

MAKING CORE MEMORIES **TEACHERS' CONVENTIONS KICK OFF**

See Tale End, page 16.

ATA NEWS

February 18, 2025 | Volume 59, Number 9 | News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association



LINDSAY YAKIMYSHYN

Teachers take part in a coat-hanger weaving session during the North Central Teachers' Convention, held Feb. 6–7 in Edmonton.



PEC election on the horizon

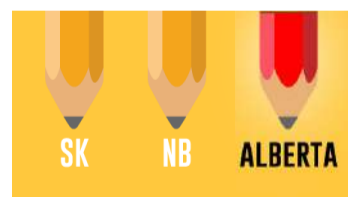
Be ready to vote — verify your ATA online account

See [page 4](#).

Now is the time

What to know about school board trustee elections

See Q&A, [page 2](#).



Still the least

New data shows Alberta's per-student funding still the least in Canada

See [page 4](#).

All in a name

Two ATA districts receive new names

See [page 5](#).

Job action poised to expand

More education support workers vote for strike action

See [page 9](#).

If it's broken...

Two years in, how the teacher discipline process is going

See [page 7](#).

Take your break! Make small changes to avoid burnout



EDITORIAL

Kristine Wilkinson
ATA News
Editor-in-Chief

“Teacher burnout” – I hate that phrase!!! It is often followed by “take care of yourself,” but this has always left me wondering how I can actually take care of myself. It sounds impossible sometimes. However, there are some fundamental strategies that do help, and I bet you can find time, even during the busiest times of the year.

Teaching is not for the faint of heart; dealing with the complex needs of students and their families takes a lot of spirit and care. I have had a few occasions over my many years of teaching when I really thought, “I can’t do this anymore.” One such occasion was when I began my first vice-principal position. I was in for a huge surprise. Not only had I changed positions from a junior high teacher to a vice-principal, but I had also changed

schools. I was in shock, and I did not like it!

My assignment felt overwhelming, not only because it was new, but also because I had left the team of colleagues and friends I had leaned on over the previous decade behind. The change of schools was much more impactful than I realized it would be. I also had new and unfamiliar duties, was assigned to teach all new courses and felt the pressure of being the instructional leader. I didn’t know if I could handle it, and I suspect every teacher in Alberta has felt this overwhelmed at some point in their career.

The pressure and stress I felt when I changed positions was, fortunately, not unrelenting. I developed a new team of colleagues who supported me and gave me moments of laughter throughout the days. For me, colleagues played a huge role in my mental health – and they still do! I was fortunate that the stress subsided for me, but that’s not the case for everyone in every circumstance. Yes, stress is a reality of professional life, but extreme and unrelenting pressures

can lead to the debilitating state we call burnout.

Three symptoms characterize burnout: exhaustion; cynicism, or distancing oneself from work; and inefficacy, or feelings of incompetence and lack of achievement. Research has linked burnout to many health problems, including hypertension, sleep disturbances, depression and substance abuse. Moreover, it can ruin relationships and jeopardize your career. We have seen ourselves or our friends experience this, and it is heartbreaking.

I implied above that there was an easy step you could take to prevent or recover from burnout. One of the most helpful ways is to develop relationships and seek out helpful interpersonal connections. Friends and fun got me through the tough moments. Positive relationships are a must! Also try to carve out time to prioritize your health. Shift your perspective to determine which aspects of your situation are fixed and which can be changed. I’m not telling you to start doing hot yoga every morning (unless that works for you), but look at what you can

change in your day, and take one small step in a positive direction.

Even as you take care of yourself, take care of your team. Make sure you let colleagues know that they too need to take time for rest and renewal, even simply by role-modelling taking a break. I always tried to find time for a coffee in the staff room. Could this happen every day? Of course not, but I tried to make it priority. I do hear that teachers aren’t consistently taking their legislated 30-minute lunch break. Making sure you and your colleagues take this time is an easy first step to avoiding burnout. Take your break!

Small, simple changes can make a world of difference. Teachers know that teaching is not transactional; it is based on relationships, and so is your own wellness. The joy we find in our days leads to a much more fulfilling career, and I wish that for all of you. When you see me around ATA events, I would love to have a quick visit – I guarantee it will improve my day (and hopefully yours).

I welcome your comments. Contact me at kristine.wilkinson@ata.ab.ca.

Trustee elections: Time to seize the day



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive
Secretary

Question: I’ve noticed on Facebook some posts by people who seem to be running for their school board. What do I need to know about school board trustee elections?

Answer: January 1 marked the opening of the nomination period for quadrennial school board elections, which will be held in conjunction with municipal elections across Alberta on October 20, 2025. Some eager beavers have already begun positioning themselves to run for school trustee positions, and interest in these elections will mount throughout the course of the next eight months.

