because there are not enough qualified teachers to fill positions.

What causes teacher attrition and what can be done?

## INADEQUATE COMPENSATION

Teacher salaries across the United States vary, but “the evidence suggests that for financial incentives to work, they have

to be large enough to compensate for the challenges of working in less desirable schools or areas, or to compensate for the salary that teachers would receive if they had been in a comparable profession” (Carver et al. 2022, 25). Given that one in six teachers holds a second job according to the Pew Research Center (2019) and that teachers leave the profession at high rates, it is clear there is a need to address low salaries. In March 2023, in the wake of teacher shortages across many states, the Pay Teachers Act, which proposed to set a national minimum wage for teachers of \$60,000, was introduced to Congress. While financial incentives such as higher salaries, loan forgiveness, housing



support and child-care support may help entice people to teaching, they must be considered alongside other factors in building career commitment to the profession of teaching.

## CONDITIONS OF PRACTICE

Sutcher et al. (2016) write that “in many states and districts, relatively little attention is paid to supporting teachers after they have joined the profession” (p. 39). In examining organizational factors that contribute to teachers leaving their jobs, Ingersoll (2001) notes that “teachers departing because of job dissatisfaction link their decision to leave to inadequate administrative support, isolated working conditions, poor student discipline, low salaries and a lack of collective teacher influence over schoolwide decisions” (Haynes 2014, 4). In other words, conditions of practice matter.

How might conditions of practice be improved on an organizational level? There are many interrelated solutions that could be implemented to improve the professional conditions within which teachers and principals work. First, proper credentialing, mentorship and residency programs help prepare teachers and principals to manage the challenging circumstances that can arise during a school day (Sutcher et al. 2016; Carver et al. 2022). Second, class sizes and specialized supports for students with exceptional needs are needed to help mitigate teacher and school leader workload (Carver et al. 2022). Third, according to Education International (2022), “High stakes and punitive accountability must be replaced with systems that trust teacher professionalism and teachers’ professional decision making. Professional autonomy as well as academic freedom must be guaranteed” (p. 11).

While Education International does not direct this comment at any one country, the United States has adopted several educational reforms such as No Child Left Behind that, in their reliance on test scores to measure the worth of a school’s or teacher’s performance, have been highly destructive for American public education and the teaching profession. Further, teacher and school leader voices were not considered in these reform

movements, and if meaningful improvement is to be made in public education, the expert voice of the teaching profession must be included.

## BURNOUT

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the stressful conditions experienced by teachers and school leaders, in part because it intensified teacher and school leader work by way of “the implementation of COVID-19 mitigation policies ... school staff shortages, the compounded effects of student trauma and behavior concerns, and interrupted student learning” (Steiner et al. 2022, 2). Steiner et al. (2022) explain that a result of this work intensification was that “about twice as many teachers and principals reported experiencing frequent job-related stress as the general population of working adults in January 2022” (p. 5).

Carver-Thomas, Leung and Burns (2021) report that in California, teacher shortages also translated into an inability to attract qualified substitute teachers. As a result, teachers and school leaders, in addition to managing their own work, also provided coverage for colleagues unable to attend work both in the short and long term (p. 10).


As in Canada, the COVID-19 pandemic illustrated the fragility and importance of the public education system and social supports in the United States. District leaders in Carver-Thomas, Leung and Burns’s (2021) study express concern “that the stressors of managing the challenges of the pandemic on top of the challenges of increased workload could lead to teacher burnout and increased turnover rates” (p. 13). While the concerns regarding conditions of teacher practice were evident before the pandemic, some researchers are recommending a substantial organizational response to teacher and principal workload given the aggravating effect of COVID-19.

## THREE-PART SERIES

This is the third part of a three-part series exploring teacher shortages and the impact of COVID-19 on teachers, as well as policy solutions to the shortage.

The first part appeared in the fall 2022 issue of the *ATA Magazine*, and the second part in the winter 2023 issue.

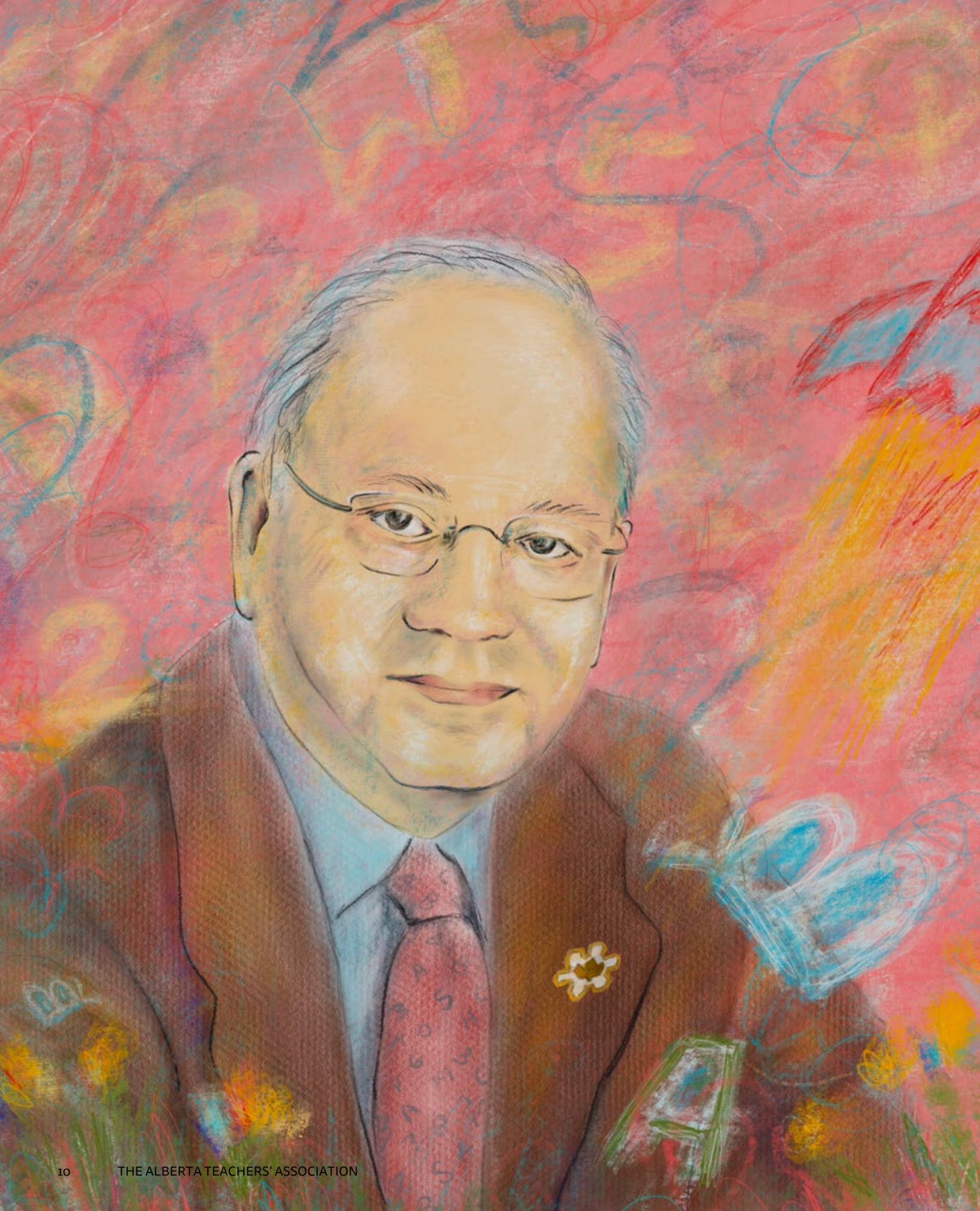
## CONCLUSION

In January 2022, the National Education Association (NEA) released a nationally representative poll conducted by GBAO Strategies of its membership’s stress, burnout and intention to stay in the teaching profession. In its report, the NEA shares that “more than half (55%) of members say they are more likely to leave or retire from education sooner than planned because of the pandemic” (p. 2). This number is higher for Black educators (62 per cent) and Hispanic educators (59 per cent). While intention to leave teaching does not necessarily translate into teacher resignations, this is not a figure that should be taken lightly. It suggests that in the United States, there is an urgency to address long-standing issues of teacher compensation and conditions of practice. 

Complete references are available from the author at [lisa.everitt@ata.ab.ca](mailto:lisa.everitt@ata.ab.ca).









# Myer Horowitz: Lifelong dedication to education

**Maggie Shane**

Archivist, ATA

**DR. MYER HOROWITZ WAS A** distinguished and much-loved teacher, academic and leader who always sought, in his own words, to “try to understand other people — what motivates them, what concerns them — to be as good a listener as possible and to be supportive.”

Horowitz’s contributions to Canadian K–12 and postsecondary education and pedagogy are varied and profound. His mark is indelible.

Born in Depression-era Montreal in 1932, Horowitz attended McGill University’s School for Teachers. He later earned a BA from Sir George Williams College (now Concordia University), an MEd from the University of Alberta (U of A), and a PhD from Stanford University before being named a full professor at McGill in 1965. In 1969, he was appointed chair of the U of A’s Department of Elementary Education. Over the next two decades, the U of A benefitted from Horowitz’s profound commitment to education, students and the university community — he served as dean of education, vice-president (academic) and, finally, as president, ending his tenure in 1989.


While he spent much of his career in postsecondary education, during his early years in Montreal classrooms, Horowitz emerged as a fierce advocate for early childhood education. His advocacy and work in early childhood education became the hallmark of his professional life and, importantly, continued to be his focus even into retirement. In 1989, upon vacating the post of U of A president, Horowitz

fought against the Alberta government’s cutbacks to kindergarten education.

Horowitz received many accolades. A grateful nation bestowed the Order of Canada in 1990. Six honorary doctorates celebrated Horowitz’s scholarship. In 2012, Horowitz was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. The University of Victoria established a scholarship in his name, and the U of A’s Myer Horowitz Theatre honours his service to that institution.

His contributions were also recognized by the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, the Canadian College of Teachers and the Alberta Teachers’ Association, which conveyed its highest honour of honorary membership in 1980.

A teacher first, Horowitz was proud of the accomplishments of his students, from kindergarten to postsecondary, and felt an obligation to create for them a brighter future. He said in 2012, “I have felt that it is also important that, beyond our work in our classrooms and schools, we be advocates for positive change.”

In his words and actions, Horowitz exemplified a lifelong dedication to the transformative power of education. 

► **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).

## Myer Horowitz

ATA Honorary Member

Officer of the  
Order of Canada

Fellow of the Canadian  
College of Teachers

Founding member and past  
advisory board chair of the  
University of Victoria’s Centre  
for Youth and Society

ILLUSTRATION BY YUET CHAN





## Music and wellness

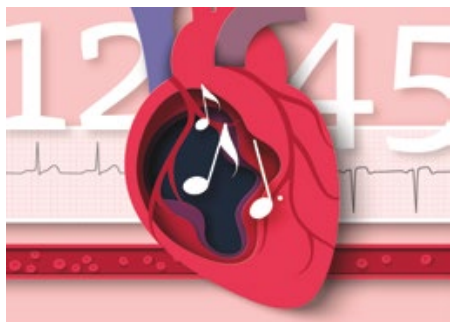
How can you reap the benefits?

**Amanda Clark**

Music Representative,  
Fine Arts Council, ATA

**AS A MUSIC TEACHER**, I have seen the benefits of music first-hand. There's a wealth of research that shows the physical, psychological and social/emotional benefits of music ([choralcanada.org/en/curated-research](http://choralcanada.org/en/curated-research)).

Here are some ways of including music in your classroom and enjoying some of those benefits too.



## Physical benefits

Singing regulates our blood pressure; increases production of immunoglobulin A, an antibody that is essential to fighting disease; improves lung and respiratory function; and helps rehabilitate communication. Playing instruments helps to develop fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination and boosts cardio. Here are some classroom-ready strategies:

- Find songs that have relevance to the topic you are teaching and learn how to sing along and sing together as a class. (You don't have to be the world's best singer to enjoy this; have fun.)
- Put math facts or other concepts to a beat. Use an online drum kit (drumbit .app) to create a beat or tap on your body.
- Try movement programs like DrumFIT (drumfit.com).
- Show YouTube movement videos that incorporate music.



## Psychological benefits

Music connects the regions of the brain associated with memory, thinking, movement, attention, language and emotion. Therefore, music can help us remember facts and information better; it can improve our attention for learning and can help us regulate our emotions. Music can relieve pain and stress and boost mood.

IMAGES ISTOCK ADAPTED

- Play music while working on tasks — it may help with concentration.
- If a student experiences trouble regulating emotion, find out their favourite song and have it on standby.
- For students who are working on language or communication, have them learn and listen to music to help build vocabulary and speech sounds.



## Social/emotional benefits

Music helps us build self-confidence, self and group identity, and community. Music can also increase social skills and quality of life.

