

Stranger things

Guppies, frogs and a cat in the classroom

[See Tale End, page 16.](#)

**Off Script**

with ATA President Jason Schilling



Support for new colleagues.

[See page 7.](#)

# ATA NEWS

October 8, 2024 | Volume 59, Number 3

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LINDSAY YAKIMYSHYN

Students warm up before participating in the annual Terry Fox Run on Oct. 3.

## Public funds for public schools

Why should we care about private and charter schools?

Read [Kristine Wilkinson's editorial on page 2.](#)

## Representing teacher voices

An overview of the PEC member role.

Read the [Executive Secretary's Q&A on page 2.](#)

## More money in your pocket

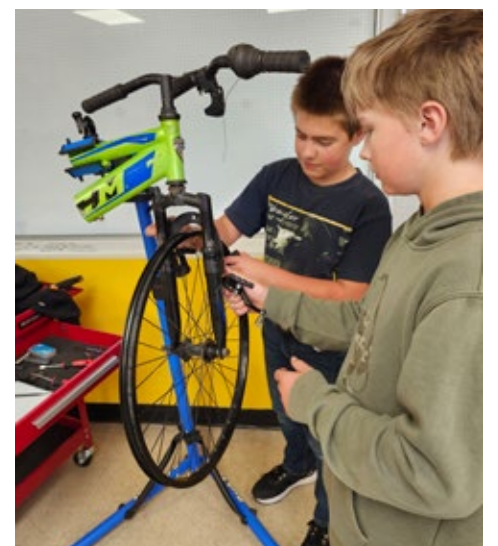
What lower pension contribution rates mean for you.

See [page 5.](#)

## Atteindre de nouveaux sommets

La Faculté Saint-Jean lance un programme de doctorat.

Voir [page 9.](#)



## Success story

School bike mechanics program going strong.

See [page 7.](#)

## Why should we care about private and charter schools?



### EDITORIAL

Kristine Wilkinson  
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Why all the fuss about school funding lately? Why do we care if charter and private schools enter the mix of public education? The reason is simple: they are not public education.

In Alberta, public schools include Catholic, francophone and public schools. This is directed by Alberta legislation from 1905 that protects the rights of minorities in Canada.

Public schools must provide education to all students. In contrast, private schools select students based on tuition affordability and other criteria like a student's ability. For instance, students with behavioural or learning disabilities might be excluded from a private school. Further, the average tuition cost in Alberta private

schools is around \$16,000 per year, putting this option out of reach for many families. Despite this, private schools in Alberta receive 70 per cent of the per-student funding that public schools receive from government coffers. This is the highest private school funding rate in Canada, with

“There is only one pot of money for schools in Alberta. When money is diverted to private and charter schools, it leaves public schools in a funding shortfall.”

many provinces not funding private schools with public dollars at all.

Charter schools do not charge tuition, but, like private schools, they can select students based on specific criteria. Charter schools in Alberta also receive public funding, though they are not supported with public money in any other province in

Canada. Doubling down, the Alberta government recently announced a \$43 million charter school build, frustrating parents whose children are in overcrowded public schools with overworked teachers. The government noticed the space crunch and the need for new school builds. Great! So, why

their students. Rather, parents want the public system to get the adequate funding required to meet the needs of all students. Public schools need teachers, buildings and supports to ensure the best outcomes for the 93 per cent of Alberta's students that attend our public schools.

When you walk into a public school in Alberta, you see a cross-section of the community's population. Your public school represents your community and reflects the values of the community. It doesn't matter what your background is, you can succeed.

Every student deserves to reach their dreams — our current system of public schools still makes this a reality because of the tireless efforts of the teachers, school leaders and others who lift them up.

Every child deserves a place to learn and grow. They don't deserve for their schools to be overstuffed and understaffed while the government provides public money to private and charter schools that won't take all students. It just makes no sense. ■

## The role of PEC members (aka my bosses)



### Q & A

Dennis Theobald  
ATA Executive Secretary

**Question:** I see that there is a by-election to fill a vacant position on the Provincial Executive Council and that nominations are about to open for members wanting to run in the next general election. What does being on the Council entail?

**Answer:** The Provincial Executive Council, or PEC, is the governing council of the Alberta Teachers' Association, functioning as a "board of directors" to provide ongoing guidance to the Association and make decisions between annual representative assemblies.

PEC is composed of 15 district representatives (DRs) who come from across the province (the by-election is in Edmonton District). While Edmonton-McMurray and Calgary City districts, in deference to their population, elect three DRs each, the other nine DRs represent teachers in different geographic regions across the province.

DRs play an invaluable role in bringing the voice of the teachers they represent to the table and serving as an important channel for communication back to the membership. In keeping with principles of good governance, even though they are expected to represent those who elect them, when gathered

together their job is to rise above local interests and make decisions that will best advance the interests of the entire membership.

The work of a DR is demanding. It involves getting out to meet and speak with teachers where they live and work. In some of our districts, which may be the size of small European countries, this involves spending considerable time on the road, traveling between communities and schools. DRs are also assigned to serve on various standing and ad hoc committees of the Council, and liaise with locals, convention associations and specialist councils. The

“District representatives play an invaluable role in bringing the voice of the teachers they represent to the table and serving as an important channel for communication back to the membership.”

Council has eight scheduled meetings a year, but additional emergent meetings are increasingly common as Council responds to the rapidly changing circumstances confronting the profession.

To facilitate their work, DRs are provided with half-time release (the equivalent of 100 days) from their teaching positions, the details of which are negotiated and managed by the Association and the employer.

PEC members are also provided with honoraria and are reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred in attending Council meetings, and during other related duties and activities. As well, a PEC development fund provides for conference attendance and other educational activities relevant to the members' responsibilities, contributing to the ongoing professional development of DRs.

In addition to DRs, the positions of president and two vice-presidents are elected by teachers across the province. These, together with the past president and the executive secretary,

that the governors of the Association should, with this one exception, remain active classroom teachers contributes greatly to the credibility of the Council, collectively and individually. When meeting with government officials or with representatives of other organizations active in the education sector, members of the Council, individually and collectively, will introduce themselves by describing their teaching assignment, giving their comments unique gravitas and credibility.