Elected school board trustees are responsible for governing Alberta’s public, Catholic and francophone school systems, and the fact that they are elected makes public education public and democratic. Crucially, every Canadian citizen over the age of 18 who resides in an Alberta school district has the right to vote and, with few exceptions, run for the position of trustee in that district. This extension of the franchise to every member of the larger community directly

or indirectly served by the school district differentiates governance of public, Catholic and francophone schools from that of charter and private schools, which are effectively closed clubs, albeit clubs in receipt of substantial public dollars.

School boards collectively administer almost \$7.5 billion in operational spending transferred to them by the province. Their decisions affect over 650,000 students and about 80,000 teachers and other staff. School trustees are at the centre of this, approving policy, budgeting, directing the superintendent and engaging with the community. They are, ultimately, the boss of you, and you get to elect them!

The position of school board trustee has often been a very accessible point of entry for budding politicians of all political stripes. Service on school boards has helped to give individuals the experience to run successfully for municipal, provincial and even federal office. Premier Danielle Smith provides a notable example, having been elected in 1998 to the Calgary Board of Education and ending her tenure when the entire board was turfed by then education minister Lyle Oberg in August 1999.

Yet despite their potential importance and impact, school trustee elections rarely rise to public attention. In the last elections, of 426 trustee positions, 204 were

filled by acclamation and six went vacant. Voter turnout also tends to be embarrassingly low and it is not unusual for contested seats to be determined by a few dozen votes.

This is a problem, but also an opportunity.

With low information and low turnout elections, some candidates who are actively hostile to the fundamental values of public education will attempt to use the upcoming elections to position themselves to advance their blinkered, harmful and destructive agendas opposing inclusion, teacher tenure, teachers’ exercise of their professional judgement, efforts to ensure that schools are safe and caring spaces for all students, and public education itself. Even though formal slates and parties are prohibited in school board elections, some candidates are already working together to advance this mission. Among the most prominent organizers of these candidates is David Parker’s Take Back Alberta (TBA) organization, which has targeted school boards. Even if the future of Parker and TBA is uncertain given that they have been fined over \$100,000 for various breaches of Alberta’s election law, the network of fellow travellers they have established remains in place. We can add to this candidates who have the support of the Alberta Parents’ Union and Parents for Choice in Education.

(See <https://teachers.ab.ca/news/supporters-public-education-need-counter-destructive-forces>.)

Teachers and supporters of public education cannot be complacent in the face of this threat. The good news is that we are not powerless. Our task is threefold. We must first identify and encourage individuals who are prepared to stand up for our public, Catholic and francophone schools to put their names forward for office. Second, we must ensure that all candidates’ platforms and credentials are made publicly known so that voters can make informed decisions about who they will support. Finally, we must turn out to vote and encourage other like-minded citizens to make the trip to the polls on election day.

The Association has produced a digital *School Board Election Handbook* (available in the Members Only section under Member organizing resources > General resources) to assist teachers, candidates, locals and subgroups to organize in advance of the election. Additional information for candidates is available from the Alberta School Boards Association. October 20 may seem like a long way away, but the clock is ticking. ■

Questions for consideration in this column are welcome. Please address them to Dennis Theobald at dennis.theobald@ata.ab.ca.



Taking the owl's approach to bargaining



VIEWPOINTS

Sean Brown
ATA Coordinator, Teacher
Employment Services

As the chief negotiator for the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), I'm sometimes asked about our approach to bargaining. A labour action strategy is crucial during bargaining because it ensures the Association stays prepared, disciplined and proactive. Bargaining involves not only presenting demands and waiting for a response, but also effectively leveraging power while managing risks and maintaining control of the narrative.

Labour disputes can escalate quickly if not managed properly. To avoid disorganized, ineffective or hasty actions that could undermine a union's — in our case, the ATA's — position, a clear escalation plan is necessary to ensure that any labour action is strategic rather than emotional and that actions are taken at the appropriate time and with adequate preparation.

Perhaps the best way to frame the bargaining approach is to look at the hawk and the dove. When the hawk and the dove both want the same resource, they choose to battle or to concede, respectively. This hawk-dove paradigm is overly simplistic, though, as it assumes that the only options are aggression (hawk) and concession (dove). So, I'd like to add an owl to the mix.

The owl signifies a more nuanced and pragmatic approach, acknowledging that the highest risk of a strike involves not just strategy, but also taking into account the unintended consequences of miscalculation, emotion and loss of control.

The owl understands that strikes are not solely the result of deliberate choices but often emerge from a

series of escalating events that spiral out of control. Labour history, much like military history, is replete with instances where both sides miscalculated, raising tensions beyond anyone's original intent. The optimal strategy is not merely to prepare for conflict (hawk) or to avoid it at all costs (dove), but to actively manage the risks of escalation while pursuing robust bargaining objectives.

How events spiral

1. Emotional escalation — During a crisis, intense emotions can cloud judgment. A poorly timed or inappropriately phrased statement, an unexpected external event or a handful of individuals acting impulsively can escalate tensions in unpredictable ways.