- Encourage your students to share their talents with the school.
- Encourage students from other cultures to share their music.
- Sing together as a class. It will increase behaviours such as sharing, helping and cooperating.

I created a slide presentation with songs and resources for the elementary classroom generalist. It has links to music and activities that correspond to different subjects and more concrete ideas of how to include music in the classroom. Feel free to make a copy and explore the resources. Happy music making! <sup>ATA</sup>

### AMANDA'S MUSIC RESOURCES FOR THE CLASSROOM TEACHER



To access Amanda's presentation, scan the QR code with your phone, or visit <https://bit.ly/MusicResourcesForTheClassroom> online.

- ▶ [Amanda Clark can be reached at music@fineartsata.ca.](mailto:music@fineartsata.ca)

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCE



### Makerspace Sound and Music Projects for All Ages

Mary L. Glendening and Isaac W. Glendening

A professional audio engineer and a dedicated maker-librarian have teamed up to bring musical DIY instructions to add sound and rhythm to your next maker project. Follow illustrated, step-by-step instructions, and explore different ways to incorporate audio programs, apps and robotics in your physical and digital inventions.

*Available through the ATA library*

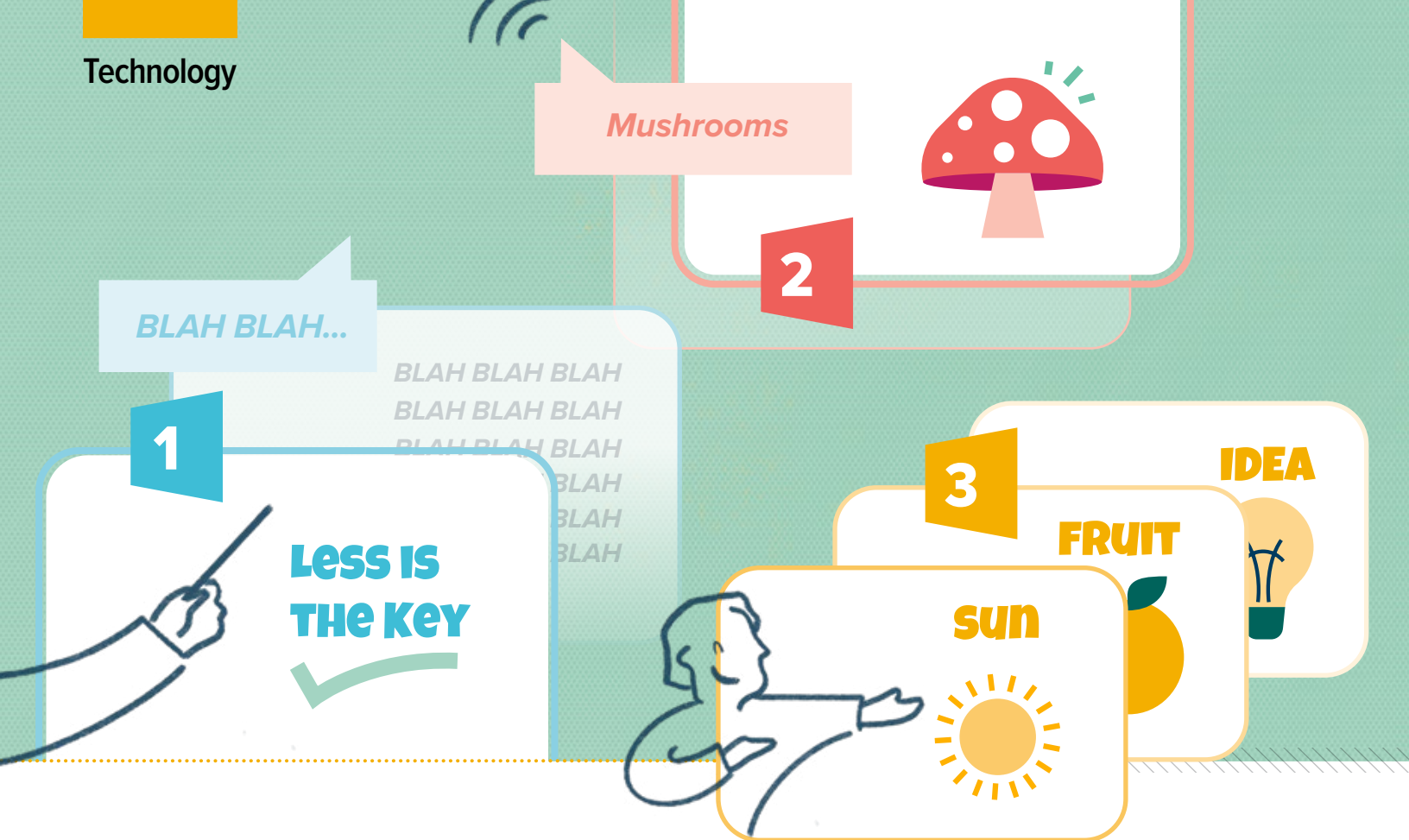
## Did you know ...

The Fine Arts Council (FAC) of the Alberta Teachers' Association embraces music, art, drama and dance without obscuring their uniqueness.

### The FAC

- is a communication link for teachers with their fine arts colleagues,
- supports teachers through inservice and mentorship.

For more information, visit <https://fac.teachers.ab.ca>.



# Designing effective teaching slides

Less is more; consistency is key

**Danny Maas**

Executive Staff Officer, ATA

**TEACHERS OFTEN CREATE** slides for their lessons, but did you know that how you design and teach with those slides can have a major impact on how well students learn? Here are some tips for designing slides based on learning principles from cognitive science.

## 1 LIMIT THE AMOUNT OF TEXT

When learners see text-heavy slides and try to listen to the teacher speaking those slides, it's like trying to listen to two people speaking at once, which is impossible. Learners end up splitting their attention between the two tasks, and learning is much less efficient. Even if the words on the slides are the same words the teacher is speaking to, learners can read them much faster than the teacher can say them, and the attention-switching remains. If you are speaking to the slides during your lesson, use a maximum of one key word or short phrase.

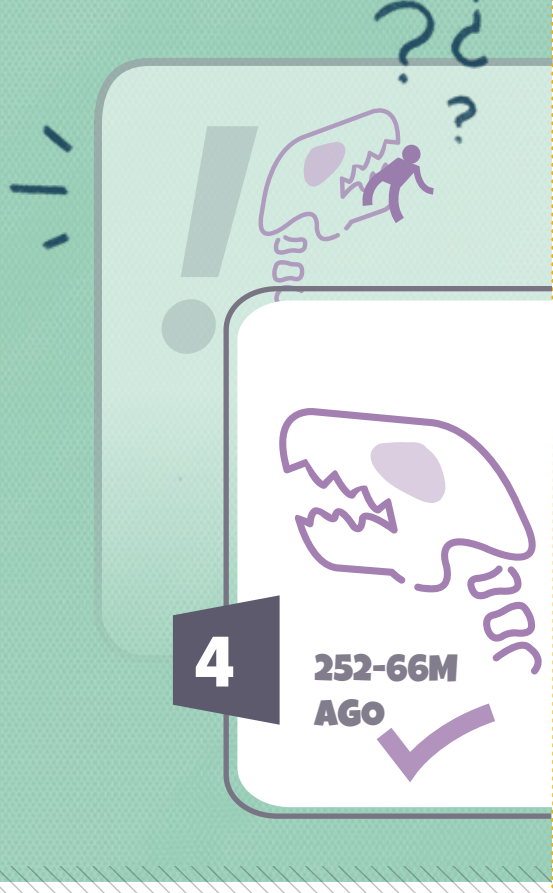
## 2 ADD IMAGES

While the brain can process and encode only one audio track at one time (as we saw with tip No. 1), it can encode a visual track at the same time as an audio track, and the learning therefore becomes much more powerful. This is called dual coding, and the research shows that learners understand and retain far more when visuals accompany words. Be aware of copyright. Use websites that offer free high-quality stock images, such as [unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com).

### TWO CAVEATS:

- » The image should complement what is being said or read.
- » If a complex chart or diagram is needed, highlight one portion at a time to guide attention.






3

### USE A CONSISTENT DESIGN

Organizing digital learning materials in a consistent fashion helps the learner focus on the teaching and be less distracted by the way material is spatially arranged. Consider having the key word or phrase as well as your visual in a consistent location to help students focus on the idea. From time to time, if there happens to be one key idea you really want to spark students' attention, this is the place to change up that slide organization, then return to the standard organization.

4

### AVOID DISTRACTIONS

With a plethora of funny memes, animated GIFs or videos readily available, it can become tempting to insert these into teaching slides in an effort to keep students' attention. However, this may work too well, and it may be those distractions that students remember. As Dr. Jared Cooney Horvath states in *Stop Talking, Start Influencing* (available at the ATA library), we remember what we pay attention to. 

# Teachers and TikTok

## CAUTION THE WATCHWORD WHEN CONSIDERING SOCIAL MEDIA

### Dave Matson

Executive Staff Officer, ATA

The social media app TikTok has risen meteorically in popularity in recent years, particularly among teens. The app allows users to create short videos and share them broadly to their friends and the general public. Some teachers have begun using, or thought about using, TikTok as an instructional tool in their classrooms or even for personal reasons. No doubt, using a vehicle already popular with students could be an effective tool to help create and maintain student engagement, but some concerns about TikTok have surfaced that might make teachers think twice.

The wave to ban TikTok is upon us, with governments across the world banning its use by government employees on government-issued devices. Some jurisdictions doing so include the European Union, the United States federal government and, closer to home, the Canadian federal government, the Alberta provincial government and even the City of Calgary.


School divisions in Canada are not immune to these bans. Ontario's provincial government is currently considering banning TikTok from devices issued by school divisions and blocking access to it on their networks. The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board has instituted such a ban without a requirement from the Ontario provincial government to do so.

These bans stem from security and privacy concerns related to the information that is collected from users of the app. Government agencies have warned

that ByteDance, the Chinese technology company that owns TikTok, could be compelled under Chinese law to give data about its users to the Chinese government.

ATA Teacher Employment Services (TES) urges teachers to be cautious when using any social media app, whether it is on an employer-issued device or their own personal device. Read the permissions that identify the information you are allowing the company to collect about you to use the app, and determine your comfort level with sharing that information with the company.

It is also important for teachers to carefully consider other factors when using technology as an instructional tool. Read your employer's acceptable use of technology policy. Is the technology compliant with that policy? If you will be collecting the audio or video image of a student, how will that information be collected, used and disclosed? Will it comply with privacy legislation and your employer's privacy policies? If a social media account is used for creating and sharing videos with students, is the account monetized? If so, have you considered who owns the intellectual property?

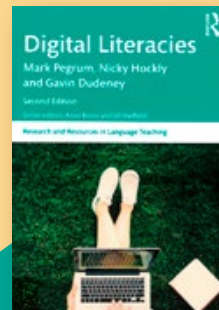
On social media, it's tempting to use less formal language than you otherwise would in a professional setting such as your classroom. Keep in mind your obligations to the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers and Teacher Leaders if you choose to use these tools. 

Teacher Employment Services (TES) is here to help you navigate these waters. Please contact us for advice for these or other questions you might have.

### ► Digital Literacies: Research and Resources in Language Teaching

Mark Pegrum, Nicky Hockly and Gavin Dudeney

*Available through the ATA library.*





ISTOCK ADAPTED

## Unpacking the acronym

The rich meaning of 2SLGBTQIA+

**Andrea Berg**

Executive Staff Officer, ATA

**LANGUAGE HOLDS POWER.** It can give visibility to historically marginalized populations and can both shape and reflect societal understanding of these groups. That is why understanding the terms we use, and their evolution, is so important.

One term that holds power within each letter and symbol, within each nuanced shift, is 2SLGBTQIA+.

### GAY

The word “gay” emerged as a covert term in the 1900s and became more popular in the 1950s and 60s. Gay became a term that those of the Stonewall generation preferred as they were less likely than their predecessors to see being gay as

shameful. Today the term describes someone who is physically, emotionally or romantically attracted to people of the same gender, or — when used as an umbrella term — someone with a sexual orientation other than heterosexual.

### LESBIAN

The term “lesbian” comes from the Greek island of Lesbos, home to the poet Sappho, whose writing describes attraction between females. In the 1970s, the term was reclaimed in the public sphere as women used it to differentiate themselves from gay men. In the 1980s, the L was positioned at the beginning of the acronym to honour lesbians for their support of gay men during the AIDS epidemic.

## BISEXUAL

In the 1800s, the term “bisexual” was used to describe humans with both male and female reproductive organs. Over time, bisexual came to refer to an individual who is attracted to both males and females. This definition is limiting, however, as it defines attraction as restricted to the gender binary — those who identify as exclusively male or female. Bisexual has since evolved to recognize attraction to a multitude of genders.