Any active or associate member of the Association may run for the position of DR in the district in which they reside or for a table officer position. To support diversity, equity and inclusion, the Association will be providing additional information to assist teachers from underrepresented populations to become more familiar with the election process and better prepare them to run for office.

General elections are held every two years, and all terms expire simultaneously on June 30. Details about the nomination process and timelines are set out on the Association website with additional information about supports for potential diverse candidates being forthcoming in the near future.

For 23 years now, the members of PEC have been my bosses, and my appreciation of their contribution and commitment to our profession has only grown. We need good people to step up to these important roles, and I encourage you to consider doing so. ■



# YOUR VIEWS

## How is the cellphone ban in your classrooms going so far?

**f Morgan Lawrence**  
It's been a month, and my kiddos are compliant for the most part. I still don't like having to police it ... it's caused frustration on both sides for sure.

**f Danielle Black**  
I've only confiscated two so far. Very little pushback in my school.

**f Victoria Holota**  
I teach Grade 8. It's working so well that I'm about a week ahead in my lessons than I was last year.

**f David Whan**  
It has been a smashing success.

**f Cherra Olthof**  
We already had this policy, so it's been a snap.

**f Cassie Dey**  
It doesn't really make much difference when they have access to Chromebooks. It's the same level of distraction and takes monitoring.

**f Stephen Moses**  
Nothing has changed for us. It was always the expectation that phones are permitted with teacher permission for learning only. Other uses? Put it away or have it taken away. Consistent progressive discipline with parent involvement is key.

**f Kara Balloch**  
It's been great. We had a policy previously, but this order gives us a leg to stand on when we need it. I didn't realize how much time I spent (I teach grades 8 and 9) policing phones and social media in class.

**f Beverly McNutt**  
As a substitute teacher this year, I was concerned about how to enforce this, but am very impressed by students at all of the schools I work in, not one infraction.

**f Jennifer Black**  
Lots of resistance. Constant monitoring. Constant attempts to circumvent the rules.

**📷 Tanis Michelle**  
Better than expected. It's been freeing to not feel like we are policing kids all day long, and I think kids appreciate the permission to be present in school.

**📷 Eller Erin**  
Wonderful! They actually talk to each other, play uno/games in the downtime, and no more fighting/hiding air pods. Honestly, such a small thing has made a huge difference.

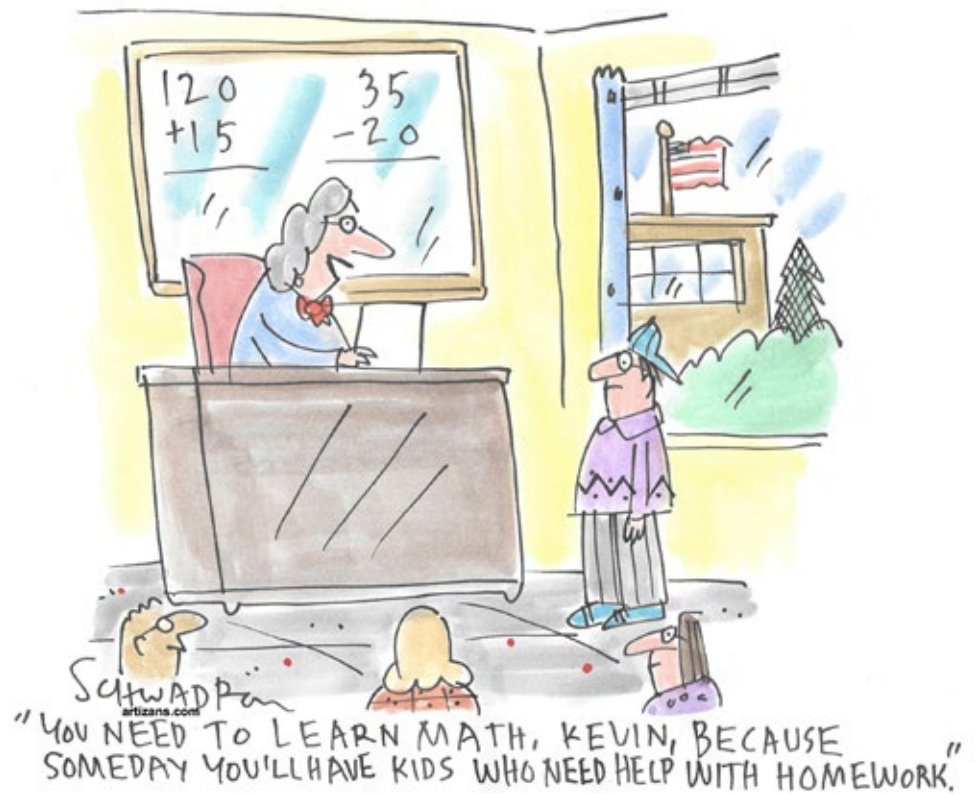
**📷 Scott Squires**  
It is wonderful, kids are having fun and are engaged again.

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

## FOR THE RECORD

“We are deeply, sincerely afraid that the health care system in Alberta is ready to collapse past the point of repair anytime soon. Our patience has come to an end.”

– Dr. Shelley Duggan, president of the Alberta Medical Association



# Going grassroots: Taking steps to build collective power

## VIEWPOINTS

Karlee Hren, Jay Procktor and Heather Quinn  
Edmonton teachers and teacher-representatives

In early August, we had the opportunity to attend the United Teachers Los Angeles's (UTLA) organizing weekend, which had over 900 of their school-based representatives in attendance. This annual event focused on “building collaborative power” and emphasized the effectiveness of school-based representatives. The palpable sense of union solidarity energized the discussions and reinforced our belief that the future successes of the Alberta



Left to right: Denisha Jordan (California Alliance for Community Schools Organizer), Heather Quinn, Cecily Myart-Cruz (UTLA President), Jay Procktor, Karlee Hren

Teachers' Association (ATA) must be driven by local initiatives and local conversations.