2. Loss of command and control — Managing complex organizations under pressure can be challenging. Messages may be misinterpreted, leading to unintended actions, such as military miscommunications have triggered unplanned battles.

3. Time pressure and mistakes — Making quick decisions during crisis situations can result in errors, as governments and military leaders have stumbled into conflicts they later regretted.

Owls in labour action: A different playbook

1. Map out the crisis scenarios — Owls prepare for potential escalations by outlining various crisis scenarios and their unintended consequences. What if a statement is misinterpreted? What if employer actions provoke an unexpected backlash? What if public sentiment shifts unpredictably?

2. Controlling the narrative — Owls understand that perception is reality. The goal is to shape events rather than be shaped by them. This involves

strategic communication that de-escalates when necessary and applies pressure where effective, ensuring that messaging remains disciplined and clear.

3. Strategic action, not just reaction — Hawks advocate for aggressive measures, doves promote restraint, and owls emphasize thoughtful escalation and contingency planning.

4. Leaders must lead — Owls understand that in high-stakes situations, maintaining composure and clarity is essential. Leaders must set the tone and ensure that team members make decisions based on a shared strategic vision.

5. Exit strategies — The best generals know how to enter and exit a war. Owls prepare off-ramps, establishing clear pathways to resolve a strike before the damage becomes excessive. This involves defining in advance what an acceptable resolution looks like and ensuring that the other side understands this pathway as well.

The owl advantage

Hawks win battles but can lose wars. Doves avoid battles but may concede too much. Owls don't merely focus on the fight itself; they emphasize the long game, managing risks, seizing opportunities and ensuring that any labour action bolsters the owl's position instead of creating long-term vulnerabilities.

By thinking like an owl, the ATA can sidestep the greatest danger: not merely losing a battle, but becoming ensnared in a conflict that neither party desires, resulting in harm for both, with neither truly victorious. ■

Sean Brown is the ATA's chief negotiator. He joined the ATA in December 2015 and before that served on Provincial Executive Council as the District Representative for Edmonton District for three years.

RED for ED

Greater Peace Local No. 13 has been actively engaging members and fostering solidarity supporting central bargaining. To show our collective strength, we provided every teacher in our local with a "Teacher Strong" red t-shirt, which they proudly wear on Fridays and central bargaining days.

We organized and hosted Red for Ed contests to encourage participation, keeping our members engaged and energized in this important cause. Additionally, as a token of appreciation and unity, every teacher received a local-branded backpack as part of their Christmas gifts.

Through these initiatives, we continue strengthening our local and demonstrating our unwavering support for collective bargaining.

— Ashley Wiggs, local political engagement officer,
Greater Peace Local No. 13

— Jeanne Lawrence, local communications officer,
Greater Peace Local No. 13

The Career and Technology Education Council (CTEC) is proud to introduce — and wear — our CTEC Red for Ed t-shirts. They are a testament to the diversity of Alberta's teachers, while showing unity in our shared commitment to enhancing education throughout the province.

— Paul Bohnert, president, CTEC



Wearing red reminds us that we're all in it together and helps to keep us hopeful for better days. We're grateful to our bargaining committee. We know they're working hard on our behalf and advocating tirelessly to improve public education.

— Monica Dear, Virginia Park School

Want to share how you or your team is supporting public education in Alberta? From wearing your best Red for Ed to creating moments of engagement or advocacy, we want to hear from you. Email managing editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca.



Alberta per-student funding still the least in Canada

Mark Milne
ATA News Staff

For the fourth year in a row, our province has landed squarely at the bottom of the national list for per-student funding — and the gap between Alberta and the national average continues to grow. Statistics Canada released their latest data on revenue and expenditure by public school boards across Canada, and once again Alberta lags behind all other provinces in almost every measure.

The newest release from StatsCan covers the 2022–23 school year and pegs the national average school board operating expenditure at \$13,692 per student. Alberta falls well below that standard, coming in at \$11,464. That’s over 16 per cent below the national average, increasing the gap by three per cent from the previous year. The discrepancy between the average and Alberta’s spending has grown 11 per cent since Alberta first fell to the bottom of the scale in 2018–19.



Neil Hepburn

“When looking at recent history, statistics show that our province has usually performed at or above the national average, often claiming the second or third spot,” said Neil Hepburn, ATA economist. “But since the 2014–15 school year, we’ve seen a drastic and rapid slide to the bottom.”

Hepburn points out that salary levels are also a comparison that is commonly made. He says salary, however, only tells part of the story. “We also need to look at the working conditions,” said Hepburn. “Functions such as assignable/instructional time, class size and class complexity must also be factored into the equation.”

Teacher compensation, which breaks down the teacher’s salary by how many students they teach, now sits at \$8,202 per student. In this category, Alberta finds itself, once again, in tenth place and almost \$1,600 below the national average. Our province has been in the last spot for the previous

three years and below the national average for the last 13 years.