## TRANSGENDER

In the late 1990s, the “T” was added to the acronym as part of a shift to include gender identity in a community that was previously focused only on sexual orientation. The term “transgender” describes a person whose gender identity or expression is different than their sex assigned at birth. Trans people may or may not undergo gender affirming medical procedures. Their identity does not depend on such procedures.

## QUEER OR QUESTIONING

The letter “Q” stands for queer or questioning. Early uses of the word referenced something “not normal,” something “peculiar.” It later became a derogatory term to describe those in the community, but in the early 1990s, some members of the community started to reclaim the word. Some might prefer it as an umbrella term to include any non-cisgender, non-heterosexual identity. While some use this term commonly and do not view it as derogatory, others prefer to avoid its use.

## 2S TWO-SPIRIT

From time immemorial, Indigenous communities have had a variety of terms to recognize multiple genders. Two-spirit, a translation of the Anishinaabemowin term *niizh manidowag*, refers to a person who embodies both a masculine and feminine spirit. Two-spirit is not interchangeable with other LGBT terms, as it is a ceremonial term for a sacred role in the community. “2S” started being

The acronym will continue to evolve as people’s lived experiences of gender and sexuality shift.

added to the LGBT acronym more than a decade ago, with “2” sometimes used rather than “2S.” There has been a recent shift to include “2S” at the beginning of the acronym to honour that two-spirit identities predate the colonial terms.


## INTERSEX, ASEXUAL/ AROMANTIC AND +

Some forms of the acronym include “I” for intersex and “A” for asexual, aromantic or ally. Some versions include + to capture the acronym’s expanding inclusiveness and to actively acknowledge that many more identities exist than are currently included.

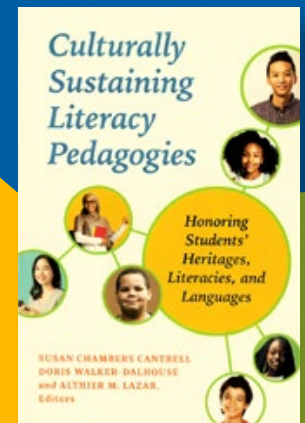
## EVOLVING LANGUAGE

Debate is ongoing about which letters should be included and in which position within the acronym. No matter how many letters are added, achieving full inclusivity is difficult.

At this time, LGBTQ seems to be the commonly used acronym, with the assumption that Q can encompass sexual and gender minorities of all types. At the same time, the acronym will continue to evolve as people’s lived experiences of gender and sexuality shift. In formal educational writing, 2SLGBTQIA+ is currently best practice.

Keeping up with changes in language can be challenging. The point is not to identify some versions of the acronym as wrong or right, but, rather, to encourage critical thinking around the language we use, the power that it carries and how it can represent social change. 

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



### Culturally Sustaining Literacy Pedagogies: Honoring Students’ Heritages, Literacies, and Languages

Susan Chambers Cantrell

Available through the ATA library.

## Continuing your learning journey

### Une histoire commune, un avenir à partager—initiation aux traités

Les participants engageront un dialogue et réfléchiront à leur perfectionnement professionnel en vue d’acquérir les compétences nécessaires en matière d’éducation relative aux traités.

### Addressing Diverse Learning Needs in Classrooms

This workshop provides an opportunity to become more knowledgeable about how to identify, plan for and respond to students with mild/moderate learning disabilities.

► [E-mail pdworkshops@ata.ab.ca](mailto:pdworkshops@ata.ab.ca) for information on ATA workshops offered.



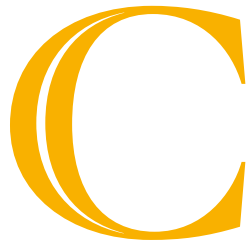
# The Great

# OVERWHELM

**Celeste**

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Grade 1/2 Teacher



Coming up to the green light, I pondered the concrete sound barrier across the street. How far away is it? How fast would I be going if I were to gun the engine and crash right into it? Would I burst through or stop dead? Hospital or morgue?

A good maiming wouldn't be so bad, would it? A few days' quiet in the hospital – complete with green Jell-O and tiny tinfoil-lid juices – sounded really appealing. Between the excessive and never-ending demands at work, supporting my chronically ill mother who lived with me, and being a single mom to a neuro-divergent daughter with serious mental health issues, I was so overloaded. I couldn't imagine tying one more knot in my fraying rope.

The appeal of that lovely grey wall was almost too great to resist, but resist it I did. I turned left as I was supposed to, looking wistfully into my rearview mirror. I turned the music up louder as I made the first of two right turns to get to my school, hoping to drown out the awful, suicidal thoughts invading my day like a disease. Gathering up my bags from the car, I chastised myself for entertaining such dark thoughts on the way to helping “shape young minds.” How could I be trusted to do a good job depositing positivity into the small children I was charged to teach when, unbidden, terribly dark thoughts crept so easily into my own head? I was weak, silly, unfit.

I imagined telling on myself to a trusted colleague, but only a sardonic chuckle escaped my lips. Who could I trust with such things? And when I imagined what I would say, it sounded only like complaining. Again. Life had not dealt me an easy hand. I had shared with those who leant an ear, venting now and then and perhaps too much. I imagined I remembered eyes glazing over and feelings being packed away, but was that the case, or was I only too much in my own head about it?

During the hour before my class arrived, a colleague appeared at my door. She was

wearing her “I-can't-do-this-anymore-please-help!” face, and so I listened. For 15 minutes we shared our woes, and I felt a parting of the shadowy curtains that had surrounded me. For a moment, I felt the benefit of sharing and listening, but as she left, those heavy curtains closed once more, and my brief relief evaporated.

I dug for a happy mask. Could I wear it all day? It appears so. No one noticed my neurosis, and, of course, this was to be expected since I rarely saw adults during teaching hours. I congratulated myself on hiding. My burden was not and should never be passed on. But my issues waited for me in the car at the end of the day.

A year-long search provided me with a counsellor that I still see to this day. I was Cinderella missing a shoe and she fit me just like she'd been cobbled for my high arches and grand, supportive toes. She listens with empathy, speaks to me as though I were a colleague, honours the mental health knowledge I have gained over the years and adds to it with compassion. Our time together has built and continues to build on the tools I access: daily prayer and meditation, some kind of exercise and lots of grace for myself.

My thinking routines have undergone an overhaul that has been no small feat. Sitting with my counsellor is only part of the work. I have learned how to apply the things she teaches me, like talking to myself as though I am my own best friend rather than my worst critic, or taking that deep breath as I recall or read affirmations that stave off suicidal ideation. Certain thoughts still cling like static-filled nylons in the dryer, but I have a better toolkit from which to draw my help. And, in the meantime, I have learned to accept and appreciate the work that I do rather than focusing on the things I have to leave undone due to systemic shortcomings.

The “Great Overwhelm,” as I like to call those dark years, is in my rearview mirror these days, and I have redeveloped my thinking about my work, put in place stronger boundaries, and learned that “no” is not just a healthy answer, but

*an essential one.* 



# Rediscovered



## David

Learning Leader

I planted a rose bush in my garden that spring, the second of the pandemic, the one where I finally came to my breaking point. I chose the sunniest spot in my whole yard, right against a wall near the walk. Gardening had always brought me peace, but as I dug the ground and set the little bush in its place, I felt a sigh welling up from deep within. I sat down in the grass and found myself, at 45 years old, in the backyard alone, sobbing uncontrollably.

Five years earlier, I had joyfully started a new position opening a new high school. It was difficult work, but one of the proudest chapters of my 21-year career. We had early and late meetings with a full day of teaching in between, while inventing everything and piloting assessment and pedagogical models. At the same time, I was earning my master's degree.

Outside of school, I was devoted to supporting my own three teenagers as a single dad. I volunteered in the community, drove to marching band, dance and basketball as we navigated part-time jobs and their transition from high school to university. When friends said "you shouldn't be sad," I ignored the warning signs and used busyness to push down my feelings.

Compassion fatigue was how I first noticed myself deteriorating inside. It became difficult to regulate my emotions while working with students. I would escalate very quickly and lost my characteristic sense of humour. My room had always been open for kids outside class time, but I started closing my door. I turned out the lights and closed my eyes in the middle of the day. I became hypersensitive to noise, and student banter grated on my nerves.

Externally, I kept up appearances. I coached cross-country running, led professional development, looked after guest teachers, guided my department through changes in assessment paradigms and remained a sounding board for colleagues. I did everything I believed was expected of lead teachers.

My assistant principal began to notice changes. She came for chats more frequently and I began to divulge that I wasn't happy. With her encouragement, I got in touch with Homewood Health and began to see a psychologist. He was wonderful. Gradually he revealed to me that I was experiencing burnout and the condition's impact on individuals and relationships.

Burnout explained all of my symptoms, including headaches, poor sleep, fatigue, concentration issues, feelings of worthlessness, loss of interest in the things I once enjoyed, and emotional vulnerability, such as what I experienced while sobbing on the lawn. I realized that the depression that had plagued me for years and the need to put on a charade just to get through the day were all symptoms of this bigger issue.



# Journaling


I sat down in the grass and found myself, at 45 years old, in the backyard alone, sobbing uncontrollably.

I started along a journey to healing. I needed first to change my work environment. I moved schools and welcomed a different set of leadership challenges. The hardest part of dealing with a crisis of mental health was that it was so isolating, and I felt like the only one who wasn't able to cope, so I made efforts to say yes when friends asked to do things instead of finding excuses and slowly began to tell them what was happening with me.

My best friend, who is a nutritionist and trainer, suggested changing my diet, which made a tremendous difference. She became my closest confidant and was able to let me be honest about my feelings. She helped me to see the links between physical and mental fitness. She also didn't let me waste time on self-pity, which was refreshing and necessary. She encouraged me to travel and write and read and helped me find the pieces of myself that I had slowly lost as my candle burned at both ends. I rediscovered

running and cycling, which I had formerly enjoyed but let slide. I lost weight and began to feel like myself again for the first time in a long while.

Recovery from burnout takes daily work. Journaling is part of my morning and evening routine; it helps me immensely to notice what is happening inside and to remind me to tell others what I am experiencing so I'm not struggling alone. Devoting time to healing allowed me to rediscover my passion for teaching, give my true self to my students and re-embrace their energy. There are still hard days, especially during winter. But I am back at peace in my garden, a little further along the path, and this past summer my rose bush was covered with blooms.

Teachers face incredible pressure and we want to do so much to help others to grow. I learned the importance of letting myself be helped so that I could once again give to those who need me. 

## Editor's note

*This feature contains some very frank, personal stories that teachers have written about their experiences with mental illness*, including suicidal ideation, PTSD, anxiety, depression and burnout. All the contributors were willing to have their full names attached to their stories to help normalize conversations about mental health and reduce the stigma often associated with mental illness.

However, the *ATA Magazine's* editorial team chose to include only contributors' first names and their general roles. This decision came after much debate and with the understanding that no single approach is perfect.

Mental health is a sensitive topic, and those who share their journey should only be praised, but being open about mental health may expose a teacher to risks to their employment prospects or targeting on social media. For this reason, we've decided to preserve the privacy of these teachers.

By focusing on their experiences and insights, we hope to contribute to a more empathetic and understanding approach to mental health, both within the profession and broader society.





# How's It Going?

**Joshua**

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CTS Learning Leader

**I**'m sitting in my vehicle crying on speakerphone in a parking lot. My former partner teacher and mentor remains silent at the end of the line. A part of me is mortified with embarrassment and screaming at me to pull it together, but the release is so unexpected and powerful that I have no hope of reining it in. I can't imagine what Michael is thinking on the other end of the call. Our relationship is friendly, but not really crying-in-front-of-each-other friendly. After all, we're a couple of Albertan middle-aged, male, construction teachers. The trigger for my emotional outburst: Michael's simple question, "So, how's it going?"



# I'd begun to feel a sense of *dread* while awaiting the bell))) announcing the end of each break.

I had just finished a workday teaching construction, technical theatre and cabinetmaking in an urban high school. The day was typical. I'd catch myself unconsciously pausing and holding my breath as I observed each group of students cheerfully working, relaxing only when I was satisfied they were following our safety protocols correctly. At the buzz of the lunch bell, I headed upstairs to the shop to print off safety tests, check emails, plan tool demos and drink as much coffee as needed to keep me standing through my afternoon classes. When a colleague checked in, I gestured at the messy shop and piles of paperwork to mark and replied, "living the dream," and we laughed resignedly at the enormity of the work.

I was living my dream, but the complexity of modern trades education was taking an invisible (to me) toll on my health. Each buzz of the bell brought a fresh opportunity to share my love of carpentry, art and design, but each bell also brought fresh opportunities for student and staff injury, equipment failures, changes to support staff, new products to assess, new projects to plan and new materials to purchase.