### Cultivating local networks

The strength of our union lies in the relationships and networks cultivated at the school level, where classroom teachers play a pivotal role. The provincial ATA plays an equally critical role as it listens to the membership and reflects its concerns in communications to members, parents and the general public.

To enhance our collective power, we need to focus on where that power is found: in our classrooms and our staff rooms. Effective union work requires not only dedicated elected representatives and staff but also active involvement from the entire membership.

As one UTLA member insightfully remarked, “The power to win is not at the table; it's at the sites [schools], knowing that teachers have the backs of their bargaining team.”

### Three key actions for our local

**1. One-on-one conversations:** This year, Edmonton Public Local 37 will implement a training program for site reps to conduct monthly one-on-one conversations with local ATA members. These discussions will include listening to members' concerns, providing ATA and bargaining updates and assigning actionable tasks for follow up. We will begin by engaging natural leaders (those respected and trusted by peers) within each school and expand our reach through them.

**2. 10-minute meetings:** Site reps will be trained to run brief, focused meetings at the start or end of staff gatherings, during lunch breaks or whenever feasible. These meetings will allow them to identify and collect teacher concerns to relay to local and district representatives, as well as to provide members bargaining and other general provincial ATA updates.

Strengthening this two-way communication will ensure that members feel heard and supported.

**3. Red4Ed promotion:** We will emphasize the history and importance of the Red4Ed movement, which symbolizes our collective organization and solidarity. The days we ask members to wear red (Fridays and bargaining days) can also help us see where we may need to focus our attention and efforts for improvement. Through Red4Ed, we can build networks within schools and the broader community, including parents and local businesses, to reinforce our unity and collective power.

### Our Association, our union

Recent provincial actions — the removal of our regulatory functions, lack of consultation around significant increases to mandatory standardized testing, changes to pension governance — have forced teachers to focus more on union-related activities.

The strength of our Association lies in our membership and in the ability of our locals to mobilize at the school level, as demonstrated by our recent achievements in local bargaining. Many of us have been told throughout our careers, “We'll get them next time.” As one local president remarked at this year's summer conference, “THIS IS next time!”

We invite you to join us and stand united shoulder to shoulder with your colleagues. Together, by fighting for our dignity, our profession and the students and working families we serve, we will secure our future and the future of those coming after us. ■

Karlee Hren and Heather Quinn are the Vice-president and President, respectively, of Edmonton Public Local No 37. Jay Procktor serves on the Provincial Executive Council as District Representative, Edmonton-McMurray.



Old Scona Academic principal Will Deys presents Gerald Chung with a plaque for CyberPatriot XVI Coach of the Year.

SUPPLIED

## Alberta teacher wins award for devotion to cybersecurity

Heather Grant  
ATA News staff

A teacher from the Edmonton Area has received an award for his dedication to getting his students involved in cybersecurity. Gerald Chung, coach for Old Scona Academic High School's cybersecurity club, was named CyberPatriot XVI's Coach of the Year for 2023-2024.

CyberPatriot, a national youth cyber education program based in the United States, was developed by the Air & Space Forces Association as a way of getting K-12 students interested in pursuing careers in cybersecurity and other science sectors. Chung's own interest in this area has grown over the years.

"I've always been a tech person," Chung says. "Cybersecurity has kind of moved to the forefront in the last five to seven years, and so I wanted to further my tech background, not just in coding or networking, and cybersecurity was just the thing coming on at the time."

Chung teaches cybersecurity as a class, and the students in that class can then apply to be in the CyberPatriot Club, an extracurricular activity he coaches on his own time. He receives dozens of applications for the club each year for 48 sought-after spots.

Consisting of eight teams of six competitors, the club at Old Scona

has had many successes, including having the top Canadian team in the CyberPatriot's international competition and finishing first in the CyberTitan Canadian National Finals last year. Competitions consist of teams preventing hacking and looking at vulnerabilities in Windows, Linux and server systems

"Our all-girls team has won nationals the last six years in a row," Chung says with a smile. "We always have an all-girls team now. I'm trying to promote girls in the program, too."

Remarking on society's reliance on digital software, Chung stresses the importance of students learning cybersecurity today and going forward. He says he feels fortunate to help students develop and apply their knowledge in the cybersecurity field and is excited to see where it takes them.

And it is thanks to his students that he is receiving this recognition now.

"When kids nominate you, it just makes you feel a lot better, you know ... the kids took the initiative."

Always the team player, Chung adds that he sees his Coach of the Year Award as a win for his team at the school.

"To me, it's more a team award," Chung says, "I have very passionate students, and I have supportive teachers and administration at Old Scona." ■

# Province announces \$8.6 billion school construction plan

Kim Clement  
ATA News staff

In response to rapid population growth and rising student enrollment, Premier Danielle Smith unveiled an \$8.6 billion investment in Alberta's K-12 education system. The announcement, made during a televised address on Sept. 17, introduced the School Construction Accelerator Program, which aims to create 50,000 new student spaces within three years and 150,000 new spaces over seven years. The plan aims to accommodate a total of 200,000 new students by 2031.

"This is the fastest and largest build our province can manage," Smith said, emphasizing that the funds will go toward building new schools, modular classrooms and pilot projects for charter and private schools.

While her announcement focused on building schools, Smith also reaffirmed the government's support for "school choice" by announcing the Charter School Accelerator Program, which will use a portion of the \$8.6 billion to add 12,500 charter school spaces in Alberta within four years.

The investment in new school construction has been welcomed by many, including school boards struggling with school capacity issues. At the same time, some stakeholders have expressed concerns with the government's plan, particularly the decision to allocate public funds to private and charter school construction as these schools are not accessible to all Alberta families.

Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) President Jason Schilling stated his concern with public funds going to private and charter schools.

"No other province spends as much on private schools as Alberta, and it's at the

detriment of public schools, where over 90 per cent of students go to school," he said.

Medeana Moussa, executive director of public education advocacy group Support Our Students Alberta, echoed this concern.

"We cannot afford to keep gifting our valuable public funds to private entities who do not admit all children," said Moussa.

There is also concern that operational relief for Alberta's public education system won't come until at least Budget 2025, leaving another year of overcrowded classrooms and unmet student needs.