“We hear politicians claim our teachers are the best paid in the country,” said Hepburn. “While it is true that our salary levels are in the top half across Canada, the number of students per Alberta teacher more than offsets that statistic.”

One area of the StatsCan report where our province is above the national average is the ratio of students per teacher. Alberta again finds itself ranked tenth, with approximately 17 students per educator. The national average sits at around 12. These calculations include classroom teachers, school administrators and pedagogical support staff. However, this data remains valuable when doing comparisons across the provinces.

“Given the high ratio of students per educator in Alberta,” said Hepburn, “it’s easy to see how our teacher compensation per student works out to being the lowest in the country.”

Often, governments will make comparisons of their education funding by measuring the dollars being allocated in their provincial budget. Hepburn said that approach provides an incomplete and inaccurate picture. In some jurisdictions, the money allocated by the ministry is only part of the revenue received by the school boards. Funds from parental fees or local governments, like municipal property taxes, are not included in the provincial government expenditures.

“Provinces who don’t include those revenue streams will appear to have a much smaller education budget,” said Hepburn. “It can be a shell game. This is why looking at actual school board expenditures is so valuable — it includes all revenue sources for school boards and all expenditures.”

It is for this reason, said Hepburn, that the most accurate numbers to compare are the actual number of taxpayer education dollars being spent on each student. That is done by examining the statistics covering the per-student operating expenditures.

“While this downward trend in Alberta education funding is not new,” said Hepburn, “the current government has done nothing to reverse this trend. Let’s hope that the upcoming provincial budget 2025 changes that.”

Nunavut, Northwest Territories and the Yukon Territory are omitted from the analysis because the particular circumstances faced by school authorities in those areas are so different from school authorities in the rest of the country. ■

The data reported here was drawn from the StatsCan tables 37-10-0064, 37-10-0065, 37-10-0007 and 37-10-0153. Check out further information on the StatsCan numbers here:



ALBERTA HAS THE LOWEST FUNDING PER STUDENT IN CANADA



In Alberta, public schools include public, Catholic and francophone schools.



The Alberta Teachers’ Association

Per-student operating expenditures 2022/23 (Statistics Canada 2025, Tables 37-10-0064, 37-10-0065, and 37-10-0007). Amount for Canada excludes Yukon, NWT and Nunavut.

StopTheExcuses.ca

Members urged to register to vote in PEC Election

Kim Clement
ATA News Staff

With the Provincial Executive Council (PEC) election taking place March 10–13, teachers are being urged to register for an ATA online account to ensure they can cast their vote.

While all ATA active and associate members in Alberta are eligible to vote, only those with a verified ATA online account in good standing will be able to participate. Election organizers are strongly advising new members and associate members to register now to avoid last-minute issues.

“Without a verified and valid account, you unfortunately can’t vote,” said Dave Matson, the ATA’s returning officer.

Because account verification involves manual processing by ATA staff, it’s best to register early. While most applications are processed quickly, some may require additional verification.

“It depends on the member information we have on file,” Matson explained. “If we’re missing key details — like a postal code, date of birth or a copy of a teaching certificate — gathering that information could take time.”

If a member applies for an account after the voting window opens, any missing details could delay verification, meaning they might not be able to vote before the deadline.

“Don’t wait until the last minute,” Matson said. “We strongly encourage teachers to sign up as soon as possible. The sooner, the better.”

Ensuring voting integrity

Collecting accurate member information during registration helps protect the integrity of the election, says Matson.

“We need to ensure that only eligible voters are participating,” he said.

Teachers who already have an online account should log in now to verify that their account details are still up to date. If a member has forgotten their login credentials and gets locked out after multiple failed attempts, they’ll need to contact the ATA for reactivation, a process that also takes time.

By taking steps now to confirm your online account is verified, you will ensure that your vote counts. And make sure you cast your vote online on March 10–13! ■



How to create or verify your ATA online account

1. Go to teachers.ab.ca and log in.
2. If you don’t have an account, follow the prompts to create one. If you can’t recall if you already have an account, please contact us to verify.
3. Verify your account details to ensure everything is up to date.

Need assistance?

Email: OnlineSupport@ata.ab.ca

Call: 1-855-407-3891 (toll-free in Alberta)

In with the new

Two ATA districts renamed

Mark Milne
ATA News Staff

Two Provincial Executive Council (PEC) geographic districts now have new names. Effective immediately, Edmonton District is to be known as Central Prairie Sky and Calgary District is to be known as South Central Rockies. While the name change has been in the works for years, it became official at the January PEC meeting.

The name change was originally brought to council by Paul Froese and Karen Nakaska, who were the district representatives (DRs) for Edmonton District and Calgary District respectively when the idea was proposed. Froese passed away last summer while in office, but his vision for the change was picked up by past president Greg Jeffery.