I had noticed that I'd begun to feel a sense of dread while awaiting the bell announcing the end of each break, and I'd begun to wear hearing protection even when only doing paperwork. I had assumed this was because the bell sounded so loudly and abruptly in my

shop, but in retrospect, I can see that I was desperate for quiet and dreading the return to chaos.

At any rate, by the end of this particular school day, the sunset glowed in the distance as I lowered and locked the overhead doors to close up for the weekend, shrouding myself and the shop in silence. I felt relief that I no longer needed to be continually evaluating every sound in a busy shop for signs of danger.

I felt the comfort of knowing no one had been hurt. I felt like I had things under control, and I was proud of making it through another week. The familiar knot of anxiety in the pit of my stomach had untied itself and wouldn't begin to tangle again until Sunday night, when I would mentally agonize over my preparation for the next week. I got into my vehicle and headed for home, which is when I received Michael's call and pulled into a parking lot to pick up.

As I write this story, it occurs to me that I was so isolated in my stress that I didn't even allow myself to acknowledge it as stress. When I was asked "So, how's it going" by someone who I knew would understand, the façade I had been maintaining crumbled instantly, and everything that had built up over my first few months just poured out: assessments, attendance, IPPs, safety concerns, equipment maintenance, material orders, shop budgeting, project plans, deciphering outcomes and parent contacts. Michael just listened.

## Myths about mental illness

**MYTH.** *If I seek help for a mental health issue, others might think I'm a wimp or even crazy.*

**REALITY.** *Seeking appropriate help is a sign of strength, not weakness. No one should delay getting treatment for a mental health problem that is not getting better, just as one would not wait to take care of a medical condition that needed treatment. The wisest, most courageous way to cope is to seek help, especially since early treatment can produce more positive results.*

Information compiled from *Compassionate Classrooms*, published jointly by the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Canadian Mental Health Association. This resource is available from the ATA.



As the wave of emotion subsided, I was able to regain my composure.

**“Michael, I don’t know what I’m doing,”** I said.

“Everybody feels like that. You’re doing a good job,” he said.

**“I’m worried that somebody is going to get hurt,”** I said.


“Well, they still have all their fingers now, don’t they?”

**“As far as I know,”** I laughed.

After my discussion with Michael, I felt confident enough to open up and begin revealing aspects of my struggle to my colleagues. It turned out that some of them were also looking for solutions to support high enrollment in our heavy shop offerings. Working together, we identified an opportunity for a shared support: an instructional support worker (ISW) stationed in one of our computer labs, supporting up to ten students from each heavy shop with the computer-based, theory components of our courses. Our students were now able to complete their necessary theory work in a quiet and supported environment, and our in-shop student numbers were effectively reduced by up to 30 per cent, allowing for targeted instruction and decreasing the scope of supervision.

It’s difficult to ask for help. Teachers feel an enormous burden of responsibility to their students, and many feel, as I did, that requesting support would undermine confidence in their capability as a teacher. Even now it’s difficult for me to make my practice vulnerable to others. But once I do, I find there are so many different ways colleagues can help: maybe by listening and commiserating to start, but also by suggesting or providing supports, equipment or techniques I might not have thought of on my own.

Let’s keep on being there to listen, share strategies and offer a compliment. Even if you don’t know quite how to help, you could start by asking,

*“So, how’s it going?”* 

# A person cannot have **GOOD HEALTH** without good **MENTAL HEALTH**



## Mental health problems

Mental health problems is a phrase used to describe struggles that people commonly experience. When people are stressed, confused or upset, they often feel overwhelmed and incapable of coping.

Such feelings most often pass and do not require medical treatment, but they have a real impact on a person’s ability to thrive and enjoy life. Therefore, those experiencing mental health problems would benefit from help, support and understanding, even in the short term.



## Mental illness

Mental illnesses are conditions that can be diagnosed, such as schizophrenia, depression, bipolar condition, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa. These conditions usually require medical treatment.



## Symptoms of mental illness

Symptoms vary with each person and type of mental illness, but the following are some of the common symptoms to watch for:

1. **Sudden withdrawal** from friends and family
2. **Confused thoughts**, delusions and/or hallucinations
3. **Extreme fears or anxiety** that seem out of proportion to circumstances or events
4. **Lack of motivation** for a prolonged period of time (longer than two weeks)
5. **Persistent feelings of helplessness** or hopelessness
6. **Loss of interest** in activities previously enjoyed
7. **Extreme mood swings** between depression and mania, sometimes with overly reckless behaviour
8. **Repeated, unusual actions** such as hand washing or checking of lights
9. **Unexplained physical symptoms** such as nausea, trembling, fatigue or headaches
10. **Difficulty concentrating**, maintaining attention and/or sudden irritability
11. **Disruption to usual sleep** patterns
12. **Serious disturbance in eating** patterns accompanied by a preoccupation with body image
13. **Talk or thoughts of suicide**



# UNIT

**Leonard**

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Resource Teacher

# 45



Walking along the winding, empty hospital corridor at 2 a.m., I've resigned myself to an alarming realization: I am about to be admitted to the *psych ward.*

Twelve hours ago, seeing how pale and overwhelmed I had become, my wife asked me, "Leonard, don't you think it's time?" I knew exactly what she meant. We drove wordlessly to the hospital.

The locked doors to Unit 45 are buzzed open. I kiss my wife goodbye, take a deep breath and enter. It is my choice to be here, and I hate it. For four months, I've been able to do my job, but nothing more. As each day ended, I would go home, crawl into bed and fall into despair. I found myself helpless to prevent the dark thoughts revolving endlessly in my head, and feared I would harm myself.

At the nurses' station, as the unit door locks behind me, I am instructed to turn over my phone and wallet. I momentarily feel like a prisoner. "What am I doing here?" I ask myself in a panic.

I am escorted to a room right across from the station, where I plonk myself on a bed with white, tightly tucked cotton sheets. That night, I toss in bed, stirred by the fluorescent lights and busy noises outside my door.

A week ago I did something even scarier than hospitalization: I chose to disclose to a group of family, close friends and others about my need for admission. The choice to disclose is a complicated one and is not appropriate for all people and situations. My health history had been a tightly guarded secret and a source of shame to me, but I felt it was important for these people to understand my situation and plan for my absence. It was a tense conversation that felt like a confession, and to their credit, they responded kindly and constructively.

The ward is calm, peaceful even. To my relief, I am permitted to leave the ward for up to an hour at a time. Between my meetings with the mental health staff, I spend time reading, journaling, and taking walks around and outside the hospital. It provides me comfort to bond with other patients in the ward.

It feels strange for me to be a patient receiving mental health care, as I so frequently am the one dispensing such service for others. It is humbling but instructive to experience this power dynamic in reverse. I discover that there is grace to receiving help from others: it builds goodwill and trust.

Dr. T, the head psychiatrist, informs me that I cannot remain long on the ward, as beds are needed

for others in more severe distress. I am afraid to leave the quiet ward where I have briefly managed to put my life on hold. I wonder, "What's going to happen when I return to 'real world'?" Regardless, after a week I am discharged, and assigned to a month-long outpatient program.

As I feared, my suicidal ideation returns. Fortunately, the outpatient program is now there to support me.

Each day, for four weeks, I join a group of 20 program participants. The program teaches us ways to sit with painful emotions, to assert ourselves constructively, to prevent mental health spirals and to uncover joy. I meet daily with a therapist, Mylene, who interrupts my rambling monologues in order to redirect attention to my underlying emotions and how I process them. Slowly, slowly, as I explore these new pathways, I find myself gaining strength and resilience to contend with the challenges I face.

Maybe, just maybe, I think I am going to *come out okay.* ATA

## Myths about mental illness

**MYTH:**

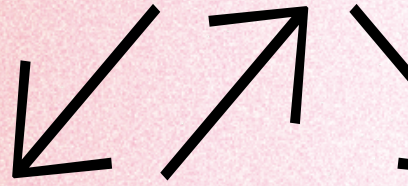
*Mental illness is a single, rare disorder.*

**REALITY:**

***Mental illness is not a single disease but a broad classification that contains many disorders. Anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, personality disorders, eating disorders and attention deficit disorders are life altering for millions of Canadians.***

Information compiled from *Compassionate Classrooms*, published jointly by the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Canadian Mental Health Association. This resource is available from the ATA.





# A New Perspective on BRAVERY

## Jennifer

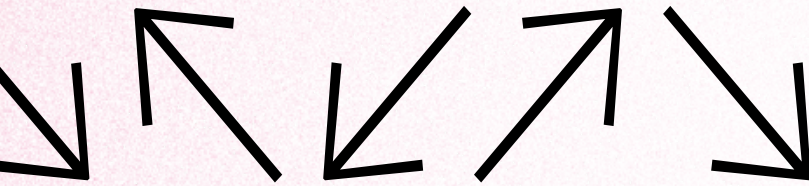
Assistant Principal

I had a year not so long ago that was both the best and the worst of my life. It was the best because I married the love of my life. It was the worst because we barely made it out alive. My career could not have been better; it was my second year as a single administrator of a little elementary school in Calgary. It wasn't easy, but it was fulfilling.

One spring morning at 5 a.m., our neighbour went onto his balcony to have a cigarette. He extinguished it in a planter and set our whole condo building on fire. We woke to the sound of a firefighter knocking down our door. We grabbed our puppy, a phone and some shoes and crawled out through the smoke and flames. We got out just in time.

I took very little time off work despite trying to rebuild my life. My family found temporary housing, and we did our best to move forward. I managed to end the school year with a semblance of normalcy. It wasn't until the summer that I really started struggling. I didn't realize it at the time, but post-traumatic stress had laid its grip on me.






## Career choices don't always follow a linear path. It takes personal bravery to make momentous decisions.

My third year as principal was rocky. I lacked resilience and fortitude. I would try to do something, but I couldn't focus. Nothing came easily to me; I stressed about everything. The challenges of staffing, budgets, schedules and school development planning left me feeling overwhelmed. I would spend 12 hours at work and feel like I had accomplished very little. I struggled to sleep because I worried about every email and issue. "What if" scenarios replayed in my mind, and I assumed the worst would happen in every situation. I needed help, but didn't know where to turn. I had never felt more alone.

One day, I just couldn't turn off the tears. I knew in that moment that I needed help, and I booked an appointment to see a therapist. I was diagnosed with PTSD, anxiety and depression. Understanding what was wrong gave me some relief, but I felt trapped in a downward spiral of stress. I carried the weight of a whole school on my shoulders; I had no assistant principal or learning leaders. I felt like I was the captain of a sinking ship and I just wanted to jump overboard.

I did a lot of soul searching and decided that I needed to make my health and well-being top priorities. An assistant principal posting captured my interest and, for the first time in many months, I was excited by a possibility. I interviewed for the job while battling pneumonia — my poor mental health had taken a physical toll — but I was offered the job and accepted. It was the best decision I could have made. To me, it wasn't a step backwards in my career but rather a hopeful step forward in my life.

Sometimes I worry about my future. Should I go back to being a principal? If I do, how will I explain my career trajectory? Ultimately, I did what I needed to do. I'm proud of myself for taking my mental health seriously and responding to those red flags. I have no regrets and am hopeful that my school board will understand that career choices don't always follow a linear path. It takes personal bravery to make momentous decisions. It takes

personal bravery to heal. 

### Myths about mental illness

**MYTH:**

People with mental illness never get better.

**REALITY:**

With the right kind of help, people with mental illnesses often recover and go on to lead healthy, productive lives. While the illness may not go away, the symptoms associated with it can be controlled.

**MYTH:**

Mental illness is caused by a personal weakness.

**REALITY:**

A mental illness is not a character flaw. It is an illness that has nothing to do with being weak or lacking will-power. Although people with mental illnesses can play a big part in their own recovery, they did not choose to become ill, and they are not lazy because they cannot just "snap out of it."

**MYTH:**

People with mental illness are poor and/or less intelligent.

**REALITY:**

Many studies show that most people with a mental illness have average or above-average intelligence. Mental illness, like physical illness, can affect anyone regardless of intelligence, social class or income level.

Information compiled from *Compassionate Classrooms*, published jointly by the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Canadian Mental Health Association. This resource is available from the ATA.

# Young Teachers Are Modelling a



## Sinead

Diverse Learning  
Teacher

I often find myself thinking about the concept of our profession being a vocation. As a Catholic working for a Catholic board, I often hear the term vocation, that becoming a teacher was not something we chose because we enjoy working with children or love learning, but because it was a calling. When we think about putting ourselves first, the guilt can be paralysing. So we don't, or so I thought until recently.

In my role in school, I support teachers to program and plan for students with diverse learning needs, and I support new teachers. I often find myself supporting teachers with an aspect of the job we often dislike, the paperwork. Teachers have to contend with being an educator, a secretary, a counselor and many more roles, which we know can be draining mentally and physically. There are books on educator self-care and workshops, but often teacher exhaustion and mental health are concerns.