"This government has neglected public schools and school boards for years," said Moussa. "We've had a huge influx of people, not only because of immigration but in big part due to the marketing push by this government, yet they haven't invested in that growth."

Schilling acknowledged the need for investment in capital projects but cautioned that new buildings alone will not solve existing issues in classrooms across the province. Remarking that the province needs 5,000 more teachers, he said the government's plan does not address how to hire, train and recruit more teachers in the coming years.

"Students and teachers are still facing unsustainable conditions. New buildings are welcome, but what good are schools without teachers?"

Schilling also highlighted persistent issues like overcrowded classrooms and inadequate support for students with complex learning needs, which remain unaddressed by the government's infrastructure-heavy initiative.

"The funding for new buildings is crucial," Schilling said, "but it won't address the untenable conditions students face today." ■



CHRIS SCHWARZ/GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

# Teacher pension contribution rates lowered

Myra Rybotycki  
ATA staff officer

Teachers are now taking home more of their paycheck thanks to lower pension contribution rates. Both the Teachers' Pension Plan (TPP) and the Private School Teachers' Pension Plan (PSTPP) saw reductions in contribution rates effective Sept. 1. What does this mean for Alberta teachers? Read on.

**Q** How much will the contribution rates be reduced?

**A** As of Sept. 1, 2024, contributions were reduced by a total of 2 per cent of pay for the TPP, shared between the members and government/employers, and a total of 1 per cent of pay for the PSTPP, shared between the members and employers.

For the TPP, the total contribution rate will decrease from 10.32 per cent to 9.29 per cent. For the PSTPP, it will change from 9.95 per cent to 9.45 per cent. This is the breakdown is shown in the table below.

**Q** What factors influence these contribution rate changes?

**A** The Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund (ATRF) Board carefully reviews various factors, the key one



ADOBE STOCK

being the actuarial valuation. This study assesses the plan's liabilities against its assets to ensure the pension fund is adequately funded.

**Q** Why is this reduction happening now?

**A** The elimination of the deficit that had long plagued the fund and the

strong plan-funded status, along with the robust and effective risk-management levers in place, allowed the ATRF Board to reduce contribution rates this year.

**Q** How do the new rates affect my monthly contributions?

**A** If you earn \$8,000 per month, your monthly contribution is (as of Sept. 1) \$739.87. This is calculated as \$470.37 on the first \$5,708.33 at an 8.24 per cent rate and \$269.50 on the remaining amount at an 11.76 per cent rate. Prior to the reduction, your monthly contribution would have been \$808.46 with the same monthly earnings. This decrease in contributions means more disposable income for you!

**Q** What if I work part-time?

**A** If you work part-time, your contributions are based on what you would have earned working full-time in your position and then adjusted by your FTE.

**Q** What is the importance of these changes for teachers?

**A** These reductions not only enhance financial flexibility for teachers but also demonstrate the effective management of the ATRF's pension funds. They represent a positive step toward a more secure retirement for all teachers.

**Q** Where can I find more information about these changes?

**A** For more details, you can visit the ATRF website, [www.atrf.com/funding-the-plans/contribution-rates/](http://www.atrf.com/funding-the-plans/contribution-rates/) (Contribution Rates – Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund (ATRF)).

## Current contribution rate details

	TPP (pre Sept. 1)	TPP (post Sept. 1)	PSTPP (pre Sept. 1)	PSTPP (post Sept. 1)
Up to YMPE	9.00%	8.24%	8.50%	8.25%
Above YMPE	12.86%	11.76%	12.15%	11.79%
Total teachers' contribution	10.32%	9.29%	9.95%	9.45%
Total government/employer contribution	9.89%	8.92%	9.51%	9.01%

## CTF/FCE CORNER

Facebook: CTF-FCE  
Twitter: @CTFFCE  
www.ctf-fce.ca



# Alberta teacher named to national committee on diversity

Lindsay Yakimyshyn  
ATA News managing editor

Teacher Fitz Sherman is set to share his voice on a national level. For the next two years, he will be representing Alberta teachers on the Advisory Committee on Diversity and Human Rights of the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF/FCE).

Serving on a committee is not new to Sherman, who has served on provincial Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) committees for years. He was a member of the School Leaders Issues and Concerns Committee, the Professional Conduct Committee and the Professional Conduct Appeal

Committee and, most recently, co-chair of the ATA's Status of Racialized Teachers Working Group. For him, sharing his voice and experience with the CTF/FCE's advisory committee is a natural next step.

"I am excited because it is something new, something different, and I want to be able to contribute to the work at this level," Sherman said.

Sherman's new role on the Advisory Committee on Diversity and Human Rights will allow him to connect with colleagues from other parts of the country to discuss diversity-related matters and then, together, provide advice, guidance and their first-hand perspectives to the CTF/FCE executive. This advice can make a real impact for Canadian teachers, leading to national initiatives related to advocacy, resources, events and programs.

"Having teachers from the field on CTF/FCE Advisory Committees is very important to ensure the Federation receives regular input and guidance from a diverse group of practicing teachers," a statement from the CTF/FCE reads. "As a federation of provincial

and territorial organizations, the CTF/FCE is strengthened by this grassroots engagement."

The CTF/FCE currently has five advisory committees: Advisory Committee on Diversity and Human Rights, Advisory Committee on French as a First Language, Advisory Committee on Indigenous Education, Advisory Committee on the Status of Women and Advisory Committee on the Teaching Profession. With nominations submitted by teacher associations across Canada, Sherman is the sole ATA field member named to one of these advisory committees this year.

Before applying to serve on the committee, Sherman, currently athletic director at Gus Wetter School in Castor, was aware of some of the CTF/FCE's current diversity initiatives, including a program to support diverse members interested in the organization's election process. With a seat at the table now, Sherman sees the CTF/FCE advisory committee as a way to learn more about diversity initiatives being undertaken not only in Ottawa but also across Canada.



SUPPLIED

Teacher Fitz Sherman looks forward to new opportunity.