"This was a legacy project left to me by my good friend Paul Froese," said Jeffery. "I was happy to finish this for Paul."

The districts' names, as they previously existed, were virtually indistinguishable from the districts of Calgary City and Edmonton McMurray and often caused confusion among ATA members. The change aims to provide more clarity and distinction between the districts representing the cities of Edmonton and Calgary and the districts representing the locals surrounding those urban areas.

Deneen Zielke, the sitting DR for Central Prairie Sky, says that, beyond adding clarity, the new names reflect the spirit of the areas they represent.

"This past fall the presidents of the five locals surrounding Edmonton met and brainstormed a list of names that they felt embodied the district," said Zielke. "After input from each local, Central Prairie Sky was chosen. It represents the prairie land surrounding the districts and the open sky where many travel to when watching the northern lights."

Central Prairie Sky covers the Elk Island, Elk Island Catholic, Greater St. Albert Catholic, St. Albert Public and Sturgeon locals.

A similar process took place in the Central South Rockies district. Each of the locals within that district feature the Rocky Mountains in their logo, so "Rockies" was a logical choice. "South Central" was added to indicate their geographic position with the surrounding southern districts.

South Central Rockies includes the Canadian Rockies, Christ the Redeemer, Foothills and Rocky View locals.

The districts' name changes came with a few challenges, as both are contested districts in the upcoming PEC election. While some electoral publications have already been printed using the former district names, all new publicity will label the districts as Central Prairie Sky (formerly Edmonton District) and South Central Rockies (formerly Calgary District). All voting processes will also reflect the new name while still including the former name.

Since this name change does not affect any geographic boundaries, it was not necessary to have the change passed at the Annual Representative Assembly. ■

WHAT'S PEC?

PEC is the 20-person committee that creates and sets policies and practices for the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). It consists of a president, two vice-presidents, a past president, the ATA executive secretary and 15 representatives from 11 districts across the province. All positions are elected by the membership, with the exception of the executive secretary.

Curious to know more about the ATA's governance structure, including PEC, geographic districts, locals and more? Check out <https://teachers.ab.ca/about>.



The current district representative and local presidents for Central Prairie Sky (formerly Edmonton District).



The current district representative and local presidents for South Central Rockies (Calgary District).



YOUR VIEWS

What teachers shared about what Red for Ed means to them

f Patricia Gagnon
Red4Edab means the voice of change for properly funded, inclusive education, and program supports for all students in literacy and numeracy in primary. Red4Edab means supporting teachers so they, in turn, can support students.

o Alison Carlson
Hope for better times

o Keltey Quast
Community and shared values

o Stephanie Shakotko Gokarn
I'm committed to whatever is necessary to ensure my students get the best education.

Teachers' tips and tricks for convention

f Lindsay Elizabeth
Look ahead at the schedule, take note of things that pique your interest and their location (do I have time to get to point b from point a between sessions?). Snacks. See your friends,

plan a lunch! Leave time for the trade fair, and enter all the draws!

f Lori Brown
Pack meals and snacks or figure out where everyone finds food. Haha.

f Jen Wrobel
Booking my nights with friends and family because hotels are ridiculously expensive, even with a special rate.

o Lauren Chapman
Plan ahead! Have options.

o Simona Chalifoux
[Convention] is interesting and informative for me as an educator. My philosophy is to aim to always be a lifelong learner, and [bring] that mindset [to] every session.

o Deena Alexander
Connecting with colleagues

o Markiana Hryschuk
Select sessions that are inspiring and/or can be implemented in your practice!

o Erin McBean
A pack full of snacks and lots of layers of clothing.

FOR THE RECORD

“As Premier, I was not involved in any wrongdoing. Any insinuation to the contrary is false, baseless and defamatory.”

– Premier Danielle Smith in a Feb. 8 statement responding to allegations around AHS procurement and contracting processes

CORRECTION:

In the PEC Election Supplement of the Feb. 4, 2025 issue of the ATA News, the name of Calgary City candidate Kent Kinsman was incorrectly spelled Kent Kinsmen. The misspelling was corrected in the online edition of the news. The ATA News apologizes for the error.

Opinions expressed on this page represent the views of the individual writers and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Alberta Teachers' Association.



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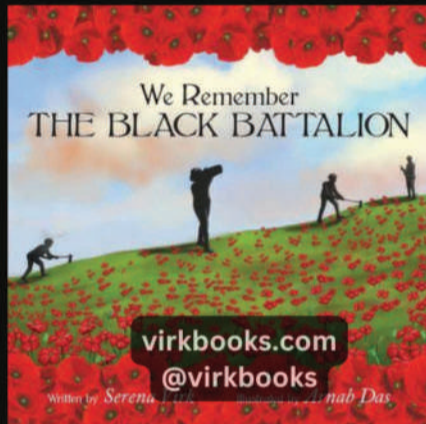
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Teacher discipline process is broken, says ATA official

Members encouraged to contact ATA immediately if subjected to a complaint

Cory Hare
ATA News Staff

It has been more than two years since the government took over the professional discipline of Alberta teachers and it's not going well, according to Tim Jeffares, the ATA's associate co-ordinator of Regulatory Affairs.