However, over the last few years I have seen some teachers deciding to put themselves first. Some are leaving the profession altogether, or they are choosing to work part time. These part-time teachers are not moms with kids at home but young teachers who are prioritising their own mental health over their income. A newly hired teacher said to me recently that she had had such a stressful year last year that she couldn't do it again. At first I was shocked, only teaching part time! But when she told me she needed to have a better balance in her life and give herself

time to recover — money wasn't a priority, her self-care was — I was impressed.

Too often we lose teachers within the first five years of the profession because it can be all-consuming, overwhelming and exhausting. We talk about self-care and staff wellness. Teacher wellness and mental health need to be priorities, not just in words but in actions too. I don't want to overuse the airplane oxygen mask analogy, but we do need to look after ourselves. <sup>ATA</sup>

→→→ Too often we lose teachers within the first five years of the profession because it can be all-consuming, overwhelming and *exhausting.*



# TIPS for teachers and leaders

## If I'm having mental health challenges, what information can/should I share with my employer?

Teachers have a right to keep their medical information confidential, including mental health challenges. The best approach is to talk to your medical professionals and call ATA Teacher Employment Services for assistance.

## What can my employer ask me?

An employer has a right to know reasons for absence, but not necessarily the details. An employer does not have the right to information regarding diagnosis, but to access entitlements under their collective agreement, employees may need to provide their employer with the symptoms or the functional limitations associated with the illness or injury that prevent the employee from completing their duties. In some cases, employees may need to communicate whether there is a treatment plan in place and if it is being followed.

The required disclosure of medical documentation to an employer generally increases as the time away from work increases, but excludes the disclosure of diagnosis. Call Teacher Employment Services for guidance on using the sick leave provisions of your collective agreement.

## What can/should I share with colleagues?

Personal medical information generally should not be shared with colleagues, including

the school leader. Schools foster collegial relationships, and often teachers feel comfortable sharing personal information with their colleagues. While it is desirable to have friends on staff, be cautious about oversharing.

## What can/should I share with students?

Teachers should not share personal health issues with their students. Employers may raise concerns if a teacher reveals too much personal information to students. Successful teachers build rapport but are not friends with their students.

## What should I do if I suspect that a colleague may be struggling with mental health issues?

- Don't be afraid to ask a colleague how they are doing.
- Respect their request for confidentiality and allow them to share only what they want.
- Let them know that you are there for them, and extend care and compassion.
- It may be helpful to ask how you can assist, and to encourage them to visit a medical professional, but do not take on the role of a counsellor to others.

## What should I do if a colleague is behaving in a way that I feel is inappropriate, but I suspect mental health issues are involved?

- Proceed with caution. Has a person's behaviour changed enough to raise concerns?
- Talk to your colleague about specific examples of what you are seeing. Advise them


of your concerns. Ask them if they would consider seeing a medical professional.

- Respect their privacy. If you are the school leader, let them know what support you can and will provide, and advise them what improvements in conduct or practice are required.
- Contact Teacher Employment Services for assistance if you are working with a colleague who may be in distress.

## Is there such a thing as a mental health leave for teachers?

No. Teachers access sick leave, not mental health leave. Mental health may require a sick leave in the same way that physical health may require a sick leave.

## As a school/district leader, what should I do if I suspect that a teacher I oversee needs help with mental health issues?

As a school leader, extend care and compassion as appropriate, but follow the teacher's lead. Don't pry. If a teacher's practice appears to be affected by a health issue, share your concern with the teacher and encourage them to contact a medical professional. Be careful not to advise a teacher to take a sick leave. A teacher's access to sick leave is dependent on the provision of medical documentation, as required in a collective agreement. 

## Types of help

The Canadian Mental Health Association advocates for all types of care that help people find optimal mental health. The treatments that a doctor prescribes could include one or more of the following:

- Medication
- Psychotherapy and/or counselling
- Alternative/complementary methods
- Community support services

Information compiled from *Compassionate Classrooms*, published jointly by the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Canadian Mental Health Association. This resource is available from the ATA.

## Resources

For a list of resources, including lesson plans, supports and phone numbers for teachers, staff and students, visit [www.canwetalk.ca](http://www.canwetalk.ca).

For any further questions, contact the ATA or the CMHA in your community.



## HELPLINES:

- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868
- Rural Distress Line: 1-800-232-7288
- Suicide Crisis Hotline: 1-800-448-3000
- Mental Health Helpline: 1-877-303-2642
- Addictions Helpline: 1-866-332-2322
- Health Link: 811



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# Extra curricular challenges

## Elementary teachers weigh in on the new Alberta curriculum

**Phil McRae**

Associate Coordinator, Research, ATA



**The new curriculum will leave huge gaps in students' learning in math. It has happened way too fast."**

—Elementary teacher, *Alberta Curriculum Implementation Research Study*

**IMPLEMENTING ANY NEW CURRICULUM** is a complex undertaking that requires very careful consideration to ensure that new programs of study have the best chance of success when they are put into practice in diverse school and classroom contexts. Because of our long history with curriculum implementation in Alberta, we know how this can be done successfully.

Conditions for success include adequate time to understand the new curriculum; teacher collaboration in building or selecting provincial resources; relevant and focused professional inservicing far in advance of mandatory implementation; comprehensive and open communication strategies for teachers, school leaders and parents during the rollout; and a clear focus on equity as the programs of study come alive across small-to-large Alberta school divisions in both rural and urban settings.

However, a large 2023 Alberta Teachers' Association research study has revealed that careful consideration was not given to these essential conditions, nor has the new K–6 curriculum been well resourced or supported.

To fully understand how well the new Alberta K–6 curriculum was being implemented in its first year (2022/23) and to gauge the level of satisfaction with the three new programs of study, the Association randomly sampled 1,000 elementary teachers for their feedback between February 10 and March 6, 2023.

### LEVELS OF SATISFACTION

Low levels of satisfaction were expressed with the new curriculum for K–3 math, K–6 physical education and wellness, and K–3 English language arts and literature. Only 37 per cent of respondents feel the language arts and literature curriculum is satisfactory. The satisfaction rating drops to 30 per cent for the physical education and wellness curriculum. Most concerning, only 26 per cent of K–3 teachers are satisfied with the math curriculum. As one Alberta elementary school leader stated, "It is grossly developmentally inappropriate."



*Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.*

~John Dewey




## IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT AND RESOURCING

The study also revealed that two of three elementary teachers felt they did not have the necessary curriculum inservicing and planning time required to successfully implement the new K–6 curriculum by September 2022. While that slowly improved over the year, with some school divisions picking up the pace of support mid-year, teachers did not have adequate supports when they walked into the classroom with a new mandatory curriculum in place.

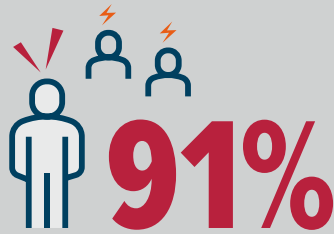
Resources were also lacking. Eight of 10 Alberta teachers report not receiving the necessary materials to successfully roll out the sweeping curriculum changes imposed last year. As one elementary teacher shared, “There should have been guaranteed resources to carry out the new curriculum. Everything I am using I have bought with my own money.” In fact, 30 per cent of Alberta K–6 teachers spent between \$100 and \$300 out of pocket on resources, with another 18 per cent spending between \$300 and \$600. Imagine a doctor or nurse buying essential medical supplies so they can continue with their professional practice.

## RISE IN LITERACY AND NUMERACY TESTING

Over 90 per cent of respondents expressed high levels of concern with the rapid increase in literacy and numeracy testing from both government and school boards. As one elementary teacher stated when describing the complexity of their classroom, “Severe behaviours, not enough supports for students, large class sizes with students achieving well below grade level, and time-consuming government testing are all interfering with student learning and the new curriculum implementation.”

The Association’s study shows dissatisfaction with the new curriculum, poorly supported implementation, and a lack of teaching and learning resources. Additionally, the increase in standardized literacy and numeracy testing for children in Grades 1–3 is resulting in diminished opportunities for more engaged student learning. 

## ELEMENTARY TEACHERS’ FEEDBACK ON NEW CURRICULUM



of K–6 teachers are **CONCERNED** that the rapid rise in literacy/numeracy testing is taking time away from student learning.

**STUDENTS NEED LESS TESTING, MORE TEACHING AND LEARNING**

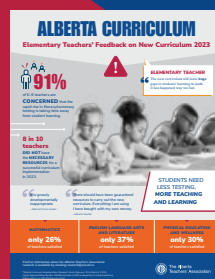
▶ **MATHEMATICS**  
only 26% of teachers satisfied

▶ **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND LITERATURE**  
only 37% of teachers satisfied

▶ **PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND WELLNESS**  
only 30% of teachers satisfied

**8 in 10 teachers** DID NOT have the **NECESSARY RESOURCES** for a successful curriculum implementation in 2023.

“It is grossly developmentally inappropriate.”  
~Alberta school leader



▶ The full curriculum infographic can be found at [teachers.ab.ca/advocacy/curriculum](https://teachers.ab.ca/advocacy/curriculum).



# Teaching Black enslavement in Canada

## A necessary step toward a maturing national identity

### Cory Wright-Maley

Associate Professor of Education,  
St. Mary's University

#### THE QUESTION OF WHETHER

and how we ought to address difficult content in elementary social studies is difficult to answer. Teachers are sometimes concerned that historical topics are not developmentally appropriate for elementary-aged students. There is no shortage of these topics: residential schools, the internment of Japanese-Canadians, the way racist attitudes led Canadians to turn away desperate people on the *Komagata Maru* and *St. Louis* who were seeking amnesty on our shores, the expulsion of the Acadians and the destruction of Africville. I want to be clear to readers that confronting these shameful and difficult episodes in Canadian history constitutes an essential part of learning how to be better Canadians.

One of the topics frequently left out of Canadian curriculum and schools is the history of more than 200 years of Black enslavement (c. 1629–1834) in what is now Canada (Henry 2010). The first enslaved Black person, Olivier Le Jeune, was brought to New France in 1628 (Maynard 2017). At the height of the period, enslavers in Canada held more than 4,000 Black people in bondage (Parks Canada 2020), and yet very few Canadians know about this history (Maynard 2017). My recent research investigating preservice teachers' knowledge about the history of Black enslavement on Canadian shores is similarly revealing (Wright-Maley 2022). Perhaps unsurprisingly, very few elementary preservice teachers knew anything of it. And Alberta's social studies curriculum is of little help in bringing it to their attention. Instead, our program of studies addresses American slavery only in the form of the underground railroad. It positions Canada as a promised land, which it was after abolition. Before that time,


however, enslaved Black people were more likely to flee to the northern free states to be free from their Canadian enslavers.

The way we spin this narrative promulgates an all-too-common narrative that we are the good guys of North America, unlike our neighbour to the south. This narrative sleight-of-hand reveals a kind of immaturity in our national identity: we don't yet know who we are, but we know who we aren't. In the social studies classroom, this manifests in the way teachers highlight the moral failures of our southern neighbour while glossing over our own. Social studies teachers, however, should help foster a kind of ethical maturity in our students, which requires us to bring into the consciousness of our students the ways in which our actions — whether by individuals, groups, or provincial and national governments — have been unjustly used to oppress those who called this place — or hoped to call it — home.

Critics of this obligation will claim that doing so generates antipathy among students toward Canada. But I think they are wrong. Indeed, occluding history from the view of elementary-aged children is likelier to lead young Canadians to become cynical when they later discover it on their own without the guidance of skilled educators to help them make sense of the information. Young Canadians may be left with a sense that it's all been a façade and must choose between cynicism or denial. This act of erasure is divisive. The role of a keen social studies teacher is to help students navigate the complexities of history in an age-appropriate manner such that our failures to live up to our ideals can be used to help ensure that we move ever closer toward them.

Returning to the history of Black enslavement, teachers in Alberta should address this history as essential context to understanding the underground railroad as part of the long legacy of the treatment

of Black Canadians. This legacy includes not only slavery but also segregation, anti-Black racism, resistance, resilience, the Black Lives Matter movement, and what Canada and Canadians ought to do to achieve racial justice. Doing so provides students with a rich background necessary to discuss big ethical issues of justice and governance that are part of the curriculum.

Teaching a more fulsome history to our students that includes not only the history we ought to be proud of but also the history that we should regret affords opportunities for the next generation of Canadians. Those opportunities include being more capable of recognizing the ways that our past has shaped the present, becoming more empathetic toward others who appear different from them and striving together to live up to our shared ideals as Canadians. These goals are part of developing a maturing sense of national identity in which we can be defined on our own terms, warts and all, rather than against the backdrop of the United States. 

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## 1. *S'épanouir en temps de crise : 21 techniques de psychologie positive*

Ce guide pratique propose 21 techniques pour vous épanouir en période difficile. Applicables dans votre vie personnelle ou professionnelle et validées par la recherche en psychologie, elles vous permettront de vous relier à l'autre, de vous engager dans l'action et d'être plus résilient.