"I look forward to seeing how the other associations are working to promote diversity, and to bring back the national perspective to the ATA here," Sherman said. "I also look forward to bringing to this committee and its work my perspective and the perspective of Alberta teachers." ■

Each year, the Alberta Teachers' Association nominates members to serve on the CTF/FCE advisory committees. Opportunities and application information will be posted on the ATA's website in the spring under Advocacy > Volunteer.

# How one school marked the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation



PHOTOS: JAMIE GREEN, GRADE 5 TEACHER, E. G. WAHLSTROM SCHOOL

Schools across Alberta marked Orange Shirt Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation this year on September 30. At E. G. Wahlstrom School in Slave Lake, the students and staff came together to recognize this day. The students worked with the school's Indigenous education coach to make moccasins. Students then observed an Honour Song sung by the Indigenous education coach. Finally, students hung the moccasins they created on the fence along the school yard.





## Sign up today to join our support groups for teachers

**"Support for Teachers Living with Anxiety"**  
(in-person for Edmonton area)  
Begins Oct 30, 2024, 7:30-9 pm

**"Supporting Teachers Experiencing Compassion Fatigue"**  
(virtual Alberta-wide)  
Begins Oct 23, 2024, 7:30-9 pm

Signup on Eventbrite  
\$75/session - eligible for insurance coverage

Aimee is a Counselling Therapist offering confidential counselling services. She specializes in supporting teachers and education workers with concerns such as stress, anxiety, compassion fatigue, and burnout.

Contact her at [hello@ordinaryliving.ca](mailto:hello@ordinaryliving.ca) to book an appointment or register for a group.



## Healthy interactions WORKSHOP



## Resolve conflict with confidence!

Join the Alberta Teachers' Association for a day-long conflict resolution workshop.


**Teacher and school leader participants will learn to**


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The Alberta Teachers' Association

<https://surveys.teachers.ab.ca/s3/2024-25-Healthy-Interactions>

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The Alberta Teachers' Association





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Subscribe to receive an email when a new issue is available.

<http://bit.ly/ATAeNews>

# Off Script

with ATA President Jason Schilling



## Supporting the next gen

There has been a lot of discussion and research about the different generations of teachers working in our schools across the province. It is not unusual in some of our schools to see three generations — Baby Boomers, Gen X'ers and Millennials — working side by side. This mix creates opportunities and challenges. It can add an extra layer of excitement as we (I speak as a Gen X'er) learn from those who have never known a world without the Internet, but it can also raise some complications as different generations and their understandings of work and school contexts intertwine and collide.

Recently, I had the chance to meet some of the newer generation of teachers joining our profession when I attended the Edmonton Beginning Teachers' Conference and the Student Local Conference this fall. As I looked around the rooms and saw these new, yet exhausted, teachers and preservice teachers, I was reminded of the early days of my career. The hopes, aspirations and fears that come when you get your first teaching job or when you begin your first teaching practicum — everything can be overwhelming, and the imposter syndrome can be strong. I know I spent the first month in my first teaching job just waiting for a knock on the door telling me a mistake had been

made, and my time was up. At the same time, starting my teaching career in a small rural school, I had a building filled with mentors who supported me in a variety of ways.

Association research on our newer colleagues tells us that these teachers crave mentorship and support on aspects such as classroom management, behavioural supports and mental health supports, as well as guidance on employment issues such as contracts (call the Alberta Teachers' Association for that!). I can attest that at any and every stage in our careers, we all crave those things.

Knowing this, it is important for us as a profession and an Association to support our newest colleagues the best we can. It takes time — and we all know that time is often in short supply — but the dividends will pay off for the profession in the long run. Moreover, the supports for our new teachers do not have to rest on the shoulders of just one person. All of us can work together to help our newest colleagues build the foundations for a long career in education.

And one day, those new teachers will be like me, watching two-week-old TikTok videos on Instagram in the morning while drinking coffee and wondering why their back hurts so much. So much to look forward to!

## Upcycling: Bike program gears up for second year

### SUCCESS STORIES

Cory Hare  
ATA News staff

There's a lot to be learned from fixing a temperamental bicycle.

That's been the experience of Dustin Moreau, the shop teacher at Westglen Middle School in Didsbury.

In the fall of last year, Moreau wanted to provide students with an outlet for their mechanical interest, and so he created a bike mechanics course. His inspiration was his growing collection of disassembled small engines and the school's heavily populated bike racks.



Dustin Moreau was inspired to jumpstart a bike mechanics course.

"I was getting a little frustrated with all these engines that I had in pieces, and no one wanted to put them back together," Moreau says.

"But I noticed how many bike racks we had and how many kids are riding bikes, and I thought to myself, well, that's kind of a nice mechanical system which is a little simple

... so I thought that would be a cool way to introduce a good practical skill."

Moreau created an option course based on a two-day bicycle mechanics course he'd taken at the University of Calgary. His course is based on the ABCs of bike mechanics: air, brakes and chain. Students start by learning how to inflate a tire and repair a flat, then move on to brake and chain adjustments.

Currently in its second year, the course has attracted more than 40 students per year and has been embraced by both the school board and the broader community.

The Chinook's Edge board approved a \$5,000 innovation grant that financed the purchase of 10 mobile bike stands, 10 mobile tool carts and the tools to fill them, while community donations have kept the school supplied with bikes for the students to practice on.

"I've been shocked with the support," Moreau says. "If I needed something, I've been able to get it."

#### A little rusty

The program has not been without its frustrations for students. The first wave of donated bikes included many that had been rusting in barns for years — not the easiest to get roadworthy. However, as time passed, Moreau isolated a collection of better-conditioned bikes for students to work on to set them up for success.

Students are also able to work on their own bikes, which increases the likelihood that they will ride and stay active, Moreau says.



Students get hands-on experience.

Overall, the program has enabled students to develop patience, resilience and problem-solving skills.

"It really has a good problem-solving routine to it, which I hope that those students can take into their math classes and their other core classes ... how to see a problem and work your way backwards," Moreau says.

"I'm excited to see the program five, 10 years down the line," Moreau adds. "It's been really good. It's been a learning curve for me, kind of learning with the students as we go, but I'm starting to really enjoy it."

## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Success Stories is an ongoing feature that enables teachers to share their successes with their colleagues. To submit an idea or an article about a new program or approach that you've instituted, please contact managing editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn at [lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca](mailto:lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca).

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# Faculté Saint-Jean launches doctoral program

## La Faculté Saint-Jean lance un programme de doctorat

**Samira ElAtia**  
Associate Dean-Graduate  
Studies and Research,  
Faculté Saint-Jean (FSJ)

Francophone education is reaching new heights at the University of Alberta's Faculté Saint-Jean (FSJ). This fall, FSJ welcomed the first intake of students for its new transdisciplinary doctoral program in French.

The doctoral program at FSJ, announced this spring, offers a bilingual university education at the postgraduate level in several fields of the humanities and social sciences, natural and applied sciences, and health sciences.

"Our doctoral program is now ready to welcome future research and academic talent eager to deepen their knowledge and contribute to the advancement of research in their respective fields," said Jason Carey, dean of FSJ.

Established to meet the professional needs of the 21st century, this program creates a space for integrated and collaborative transdisciplinary research that gives students a unique opportunity to deepen their scholarship and solidify their respective research skills within a unique framework of Canada's linguistic duality.

Carey said that the launch of this program ensures a complete educational continuum in French in Alberta.

"It will now be possible to complete

one's entire education in French in Alberta, from kindergarten to doctorate," Carey said.

The graduate program at Faculté Saint-Jean is unique in Western Canada because it is housed within a multidisciplinary French-speaking faculty that is an integral part of one of the world's leading English-speaking universities, the University of Alberta, thus offering an environment conducive to unique bilingual research work.

More information about this new doctoral program is available here: [ualberta.ca](http://ualberta.ca) > [Campus Saint-Jean](#) > [Doctor of Philosophy - Études Transdisciplinaires](#). ■



Samira ElAtia, vice-doyenne aux études supérieures et à la recherche, et Jason Carey, doyen de la Faculté Saint-Jean (FSJ), célèbrent le nouveau programme de doctorat de la faculté.

**Samira ElAtia**  
Vice-doyenne aux études  
supérieures et à la recherche de la  
Faculté Saint-Jean (FSJ)

L'éducation francophone atteint de nouveaux sommets à la Faculté Saint-Jean (FSJ) de l'Université de l'Alberta. Cet automne, la FSJ a accueilli ses premières personnes étudiantes de son nouveau programme de doctorat en Études transdisciplinaires.

Ce programme, annoncé au printemps, offre une formation universitaire bilingue de 3e cycle dans plusieurs domaines, incluant les sciences sociales

et humaines, les sciences naturelles et appliquées et les sciences de la santé.

«Notre programme de doctorat est maintenant prêt à accueillir les futurs chercheurs et universitaires désireux d'approfondir leurs connaissances et de contribuer à l'avancement de la recherche dans leurs domaines respectifs», a déclaré Jason Carey, doyen de la FSJ.

Établi pour répondre aux besoins professionnels du 21e siècle, ce programme concrétise la création d'un espace de recherche transdisciplinaire intégré et collaboratif qui offre aux étudiants une occasion unique de consolider leurs compétences de recherche respectives dans un cadre qui reflète la dualité linguistique du Canada.

Selon Carey, le lancement de ce programme assure un continuum éducatif complet en langue française en Alberta.

«Il sera désormais possible de suivre toute sa scolarité en français en Alberta, de la maternelle au doctorat», a-t-il aussi déclaré.

Le programme d'études supérieures de la Faculté Saint-Jean est par ailleurs unique dans l'Ouest canadien. Il fait partie intégrante d'une faculté francophone multidisciplinaire qui relève d'une des plus grandes universités anglophones du monde, l'Université de l'Alberta, offrant ainsi un environnement propice à des travaux de recherche bilingues et innovants.

Vous trouverez plus de détails sur ce nouveau programme de doctorat en consultant le lien suivant : [ualberta.ca](http://ualberta.ca) > [Campus Saint-Jean](#) > [Doctorat en Études transdisciplinaires](#). ■

# Council approves its recommendations on policy review

## PEC POINTS

**Audrey Dutka**  
ATA News staff

### Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council (PEC) meeting held Aug. 12, 2024, in Banff.

1. Named field members to Association committees.
2. Set the date for the announcement of voting results for the Edmonton District by-election as Dec. 13, 2024.
3. In accordance with general bylaw 74(3), set the date for close of nominations for the Edmonton District by-election as Oct. 31, 2024.
4. Amended the Administrative Guidelines so the period in which members may vote online shall commence not more than 21 days prior to the election date.

### Highlights of the PEC meeting held Sept. 19–20, 2024, at Barnett House, Edmonton.

1. Approved, as the position of Council, recommendations on the six-year

review of policy (as amended) and authorized that locals be informed accordingly.

2. Approved, for submission to the 2025 Annual Representative Assembly, the proposed Disposition of Immediate Directives.

3. Approved one executive resolution for submission to the 2025 Annual Representative Assembly.

4. Approved the final form of one Council-sponsored electoral ballot for distribution to the membership.

5. Approved the statement of Association program emphases for 2024–25.

6. Approved the Association's 2024–25 International Cooperation proposed budget.

7. Amended the Administrative Guidelines pertaining to grants provided to student locals and the advertising of special products and services offered by Association contract partners.

8. Named members to the election rules appeal panel and the by-election rules appeal panel and authorized the executive secretary, after consultation with panel members, to identify one member as chair of each panel.

9. Named field members to field experiences committees. ■



Award-winning illustration by James Lee Chiahan.

Check out the ATA Magazine on the ATA's website under News.



# ATA Magazine wins industry awards

ATA News staff

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

The gold award (first place) was for the best short written feature and went to Celeste, a teacher who wrote about her mental health struggles in the spring 2023 edition of the magazine. (Celeste's last name was withheld from publication due to the highly sensitive nature of the subject matter.) In taking home the top prize, Celeste was chosen ahead of several established professional magazine writers.

In her acceptance speech, Celeste told the crowd of publishing industry insiders that teachers are currently struggling mightily under enormous pressures.