Through legislation passed in September of 2022, the government created the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission (ATPC), which officially began operation on Jan. 1, 2023, ending more than 80 years of the ATA investigating and prosecuting professional conduct complaints against its members.



Tim Jeffares

The newly developed process, like the ATA's previous process, enables anyone to initiate a complaint against a teacher or teacher leader via an online portal. However, with the new process, once received, complaints are communicated to the respective superintendent.

"If you receive a complaint, your superintendent will know, no matter how frivolous, vexatious or without merit that complaint may be," Jeffares said.

Once the commission receives a complaint, it has four possible courses of action at its disposal: no further action, mediation, dispute resolution or investigation. Jeffares says that an inordinate number of complaints are being referred to investigation.

Since the change took effect, the ATA's Regulatory Affairs team has assisted more than 370 members who've had complaints made against them. Currently, the team is assisting 225 members who have matters before the commission.

Jeffares says the number of complaints being filed against teachers is high, reflecting a trend seen in other professions in the province.

He sat down with the *ATA News* and elaborated on his assessment of the system, how it's affecting teachers and how well it's protecting the public.

Q. Now that the commission is handling teacher discipline, what is the ATA's role in the process?

A. A policy was passed at the 2023 Annual Representative Assembly on representing teachers in this process. This is different than representing teachers in employment matters, which is the work of Teacher Employment Services. Regulatory Affairs is a separate subunit of the ATA that focuses solely on representing teachers embroiled in regulatory matters with the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission.

Our role is to ensure that the commission treats the teacher in a procedurally fair way. From time to time, we'll end up in disciplinary hearings where we'll need to consider helping the teacher mount a defence because the allegations and the proposed penalties are out of sync with other teacher regulators across Canada.

Q. How well is the process working and how effective is it?

A. From my perspective, the process is broken. It's not working well. The timelines are egregious. The lack of use of front-end processes that would really solve these issues for teachers and complainants is problematic. Teachers and complainants are languishing for years under this process.

There seems to be a revolving door at the commission, with investigators joining and leaving at an alarming rate. The commission is currently using third-party investigators with no background or understanding of the educational setting, some from out of the province, to fill in the void from all the staff that have left, and that's created all sorts of chaos, inconsistencies in investigation practices, lost evidence, poor communication and long delays for teachers.

Q. What has been the impact of this new process on teachers?

A. When you have a complaint, you're under a great deal of stress. It impacts mental health, physical health, professional relationships in the building, relationships with students, relationships with your superintendent, because all those people know. It's an awful lot to deal with.

We are conducting ongoing research with respect to teachers who have gone through the process and they've reported to us the biases that

they've encountered, how long time frames have impacted their physical and mental health and their professional standing, and how it has made them second guess being in the teaching profession.

A number of teachers have said that they are thinking about relinquishing their leadership position because the only reason they got a complaint was that someone was unhappy with their decision — it wasn't that there was anything unprofessional about how the decision was made.

Most of these teachers are innocent of anything. Many complaints are parents that are frustrated, but they're not using the correct channels to ameliorate those school problems, and the commission sees fit to send all these issues to investigation, where they languish for long periods of time, so the issues never get meaningfully resolved.

Q. What is your team doing to address this situation?

A. We work tirelessly to encourage the commission to get on with things and to make sure that there is an active investigator for each case. Often these cases fall completely dormant and we constantly write objection letters and hold their feet to the fire so they get on with this stuff. I wish I could say that that was impactful, but it seems as though the commission is content to maintain the ineffectual status quo.

Q. To what do you attribute the high volume of complaints that are being made against teachers?

A. More than anything, it's sort of a propensity for people to fire, ready, aim, to make their first course of action to file a complaint with the regulator. The best solutions for most problems are closest to the school where the student is — if you have an issue, dealing with the teacher, the assistant principal and the principal are the best solutions, but some complainants seem to be prone now to just filling out an online form, hitting send and calling it a day.

Q. How effective has the process been in removing bad teachers from the profession and protecting the public?

A. To our knowledge, since January 1, 2023, only two ATA members have been in an actual hearing, so a lot of the rhetoric used by then minister Adriana LaGrange about the ATA not holding teachers accountable and not punishing bad teachers was unfounded and deliberate misdirection. Clearly this new process isn't achieving that goal or protecting the public good.

Q. How do the number of hearings compare to when the ATA oversaw them?

A. The Association may have conducted 25 to 30 hearings per year and maybe 15 to 20 appeals per year.

Q. What would you like to see changed?

A. At the very least, the ATPC could put a standard in place for starting and completing investigations so that these matters could get put behind teachers, a process where they have active investigators assigned to every case and they're moving through the timelines in a reasonable, fair way.