## 2. *Inclusive Texts in Elementary Classrooms: Developing Literacies, Identities, and Understandings*

One of the most important acts of reading is to see ourselves in the books we read. Amy Heineke and Aimee Papola-Ellis explore how teachers can select texts that give students the most authentic views of their identities.

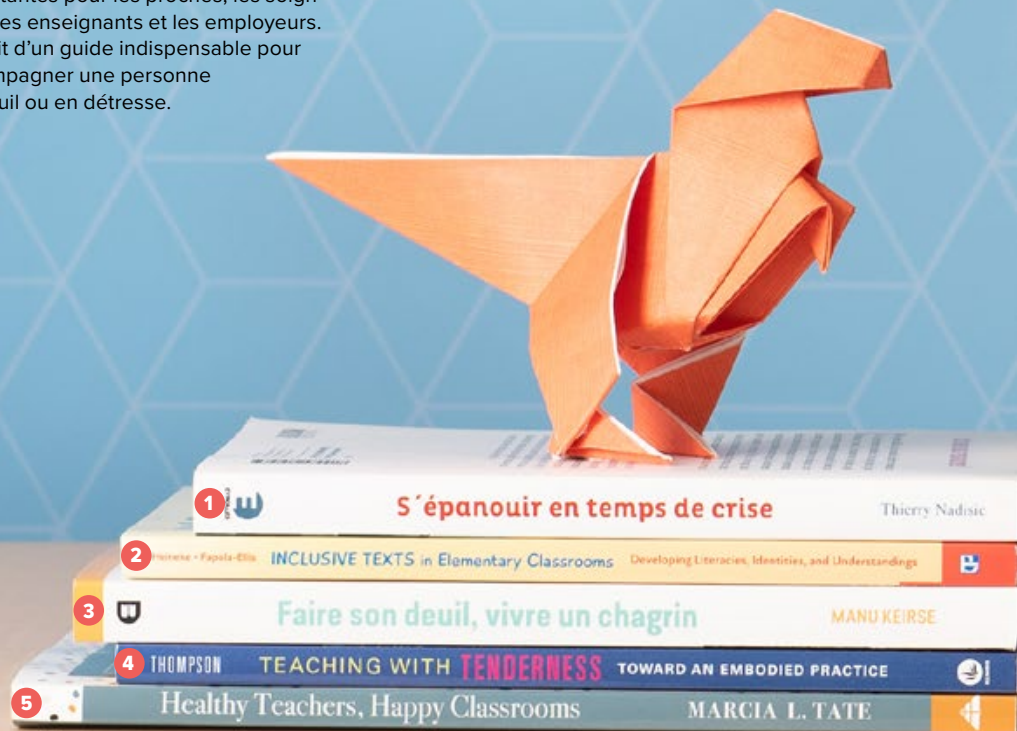
## 3. *Faire son deuil, vivre un chagrin : un guide pour les proches et les professionnels*

Ce livre propose de nombreuses réflexions et des conseils pratiques afin d'offrir un réel soutien dans des situations souvent déroutantes pour les proches, les soignants, les enseignants et les employeurs. Il s'agit d'un guide indispensable pour accompagner une personne en deuil ou en détresse.

## 4. *Teaching with Tenderness: Toward an Embodied Practice*

How can one become a global citizen without exploring our history from the standpoint of human vulnerability and social justice? Author Becky Thompson shares her experiences in bringing a mix of strategies to learning to teach with tenderness and includes discussions of activities that did not work.

Information provided by ATA librarian Sandra Anderson.



## Your colleagues recommend

Teachers suggested these reads by Facebook.

### Annie Jacques

I just finished *Kukum* by Michel Jean (in French). Jean is Métis and tells the real story of his grandmother, who married a First Nation, and how she had to adapt to her new life/reality and the challenges they went through. It was REALLY good.

### Barbara Weir Shepherd

Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments* (sequel to *The Handmaid's Tale*). Great author and sadly prescient — but hopeful.



**5. *Healthy Teachers, Healthy Classrooms: Twelve Brain-Based Principles to Avoid Burnout, Increase Optimism, and Support Physical Well-Being***

Are you trying to reduce your stress? Feel like you are losing your optimism? This amazing book from Marcia Tate is your must read guide.

**6. *Adventures in Authentic Learning: 21 Step-by-Step Projects from an Edtech Coach***

No edtech coach on hand to help develop projects for your class? Not a problem! This book is your portable coach – with answers to frequently asked questions and lots of recommended resources to make project development so much easier!

**7. *Going Beyond 'The Talk': Relationships and Sexuality Education for Those Supporting 12–18 Year Olds***

It is not easy to talk with children about sex. This book will help make it a little easier by sharing the questions that students ask about sex and how to answer them.

**8. *Sand Talk: How Indigenous Thinking Can Save the World***

A fascinating book that challenges Western thinking by examining issues such as “sustainable development” from an Indigenous perspective.



PHOTO BY YUET CHAN

**Scott Carey**

Just finished *I'm Possible* — an amazing book. It's a powerful account as the author tells the story of his early years being homeless on the streets of Baltimore to becoming principal tuba player for the New Mexico philharmonic and a professor of music. First-hand glimpse of a child surviving extreme poverty and trauma ... his hope and resilience.

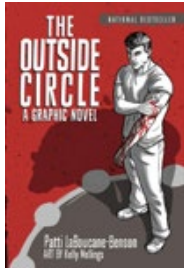
**Tabatha Hart**

*Educated* by Tara Westover. Great memoir about growing up with a bipolar father with conspiracy theories and a violent brother and still being resilient enough to succeed.

**Lorna Anderson**

I just finished *Five Little Indians*, by Michelle Good. An easy but hard read. Powerful story of residential schools.

# What's your favourite book to use with students in Grades 10-12?



### **The Outside Circle**

Written by Patti LaBoucane-Benson, with art by Kelly Mellings, this graphic novel deals with racism.

*Jackelyn Urquhart*



### **Private Label**

By Kelly Yang, this young adult fiction novel is great for talking about immigrant families, terminal diseases and consent.

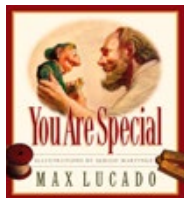
*Evelyn Chan*



### **Long Way Down**

By Jason Reynolds, this short and thought-provoking novel set in a large city sparks great discussion for rural Alberta students.

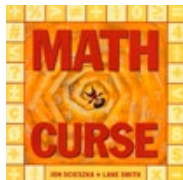
*Cammie Kanekens*



### **You are Special**

This picture book by Max Lucado reminds us that we are unique and different by design! Good for all grades.

*Bobbie-Jo Douglas*



### **Math Curse**

I read this picture book—written by Jon Scieszka and illustrated by Lane Smith—to my high school math students and they love it.

*Carolyn Pawelko*



### **The Lorax**

By Dr. Seuss, this book is a fun way to help students understand the environment and how capitalism can impact the environment.

*Jennifer Lacourse*

### **No Bikini**

We have recently added this short story by Ivan Coyote to our English 10-2/Information Processing class. It is written by a Canadian author and lends itself to the topic of diversity.

*Ann Morrison and Heather Laturnas*



### **The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe**

I haven't taught it yet, but am so excited to teach this novel by C.S. Lewis in high school religious studies. I cannot wait to have discussions about how the book

is a symbolic representation of the Holy Trinity and to share how Lewis's writing is all about Catholicism.

*Nadine Armbruster*



Teacher recommendations gathered through Facebook.

PHOTO BY YUET CHAN





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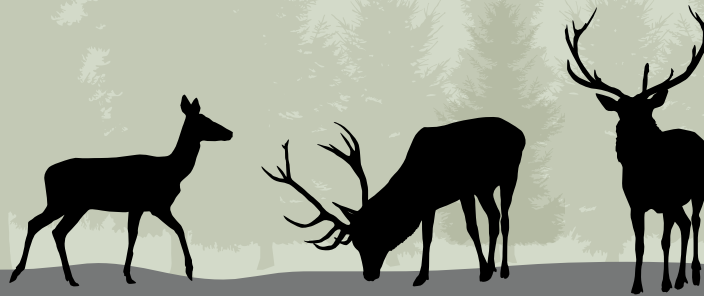
# CLASSROOM WILDLIFE EDUCATION KIT

This kit is designed for Grades 3 & 4 and aligns with Alberta Education Curriculum goals.

Kids will explore wildlife identification and the role that sustainable use plays in conservation.

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To request your kit at no cost, please email [marketing@apos.ab.ca](mailto:marketing@apos.ab.ca) with your name, contact details, address, and school.



[apos.ab.ca](http://apos.ab.ca)



We envision a world where everyone is trauma-informed.

## Upcoming Workshops



### Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

**VIRTUAL**  
 June 19

#### Strategies for Supporting

This workshop provides practical strategies and interventions for caregivers, teachers, and service providers to support a range of individuals (children, adolescents, adults) with ADHD.



### Anxiety in Children and Youth

**VIRTUAL**  
 June 16  
 Sept 15

#### Practical Intervention Strategies

This workshop provides a diverse range of skills that can be taught and practiced with children and youth to expand their capacity for managing anxiety.



### Private Training

Can't make it to a workshop? Our trainings can be customized and done privately in your school or community, either in person or online.



**For more information, contact:**

**Chantel Runtz**  
 Private Training Supervisor  
[chantel@ctrinstitute.com](mailto:chantel@ctrinstitute.com)  
 877-353-3205

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

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877-353-3205



# Youth Grants and Student Awards

Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) provides over \$1.3 million in awards and grants each year to help youth and students achieve their goals.

For more information or to submit an application, visit: [ecfoundation.org/grants/](http://ecfoundation.org/grants/)

Give. Grow. Transform.

### Upcoming application deadlines:

Nancy Fairley Scholarship - Jun 30

Al Maurer Awards - Aug 31

Charmaine Letourneau Scholarships - Aug 31

Youth VOICE - Oct 15

Young Edmonton Grants - Oct 15



## Congrats on your retirement!

### ARTA is here.

It's important to have a financial plan in place before you retire, and while it's best to start early, it's never too late.

The Alberta Retired Teachers' Association can help with over fifty articles, book reviews, and recorded presentations covering the latest news and wisdom concerning **pensions**, **TFSA**s, **estate planning**, and much more.

ARTA offers the best extended health coverage, emergency travel coverage, and a variety of ancillary services.



Visit [artabenefits.net](http://artabenefits.net) and [arta.net/wellness/financial-wellness](http://arta.net/wellness/financial-wellness) to get started on planning your retirement.







## Supporting educational inquiry and professional growth

### The ATA library

#### Materials

The ATA library has 25,000-plus professional development materials for teachers in both French and English. ATA members, associate members and life members can access materials online or borrow physical materials, which are loaned by mail (**with return postage prepaid!**) for a period of *one month*.

#### Web guides

Need a resource on the periodic table or on the Terry Fox Run? There's a web guide for that! The library offers web guides on various curricular and seasonal topics.

#### Services

In any given year, library staff answer a few thousand research questions from members and staff.

- ▶ Have a question or a new title suggestion? Contact ATA library staff at [library@ata.ab.ca](mailto:library@ata.ab.ca) and check out the website here: <https://library.teachers.ab.ca/Presto/home/home.aspx>.

#### DID YOU KNOW...?

##### Members can borrow maker kits!

From a Turing Tumble to a stop animation kit, the library's maker kits allow you to expand your pedagogical horizons.

PHOTO BY YUJET CHAN

#### Ask the librarian

##### WHAT WAS THE MOST REQUESTED ITEM LAST YEAR?

Our Cricut machines are the most requested item. The most requested book was *Shifting the Balance: 6 Ways to Bring the Science of Reading into the Balanced Literacy Classroom*.

##### WHAT IS THE MOST POPULAR WEB GUIDE?

The most popular web guide is Black History Month, with 22,810 visits last year.


##### WHAT IS THE OLDEST ITEM IN THE COLLECTION?

*History of Modern Elementary Education: With Emphasis on School Practice in Relation to Social Conditions (1912)*

##### WHAT IS THE MOST MEMORABLE QUESTION YOU HAVE HAD?

My first reference question at the ATA library (that I got on my first day of work): "I need information about Japanese lesson plans." I was flummoxed! I remember asking if they wanted information about teaching Japanese or about developing a lesson plan in the Japanese style. It turned out to be the latter — I was thankful I asked.

##### I DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START! CAN I ASK YOU FOR RECOMMENDATIONS?

Absolutely! I love talking to people about books! Let me know what interests you, and I will match you up with the newest and best we have! 