Celeste's story on mental health was part of a collection of stories published in the spring 2023 issue of the ATA Magazine. That mental health feature was nominated for "best editorial package," and earned the silver award.

The other silver award went to illustrator James Lee Chiahan, a freelancer hired by the ATA Magazine to create an illustration of system principal Kenny Yeung for the magazine's *Unsung Hero* section. That illustration was published in the fall 2023 issue of the magazine. ■

### Find out what you need to know about your pension from the experts who manage it.

Thinking of retiring in the next few years? Sign up on ATRF's MyPension portal for one of our upcoming webinars and learn what you need to know about your pension.

Attending the ATA's Substitute Teachers' Conference? Join our pension presentation designed specifically for teachers like you.

Other questions about your pension? Visit our website anytime for answers!



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



## Edmonton District ATA 2024 by-election

Run. Vote. Engage.

### Want to be a district representative?



Register as a candidate on the ATA website by 5 pm on October 31, 2024.

Check out the Edmonton District PEC By-Election Candidates' Handbook for more information.

TES-MS-17-15 2024 09

## ADVERTISING IN ATANEWS

For advertising information, contact Trevor Batty at Trevor Batty Advertising Sales 1-778-773-9397 [trevor@tbasales.ca](mailto:trevor@tbasales.ca)

Next deadline Thursday, Oct. 17, 2024, 4 p.m. (Publication date Oct. 29, 2024) Advertisers are encouraged to book early – space is limited.

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The Alberta Teachers' Association



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[LDADHDnetwork.ca](http://LDADHDnetwork.ca)



# Making children smile

*Alberta teachers on their Change for Children experience*

This summer, six Alberta teachers travelled to Nicaragua as part of the Change for Children 2024 teaching tour. The teachers spent two weeks working with Nicaraguan teachers, supporting their professional development and learning about the unique challenges they face. The Change for Children participants capture their shared experience below, in verse.

## Deacachimba

*Seven strangers were on an adventure knowing their role was to serve.  
They all had signed up for an experience none of them would soon forget  
Once they loaded into the boats, quite certainly their destiny was set.*

*The sun shone down on them, then the rain soaked them to the core —  
Some of them were wondering, "What am I really here for?!"  
When they arrived at San Andrés, looking like a pack of drowned creatures,  
La Casa Verde was a welcome site for the weary group of teachers.*

*With new adrenaline pumping, the teachers got straight to work.  
They were excited knowing they'd be helping kids, a true teacher perk.  
Organizing, planning and packing were all checked off the list;  
Just like Santa, they checked twice so no school or teacher was missed.*

*Warned about the disparity they would surely see at Pansik,  
They prepared for what could be the toughest day of their week.  
When they made it to the village and the families began to arrive,  
The inquisitive eyes put all fears to rest; these teachers were ready to thrive.*

*San Andrés, Amak, Tuburus, Pankawás, Shimenka and Yakal,  
In each community the teachers made a difference, big or small.  
Everyone did their best and learned together along the way,  
Helping other teachers and making children smile — the best kind of pay.*

*The teachers made it through the journey, all the twists and turns and bends,  
Hopefully leaving this experience as the truest of lifelong friends.*

*As experienced by Alberta teachers Ashleigh Barsalou, Suzie Beckett, Sarjenka Kuryliw, Samantha Lynas, Timothy Murawsky and Jessica Vargas, and Change for Children representative Adrienne Wiebe*

"Deacachimba" is Nicaraguan slang for "cool" or "awesome".



# ALBERTA IS THE RICHEST PROVINCE IN CANADA.

## YET OUR PROVINCE STILL SPENDS THE LEAST ON PUBLIC EDUCATION IN ALL OF CANADA.

On a per capita basis, Alberta continues to be Canada's richest province. While this should instill great pride in us, it is concerning that we spend the least on education per student. This neglect has left our schools and students in dire need, creating a crisis in Alberta's public education system.

Insufficient funding for public education leads to unmet student needs, overcrowded classrooms, the elimination of diverse programs, and decreased support for students with complex issues. These compounded problems have driven many dedicated teachers to leave their profession in despair.

As proud citizens of this province, we cannot stand by while Alberta's governmental policies continue to neglect education. Learning about the state of our public education should evoke a sense of urgency and a call to action in all of us.

It's time to address these injustices and right the wrongs. We must advocate for increased funding and resources to support our students and educators. Want to make a difference for Albertans everywhere? Demand answers from your MLA about why Alberta spends the least on public education per student in all of Canada. It's time to stop the excuses and take action.

[StopTheExcuses.ca](https://www.stexcuses.ca)



The Alberta  
Teachers' Association

# Alberta Advisory Committee on Educational Studies

## APPLICATION FOR GRANTS Descriptive or Experimental Studies

The Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies (AACES) invites applications for grants to support descriptive or experimental studies in education.

Grants in excess of \$6,000 are awarded only rarely because of limited available resources. Grants cannot be given for travel unrelated to the proposed research project.

Note: The application to the Ethics Review Committee must be initiated, and a copy of the submission to that committee must be included with the proposal.

Online applications and the guidelines for grant applications are available at Alberta Teachers' Association > Professional Development > Grants, awards and scholarships > Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies Grant.

Applications are available online.

Questions regarding the application can be e-mailed to [Sudeep.Dua@ata.ab.ca](mailto:Sudeep.Dua@ata.ab.ca) OR submitted to

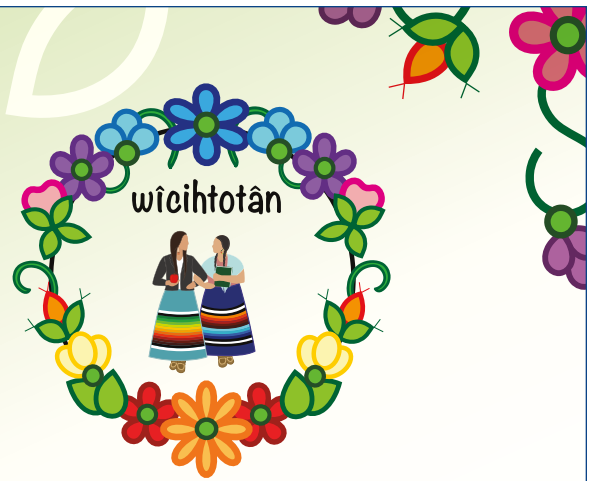
Administrator, Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies  
c/o The Alberta Teachers' Association  
11010 142 Street NW  
Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1

780-447-9432 or 1-800-332-1280

Completed applications received by October 15, 2024, will be considered at the spring meeting of AACES.