Q. What is your message to members who learn that they are the subject of a complaint?

A. Any member who is subject to a complaint needs to contact the ATA as soon as possible.

Given how long and drawn out these things are, coupled with the procedural issues that we've seen from the start to finish of the process, it's important that a member feels supported and has support because complaints aren't going to go away in two weeks — more like two years. To navigate that process alone is an awful lot while a teacher is doing their job. ■

Alberta Teaching Profession Commission (ATPC) and what does it mean to me?

Join us for an interactive session where we will explore the new Code of Conduct, the role of the ATPC and how to keep yourself out of the professional discipline process.

March 17
3:45pm-5pm via Zoom



Free to all active and associate members.

Reach out right away

If you learn that you are the subject of a professional conduct complaint, contact ATA Regulatory Affairs immediately.

Email: professionaldiscipline@ata.ab.ca

Phone: 780-447-9460 or
1-800-232-7208, ext. 460



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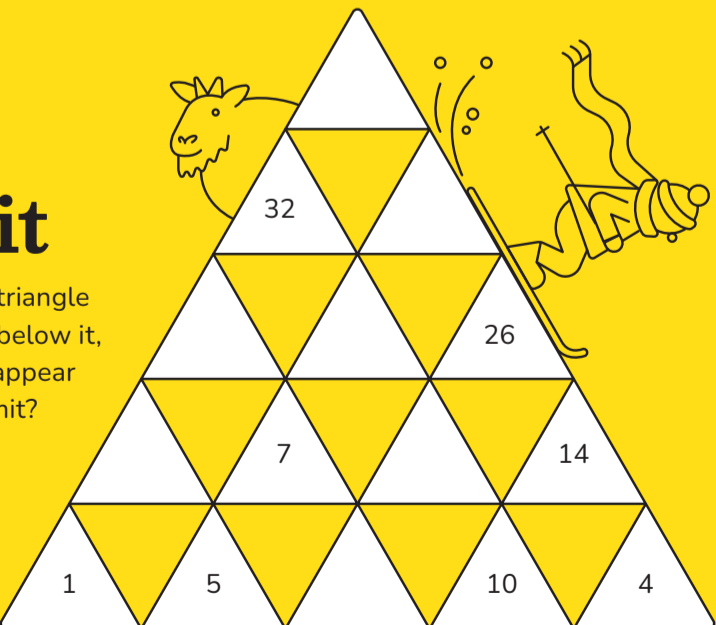

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popquiz!

Sum Summit

If the number in each triangle is the sum of the two below it, what number should appear at the top of the summit?



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For more information please contact dehr@ata.ab.ca or visit www.teachers.ab.ca.

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The Alberta Teachers' Association

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2025




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MARCH 10 11 12 13 14



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www.teachers.ab.ca



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More education support workers vote in favour of strike action

ATA News Staff

More Alberta education support workers could join their colleagues on the picket line, as five more Canadian Union of Provincial Employee (CUPE) locals representing over 2,000 employees have voted in favour of strike action.

The groups include more than 1,100 custodial and maintenance employees in the two Calgary school divisions, as well as more than 1,200 educational assistants and support staff in Black Gold School Division, Foothills School Division and Parkland School Division. Rory Gill, CUPE Alberta president, says in a statement that the vote results should not come as a surprise to the government.

"We've been telling the government that if they don't address the funding problems in our classrooms, the strikes will expand," said Gill. "They did not address the funding problems, and now the strikes will expand."

Support for job action among the groups was generally high, ranging from 82 per cent to 95 per cent in favour of a strike. The union would provide 72 hours notice before engaging in any job action. As of Feb. 13, no notice had been given.

The prospect of job action comes as more than 4,000 education support workers continue to strike in Fort McMurray and Edmonton. In Edmonton, workers have been striking since Jan. 13; Fort McMurray workers began rotating job action in



LINDSAY YAKIMYSHYN

On strike since Jan. 13, members of CUPE Local 3550 (Edmonton Public Schools employees) remain on the picket line in front of Ross Sheppard School.

November and expanded that to a full strike in early January.

On Feb. 11, a joint statement from Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board Nate Horner and Minister of Education Demetrios Nicolaidis was released that accused CUPE National of interfering in local bargaining between school boards and CUPE locals.

"Alberta's government and school boards have shown up to the table to find a path forward, but CUPE National leaders clearly have ulterior motives that are not in the best

interests of their members or Alberta students," the statement reads.

CUPE Alberta responded through a statement of their own, saying the province's joint statement was "full of falsehoods and baseless attacks."

"Alberta has the lowest per-capita education funding in Canada," Gill's statement says, "Instead of engaging in smear campaigns, the government should come to the table and address the issues that their lack of funding has provided."