## Soutien à la recherche et au perfectionnement professionnel en éducation

### Bibliothèque de l'ATA

#### Ressources

La bibliothèque de l'ATA offre plus de 25 000 ressources en français et en anglais pour le perfectionnement professionnel des enseignants. Les membres, membres associés et membres à vie de l'ATA peuvent accéder à des ressources en ligne ou emprunter des ressources physiques qui leur seront envoyées par la poste (avec les frais de retour prépayés!) pour une période d'un mois.

#### Guides en ligne

Besoin d'une ressource sur le tableau périodique ou la course Terry Fox? Pensez à nos guides de ressources en ligne! La bibliothèque propose des guides en ligne sur une variété de thèmes liés au curriculum et saisonniers.

#### Services

Chaque année, le personnel de la bibliothèque répond à quelques milliers de questions de recherche posées par les membres et le personnel de l'ATA.

- ▶ Avez-vous une question à poser ou un nouveau titre à suggérer? Contactez le personnel de la bibliothèque de l'ATA en écrivant à [library@ata.ab.ca](mailto:library@ata.ab.ca) et consultez le site Web : <https://library.teachers.ab.ca/Presto/home/home.aspx>.

#### LE SAVIEZ-VOUS...?

Les membres peuvent emprunter des trousseaux pour espaces créateurs! Qu'il s'agisse d'un jeu Turing Tumble ou d'une trousse d'animation image par image, les trousseaux pour espaces créateurs de la bibliothèque vous permettent d'élargir vos horizons pédagogiques.

#### Entrevue avec la bibliothécaire

##### QUELLES SONT VOS RESSOURCES LES PLUS DEMANDÉES?

Les machines de découpe Cricut sont la ressource la plus demandée. *Soutenir les lecteurs en langue seconde : enseignement et interventions en lecture* est le livre en français qui a été demandé le plus souvent depuis septembre.

##### QUEL EST LE GUIDE DE RESSOURCES EN LIGNE LE PLUS POPULAIRE?

Le guide de ressources en français le plus populaire est le guide de Mathématiques, qui a été consulté 2 102 fois au cours des deux dernières années.


##### QUEL EST LE TITRE LE PLUS ANCIEN FAISANT PARTIE DE LA COLLECTION?

*History of Modern Elementary Education: With Emphasis on School Practice in Relation to Social Conditions (1912).*

##### QUELLE EST LA QUESTION LA PLUS MÉMORABLE QUI VOUS AIT ÉTÉ POSÉE?

Ma première question de référence à la bibliothèque de l'ATA (reçue le jour de mon entrée en fonction) : « J'ai besoin de renseignements sur les plans de leçon japonais. » J'étais complètement déroutée! Je me souviens d'avoir demandé à la personne si elle voulait de l'information au sujet de l'enseignement du japonais ou de l'élaboration d'un plan de leçon sur le modèle japonais. C'était en fait ce deuxième aspect qui l'intéressait – j'étais heureuse de lui avoir posé la question.

##### JE N'AI AUCUNE IDÉE PAR OÙ COMMENCER! PUIS-JE VOUS DEMANDER DES RECOMMANDATIONS?

Absolument! J'adore parler de livres avec les autres! Dites-moi ce qui vous intéresse et je vous conseillerai nos meilleurs et plus récents titres! 



**IT SEEMED LIKE A GREAT IDEA TO HAVE MY PROVIDER START BILLING MY MESSAGES UNDER MY WIFE'S NAME BECAUSE I HAD MAXIMIZED MINE. NOW THAT MY WIFE NEEDS REHABILITATION, I DON'T KNOW HOW WE WILL AFFORD THE MASSAGE THERAPY SHE NEEDS.**

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## Celebrate a worry-free summer season!

This summer, take a moment to verify and update your contact information using our *MyPension* online portal, or by giving us a call so you can stay up-to-date on your pension. Whether online, in-person, or over the phone, our services remain available. So, however you decide to spend your summer, our staff has you covered!



Visit: [ATRF.com](http://ATRF.com)





## 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



### **Starvation Cove**

As a senior high social studies teacher, Ben Galeski has always been fascinated with Canadian history. This fascination prompted him to write his first novel, *Starvation Cove*, which was recently published by Justin Press. The novel fictionalizes the final days of the final survivors of the doomed 19th century Franklin Expedition to the Canadian Arctic.

**BEN GALESKI**

*St. Joseph's Collegiate, Brooks*  
[justinpress.ca](http://justinpress.ca)



### **Alberta Comics: Home**

When not teaching junior high math, science or creative writing, James Davidge is authoring novels and comics. Most recently, his work appeared in *Alberta Comics: Home*, an anthology of short comics and cartoons on the theme “home.” Davidge’s contribution, “School & Home in a Time of COVID,” captures challenges that emerged in education during the pandemic with humour and heart. Complementing Davidge’s story is artwork by Christopher Peterson.

**JAMES DAVIDGE**

*Willow Park School for Arts-Centred Learning, Calgary*  
[jamesdavidge.ca](http://jamesdavidge.ca)  
*Renegade Arts Entertainment*

## BUSINESS



**Apple and Iris Boutique**  
Grade 1 teacher Jennifer Graves owns an online women’s clothing boutique, Apple and Iris, that has teachers in mind. Graves’s boutique has weekly Teacher Tuesday launches with pieces and

products that are specially chosen and designed for life in the classroom. The boutique also does book giveaways to help grow the children’s book libraries of teachers (and parents) with books focusing on diversity, inclusion, mental health and—of course—learning!

**JENNIFER GRAVES**

*Jan Reimer School, Edmonton*  
[www.appleandiris.com](http://www.appleandiris.com)

*Facebook and Instagram @ApplendIrisBoutique*

## VOLUNTEERING



**Alberta Kodály Association**  
Music teacher Sarah Schaub has been involved with the Alberta Kodály Association (AKA) for six years and is volunteering as president for the 2022/23 year. Schaub works with

members of the AKA board to provide professional learning opportunities for Alberta music teachers and to advocate for quality music education in the province. She has previously volunteered as a singer representative for Pro Coro Canada, Edmonton’s professional choir.

**SARAH SCHAUB**

*St. John XXIII Catholic School, Fort Saskatchewan*

- **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).







# Embracing the unknown

Substitute teaching a natural fit for Calgary's Valsa Peter

**Cailynn Klingbeil**

Freelance Contributor

**STEP INSIDE A HIGH SCHOOL** English or social studies classroom in northeast Calgary and you'll likely find the affable substitute teacher Valsa Peter engaging the students. That is, if it's not a Monday, when Peter faithfully attends her local seniors' club meetups. The unconventional grandma brings her own flair to the classroom, imparting wisdom — and plenty of jokes — from her life spanning three countries.

"Val is a staple of our school," says Lisa Byrgesen, an English Language Arts teacher at Lester B. Pearson High School. "The kids absolutely adore her."

Peter mainly picks up jobs at a few high schools these days, teaching English, social studies, CALM and drama. But she has also worked in elementary, junior high and high schools across the city since becoming a substitute teacher for the Calgary Board of Education in January 2009.

To be a substitute is to step into unknown waters, Peter says, again and again. She laughs describing the younger kids' reaction to her presence in their classrooms.

"Grandmas don't teach, they bake pies," she's been emphatically told.

Her response? "This grandma can teach and bake pies."

\*\*\*

As comfortable as she now is in the classroom, Peter never wanted to be a teacher. She grew up in India, the youngest of four kids and the only girl. Her dad, a police officer, said she had to be educated just like the boys — an uncommon belief at the time.

"He said, 'your bread should be in your hands,' meaning economically, financially, you will be independent, nobody can push you around," Peter recalls.

But even he drew the line at Peter's first career choice: a journalist. That's not a career for a woman, she was told, after she had studied English literature and been admitted to journalism school. Peter became a teacher instead.

"Once I started, I fell in love with it," she says. "I fell in love with the interaction, with what I learned from the students every day."

Peter taught for about four years in India, while also raising a son and daughter as her husband, an engineer, lived and worked in Saudi Arabia. The family reunited after about four years apart, with Peter and the children moving to Saudi Arabia. There, she worked for the oil company Saudi Aramco as a training coordinator for 22 years, helping determine what skills and education the company's new recruits needed.

Peter and her husband made another big move in 2000, to Canada. They settled in Calgary, where their adult daughter lived.

"When I left Saudi, I said I'm not going to work again. I'm going to be a lady of leisure," Peter recalls. That didn't last long.

At the church she had recently started attending, she learned there was a dire need for a teacher at the connected school. Peter agreed to help — and she's been back in the classroom ever since.

"After the first week, I realized this is my life, I want to go back to this," she says.



Peter worked part time while also taking courses at the University of Calgary to earn her Canadian teaching credentials. She particularly enjoyed her option classes on topics she'd never covered in India, including the Montessori method and educating children with autism spectrum disorders.

"I fell in love with that aspect of how you can teach a child in many different ways depending on what the child needs," she says. "And as a teacher, you have to find that need and satisfy it."

Peter eventually turned to substitute teaching, drawn by the flexibility the job would give her to take longer trips and avoid writing report cards.

\*\*\*


Lisa Byrgesen, a teacher at Lester B. Pearson, says Peter is the first person she goes to when she knows she's going to have a day away.

"I know my kids are going to be in very, very good hands if she's in," she says.

What sets Peter apart, in Byrgesen's view, is how intentional she is about making connections with students, learning about who they are and what they're interested in.

"From the minute she walks into a room, her number one goal is to make connections with the students in that space," she says. "So in this really condensed period of time, she's able to have these really deep connections with kids that sometimes take a full semester to create."

Those interactions are why Peter keeps returning to the classroom. She adores the variety that accompanies substitute teaching, meeting so many different teachers and students and being able to have an impact on them.

"In one day, if one child gets something out of what I said, my day is done," she says. 

## MAKING CONNECTIONS WITH

### Valsa Peter

#### What is your favourite joke to share with students?

*Little Joey did not hand in his homework on Monday. When asked for an explanation, Joey said "The sub only told us what day it was due, not the month or the year!"*

#### Do you really bake pies? What's your speciality?

Yes I do! Indian spiced apple pies.

#### What stands out for you about each of the three countries you've lived in?

India: Family, food, music, languages, dance

Saudi Arabia: Lifelong friendships made in 22 years

Canada: Final chapter of life-fulfilling teaching dream!

#### What appealed to you about journalism and what did you imagine yourself doing in that field?

The power of writing to change and touch peoples' lives, impact society and change the course of history. I imagined myself writing articles and real-life stories empowering women to evolve and break the glass ceilings in the societies they lived in.

- ▶ **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).



# Grow your potential

Learn the skills to be a principal or superintendent

University of Calgary Continuing Education offers two online programs for Alberta certified teachers or education professionals who want to work in the Alberta education system:

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**Taking Flight**

The ATA's newest web resource on everything field experience

**VISIT**  
[fieldexperience.teachers.ab.ca](https://fieldexperience.teachers.ab.ca)

 The Alberta Teachers' Association

# Alberta's hidden gems

What local hidden gem would you recommend your colleagues check out this summer?

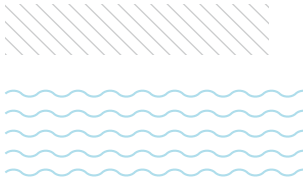
**Mindful Elevation Float Space**  
(Fort McMurray)  
– *Nadine Armbruster*

**Heritage Park**  
(Calgary)  
– *Carmen Wasyluniuk*

**Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump**  
Near Fort Macleod, The Penny  
Coffeehouse (Lethbridge)  
– *Suneet Kharey*

**Tollers Bistro, Cilantro  
and Chive, Leto's Steakhouse**  
(all in Lacombe)  
– *Janel Winslow-Sherwin*

**Twenty Eight Urban Kitchen**  
(Stony Plain)  
– *Christy Haggarty*



All the smaller lakes around  
**Banff, Lake Louise and Jasper**  
– *Sana Waseem*

**Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park**  
– *Cammie Kannekens*

**Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park**  
– *Carolyn Pawelko*

**Telford Lake**  
(Leduc)  
– *Karlee Hren*

**Annie Rue Ice Cream**  
(Edmonton)  
– *Heather Wright*

**Combat Archery**  
(Edmonton)  
– *Jackelyn Urquhart*

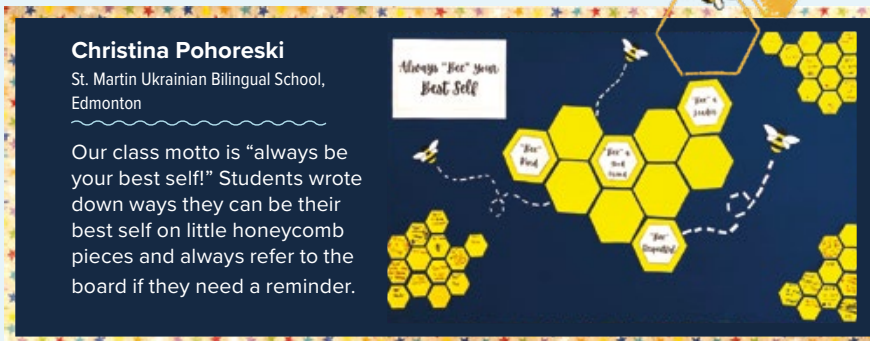
**The World Famous Gopher Hole Museum**  
(Torrington)  
– *Morgan Lawrence*

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



# Show off your board!

We asked teachers to share stories and photos of their most special bulletin boards.