Application  
Deadline:  
**OCTOBER 15, 2024**  
**4:30 PM**

 The Alberta Teachers' Association



 The Alberta Teachers' Association

## wicihtotân Let's Help Each Other

wicihtotân is an ATA program and network for Indigenous teachers and school leaders to listen and learn together. The program connects participants to offer support, guidance and mentorship with each other.

The Alberta Teachers' Association is seeking First Nations, Métis and Inuit teachers and school leaders to **join wicihtotân** and attend three gatherings throughout the school year:

**December 6**, 1:00 – 3:30 pm, online via Zoom

**March 21**, 1:00 – 3:30 pm, online via Zoom

**May 16**, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm, Edmonton, location TBD

Release time will be provided by the Association.

To Register go to <https://surveys.teachers.ab.ca/s3/w-cihtot-n-Gathering-Registration-2024-2025>.



Registration Deadline: November 30, 2024

### For More Information

E-mail: [walkingtogether@ata.ab.ca](mailto:walkingtogether@ata.ab.ca)  
Phone: 780-447-9400 (in Edmonton),  
1-800-232-7208 (toll free in Alberta)

PD-2024-09



## STORIES AND PHOTOS WANTED

If something newsworthy is going on in your school, district or local, please let us know. We will also consider articles, photos and cartoons. Please email tips and submissions to managing editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn: [lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca](mailto:lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca).

popquiz!

# Sudoku

	7				8	2	9	5
8			5		9			
			1			3	8	
4				2	5		3	6
5		9				4	2	
3	2	6						8
2				8			5	
9	5		7		3	6		
	3	4			6		1	9



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## International Collaboration for Education 2025



Are you ready for something more in your professional life?

Are you looking for a larger, more global view of education?

As a teacher, do you feel you have more to offer and more to learn?

Are you ready for a personal and professional adventure?

### If yes, International Collaboration for Education (ICE) (formerly Project Overseas) might be for you!

#### Volunteer for ICE with the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF/FCE)

The CTF/FCE is seeking English and French-speaking Canadian teachers at the elementary and secondary levels who are interested in volunteering their time and talents to offer professional development in-service programs in partnership with teacher organizations in developing countries. Each year, over 50 Canadian teachers are chosen to volunteer on CTF/FCE's ICE in countries throughout Africa and the Caribbean. The in-service projects take place in July.

For more information and the application form, please visit [www.teachers.ab.ca/professionaldevelopment/internationalcooperation](http://www.teachers.ab.ca/professionaldevelopment/internationalcooperation)



The Alberta Teachers' Association

# Retiring in 2025? ARTA can help.



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

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



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

[bit.ly/ARTApfwc](https://bit.ly/ARTApfwc)



## Forests, Volcanoes, Wolves, and the Deep Sea... the Thrill of Discovery Never Stops!

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**Nalini Nadkarni: Roots to Canopy**

**MON/TUE NOVEMBER 18 & 19, 2024**

*Curriculum connections: Fungal Associates, Conservation, Earth Science, Ecosystems, Nutrient Cycling*



**Andrés Ruzo: Hunt for Sleeping Giants**

**MON JANUARY 27, 2025**

*Curriculum connections: Impact of Natural Events, Harsh Environments, Earth Science*



**Doug Smith: Wild Wolves of Yellowstone**

**MON APRIL 28, 2025**

*Curriculum connections: Environmental Impact of species reintroduction*

**Kakani Katija: Designed by Nature**

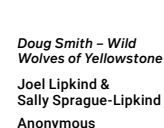
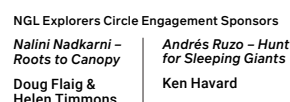
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*Curriculum connections: Biomimicry, Harsh Environments, Biological Adaptations, Ecosystems*

\* All shows start at 10:15 a.m.

Jack Singer Concert Hall at Arts Commons

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Artists, programs, and dates subject to change.

# TALEND

October 8, 2024 | Volume 59, Number 3

## Guppies, frogs and a cat... Oh my!

We asked teachers to share the strangest thing they ever found in the classroom — their answers may (or may not) surprise you.



*A rabbit. Also frogs used to come in through the floor of the portable and get stuck under the lockers. I could hear them ribbiting after school.*

– Patricia Gagnon

*Several years ago a few students decided to play a prank in my room and they hid dozens of tiny plastic babies around the room. I am still finding them in some of the strangest places! My favourite one was when they half buried it in the dirt of my spider plant.*

– Chandra Moir

*A cat in the ceiling above the school's main office.*

– Kim Stubbs

*I had a student come to me at the end of the day with a Ziploc container. I was still early in my career, so I naively asked her what it was. It was guppies. Live ones. But she reassured me she had fed them and made sure they had air in her locker all day. Apparently there was an underground market for baby guppies in my class.*

– Kristen Kokura

*When I was subbing once in a junior high food class, a student brought a snake into the class and let it go. Another time teaching Grade 5, a student new to Canada brought in a baby gopher that she managed to catch, put a bow on and put in a gift bag.*

– Sharon Brown McLellan

*A duck (not a duckling) in a backpack. My grade 10 student said it looked injured ... and wanted to rescue it.*

– Lindsay McLennan Tschirter

*Life-sized cardboard cutout of a random man in a suit. Turned out to be a relative of the previous teacher.*

– Alexandria Makarewicz

*We had a student bring a cow tongue to school last year.*

– Carmen Simmonds

*I heard a tiny cry and found a wee kitten in a backpack. We had a pet for the day!*

– Lori Karoly Szmul