**Christina Pohoreski**

St. Martin Ukrainian Bilingual School, Edmonton

Our class motto is "always be your best self!" Students wrote down ways they can be their best self on little honeycomb pieces and always refer to the board if they need a reminder.



**Jami Hamilton**

Good Shepherd Community School, Fort McMurray

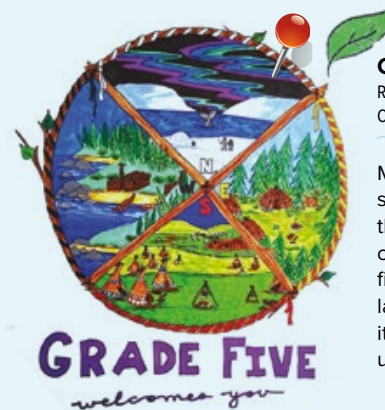
This is probably my favourite bulletin board this year. Students received a mason jar with another classmate's name on it. Each student wrote things they loved about their classmate on hearts and glued them on the jars. The most rewarding part was seeing the smiles on the faces of students in my grade 1/2 class after seeing what their friends had written about them! During a worldwide pandemic, it is so important to show love for one another.



**Alyssa Harrison**

Whispering Ridge Community School, Grande Prairie

This is a diagram of the inner ear that I created for my third graders while we learned about hearing and sound!



**Cynthia Johnson**

Ridgevalley School, Crooked Creek

My doorway welcome sign last year. Kids sign their names when they come to school on the first day. I cut it out and laminated it after I used it in Grade 5 so it can be used year to year.

**Chelsey McDonald**

Landing Trail School, Gibbons

All credit for bulletin board creations goes to my amazing EAs, not me. I was a new-to-kindergarten teacher and was COMPLETELY overwhelmed. We finally got some art done and one of my EAs made this amazing bulletin board for "Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!" and then we just didn't get any other bulletin-board worthy art done for a long time.

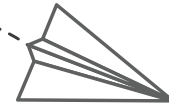
Suddenly it was winter and Christmas was coming, and I was stressed by our lack of bulletin board changes (and said as much to one of the EAs in our school). The next morning I came in, and the EA had made Santa hats and stuck them on all the pigeons, and put a wreath on the bus, so I wouldn't have to stress about a Christmas bulletin board anymore.



**I certainly couldn't take it down after that. It brought so many smiles to our staff and students!"**



# Complete our survey and enter to win \$100



The Alberta Teachers' Association invites members to participate in the following survey about the *ATA Magazine*. Responses will help shape the publication in the years ahead.

Survey participants are eligible to enter a draw for a **\$100 gift card** from the retailer of their choice. To enter the draw, include your name and contact information at the end of this tear-out survey or on our online survey.

**Survey deadline is June 30, 2023.**

### Which of the following most accurately reflects your interest in the *ATA Magazine*?

- I look forward to reading every issue.
- When I have time, I flip through the pages and read articles that catch my eye.
- I read it when a colleague notes something of interest.
- I have no interest in the magazine at all.

### On average, how long do you spend reading an issue of the *ATA Magazine*?

- No time
- A few minutes
- More than 5 minutes but less than 15 minutes
- 15 minutes to 1 hour
- More than 1 hour

### What format do you typically use to read the *ATA Magazine*?

- Print
- Online
- Both print and online
- Neither

### Please number the following magazine elements from 1 to 7 to indicate your most to least preferred. (1 is most preferred, 7 is least preferred)

- \_\_\_ ATA perspective and info (Editor's Notebook, From the President, Then and Now, In Focus)
- \_\_\_ Teacher profiles (Unsung Hero, In Profile, Who's Out There)
- \_\_\_ Cover/feature stories
- \_\_\_ Research-based articles (Research Insights, Looking Abroad)
- \_\_\_ Specialized sections (Wellness, Technology, Diversity)
- \_\_\_ Teacher-submitted content (In My Humble Opinion, Most Memorable Lesson, Teacher Hacks)
- \_\_\_ Recommended reading (From the Bookshelves, Your Colleagues Recommend, Kid Lit, Recommended Resources)

### To what extent do you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The <i>ATA Magazine</i> gives me a positive impression of the Alberta Teachers' Association.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The <i>ATA Magazine</i> makes me feel connected to the teaching profession.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The <i>ATA Magazine</i> helps me understand issues in education.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Articles in the <i>ATA Magazine</i> are an appropriate/comfortable length.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The layout and design of the <i>ATA Magazine</i> are appealing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The content of the <i>ATA Magazine</i> is interesting, informative and engaging.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### What would you like to see more of?

### What would you like to see less of?

### What other types of content would you like to see included in the *ATA Magazine*?

### I am a ...

- Teacher
- School leader
- Central office teacher
- Academic
- Government official/employee
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

### My age is ...

- Under 34
- 35–44
- 45–54
- 55–64
- 65 or older

### I identify as ... (check all that apply)

- Male  Not listed
- Female  Prefer not to answer
- Transgender

### My community is ...

- Calgary or surrounding area
- Edmonton or surrounding area
- Fort McMurray
- Grande Prairie
- Lethbridge
- Red Deer
- Medicine Hat
- Small town or rural
- Other city or large town

Please enter me in the draw for a \$100 gift card.

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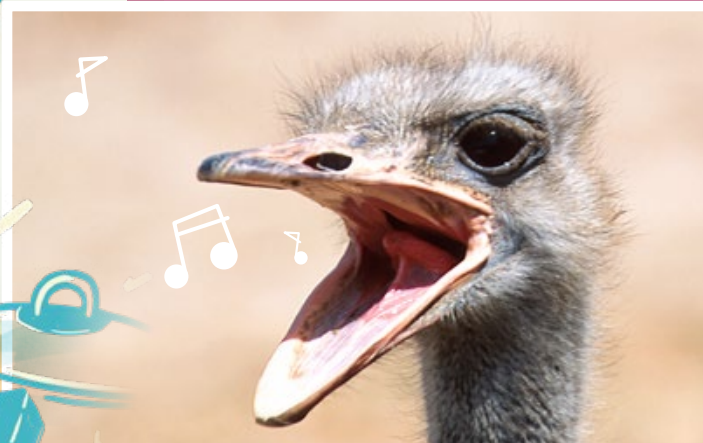
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STOCK: ADAPTED

# Creative Challenges

Letting go of “correct” enables music students to soar

## Keshini Senanayake

Secondary Music, Nelson  
Mandela High School, Calgary

### IMAGINE STUDENTS TAKING

all the 60-plus chairs in the band room and creating a circular, moving drumming performance. Or a performance comprised entirely of animal sounds. How about students beat boxing and drumming while one student sings “This Girl is on Fire”? These performances are all part of what I call our “Creative Challenges”.

For this task, I provide students with a few guidelines and one or two periods to put together a performance. They then perform their creation for the entire class. Some Creative Challenges involve animal sounds or electronic music programs, mashing up melodies from their band pieces, or even using furniture found around the school.

One challenge I find in music education is that we teach students that they

must master their instruments and learn a bunch of music theory before they begin to explore and create their own music. These Creative Challenges are a means of challenging that colonial approach to music education by creating a space where we encourage students to be creative from day one.

We start with a Creative Challenge in the first week of school, then add instrument techniques and music theory to help equip students with the tools to continue creating music. Don’t get me wrong, the first challenge, where students create music to represent given symbols using only found objects, and with mixed abilities of musical training, is absolutely awkward. But with some prompting and inspiration, we work through the awkward rather than avoid it.

One of the difficulties with these Creative Challenges is that students often ask, “Is this correct?”, “Are we allowed to do this?” or “Is this what you want?” Students are often fixated on seeking one correct answer rather than creating an

idea that they can justify as right for them. As one of my students shared, “These tasks are not about getting it right. Once we realized that there is no right or wrong answer, as long as you have an idea that you can justify, the sky’s the limit!”

Creative Challenges help create a music community where students collaborate, are resourceful, and are open to experimenting with sounds and ideas. They help give a unifying purpose for learning music theory, instrument techniques and history, which are all listed outcomes in the music program of studies. Most importantly, they allow students to imagine what’s possible if they are creative and brave enough to try it. <sup>ATA</sup>

► **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 magic of art

Two worlds colliding creates connection

**Terra Kaliszuk**

Executive Staff Officer, ATA



ILLUSTRATION BY ERIN SOLANO

## THE CHALLENGE

How to help a reluctant student connect with school.

### MY FIRST TEACHING

assignment was comprised entirely of junior high courses which, much to my surprise, ignited a passion for teaching the junior high age group. For the next 18 years, every assignment I accepted included junior high work and, eventually, I discovered a passion for teaching junior high art.

Then came late August 2021, when my administrator called to share a last-minute timetable change for the upcoming year. Upon hearing the details, I burst into laughter. To my surprise, however, it wasn't a joke, and my amusement quickly turned into abject terror. Along with my usual junior high courses, I would also be teaching Grade 2 art.

That fall, as I cautiously stepped into the "spirited" world of Grade 2, I was also coping with a junior high class that had an overwhelming ecosystem of complexities. One of the junior high students in this class, whom we'll call Wren, had a complex life. From the day we met, Wren's relentless skepticism and undeniable chill revealed

“My trepidation about teaching Grade 2 simply evaporated.”

a mistrust of both adults and peers alike. Content to draw in his sketchbook rather than engage with our class, Wren escaped into his artwork to avoid us all. In my quest to help him feel a sense of connection with our school community, I invited Wren to assist me in Grade 2 art.

When Wren joined our Grade 2 art class for the first time, we agreed that he would demonstrate our daily drawing warm-up on the board. A remarkable silence draped the room, and curious eyes followed Wren's marker floating across the board in a series of swoops and swaths. Jubilant recognition bubbled throughout the class as Wren revealed distinct floppy ears that completed his drawing of a rabbit. Amidst the delight, Wren's

chilly demeanour was betrayed by an undeniable smile.

As the children began to create drawings of their own, Wren glided from student to student with an intrinsic calm I had not seen from him before. In retrospect, it was one of the more beautiful moments in my career. During that class, my trepidation about teaching Grade 2 simply evaporated, leaving in its place a warm and welcome hope. <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).

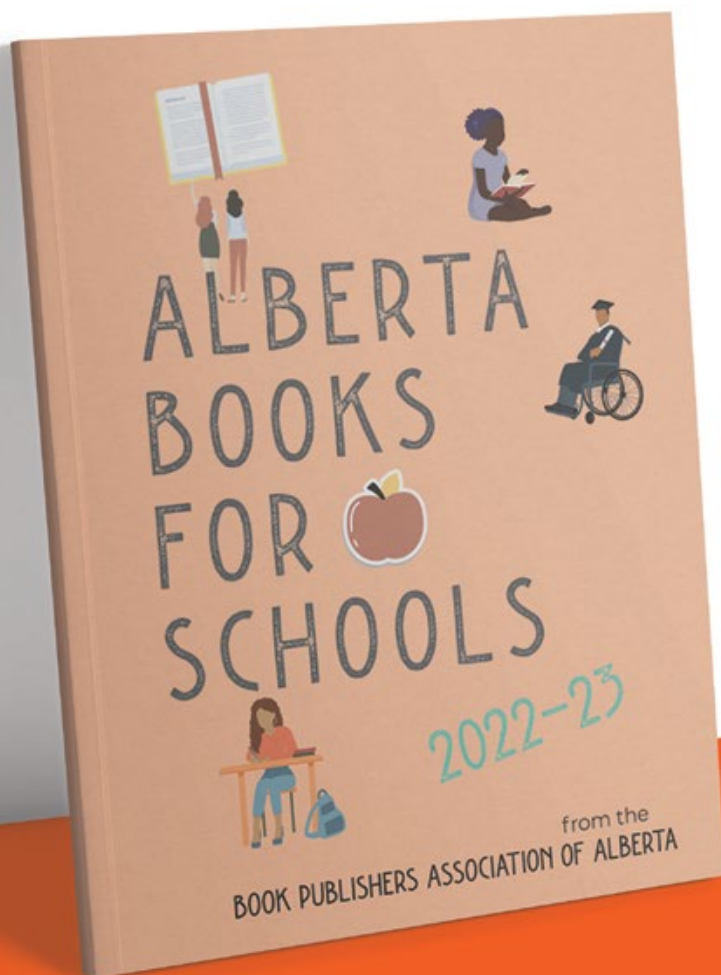


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