CUPE Alberta's statement further suggests that the government is trying to

draw attention away from the possible expansion of education worker strikes and from polling data CUPE shared that indicates a high level of support for striking education workers.

"The public understands that these job actions are happening because the Alberta government has not addressed the poor wages of school support workers," says Gill. "Albertans understand that education workers have to stand up for students and education. Parents and others are cheering them on and joining them." ■

ATA to celebrate substitute teachers

ATA News Staff

With Substitute Teachers' Appreciation Week approaching, the ATA is ready to celebrate the contributions of substitute teachers.

Substitute teachers play a crucial role in maintaining continuity and helping keep students engaged and productive when their classroom teachers are away. Substitute Teachers' Appreciation Week represents an opportunity to recognize the important contributions these colleagues make to public education in Alberta. This year, Substitute Teachers' Appreciation Week takes place March 10–14.

"The work substitute teachers do is invaluable," says ATA President Jason Schilling. "They have to step in, often with very little notice, and build connections with students so quickly to ensure that the learning continues."

The ATA offers supports and services for substitute teachers throughout the year, including a Substitute Teachers' Conference each fall. During Substitute Teachers' Appreciation Week, the ATA encourages school divisions, locals and individual schools to find meaningful ways to celebrate the substitute teachers in their communities.

Saying thanks

There are many ways to show gratitude and support for substitute teachers, both during Substitute

Teachers' Appreciation Week but also on an ongoing basis. Below are some strategies and activities to meaningfully acknowledge and offer continuing support to these colleagues.

- **Recognizing contributions:** Highlight the strengths and achievements of substitute teachers within the school community, whether through items in newsletters and social media posts or at your next meeting or event. During Substitute Teachers' Appreciation Week, you might consider hosting a special coffee, tea or lunch to say thanks.
- **Offering support:** Equip substitutes with information packages that contain essential information about the school and classroom procedures to set them up for success.
- **Providing timely information:** Offer substitutes a mailbox where they can access copies of the *ATA News* and the *ATA Magazine*, as well as local, school and district information.
- **Sharing lessons or activities:** Offer helpful teaching materials to make their work smoother and more effective.
- **Organizing an orientation seminar:** Collaborate with the ATA local to provide a session that familiarizes substitute teachers with expectations and resources.



- **Creating an inclusive environment:** Invite substitute teachers to attend staff meetings or events to foster a sense of belonging and camaraderie.
- **Supporting professional development (PD):** Provide access and invite substitute teachers to ongoing PD activities and consider planning a special PD event tailored for them. Encourage them to attend teachers' convention and the Substitute Teachers' Conference.
- **Creating space for feedback:** Consider providing frequent substitute teachers with a letter or card outlining their strengths and contributions to the school and the profession, and, when appropriate, encouraging your school leaders to observe and evaluate these teachers to support their efforts to achieve permanent professional certification.
- **Making small gestures of gratitude:** A simple thank-you note or a kind word can go a long way in making substitute teachers feel valued.

Free PD opportunities for substitute teachers

As part of Substitute Teachers' Appreciation Week, the ATA is offering free evening workshops tailored to substitute teachers in Alberta. This year's sessions are "Roles, Responsibilities and Supports for Substitute Teachers," "Economic Issues for Substitute Teachers,"

"Teacher Wellness — Don't Just Survive ... Thrive!" and "Regulation and Resilience: Supporting Students with Challenging Behaviour." These sessions aim to enhance substitute teachers' knowledge, resilience and capacity, says ATA staff officer Dan Grassick.

"We are always looking for the best ways to support substitute teachers," Grassick says. "Aside from helping them manage the complexities of their work, we want to ensure they understand their rights and responsibilities, as well as their agreements."


Members can register online at <https://2025atasubweek.sched.com/> for workshops, which will be held online via Zoom at 6 p.m. each day from March 10 to 13.

Showing support and appreciation for substitute teachers is another way to show solidarity.

"We are all in this together," Schilling says. "This is just another opportunity to remind ourselves of the great work our colleagues do every day for our students and for public education." ■

Support for subs

Substitute teachers who need work-related support or advice are encouraged to contact the Teacher Employment Services duty officer by calling 1-800-232-7208.



**ATA 2025
PEC
election**

VOTE ONLINE

www.teachers.ab.ca


March 10
Voting opens
at 8 AM

March 13
Voting closes
at 5 PM

BE READY TO VOTE ONLINE

Voting instructions will be sent to members mid February.

An ATA online account is required to vote. Don't have one? Get yours at teachers.ab.ca.



The Alberta Teachers' Association

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The Alberta Teachers' Association



The Alberta Teachers' Association

The winter issue of the ATA Magazine has landed!



Feature

Astounding and unsettling

Artificial intelligence is revolutionizing education

Winter issue of the ATA Magazine now available in schools.

Digital content available at teachers.ab.ca

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

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COMM-47-5-2-C-D1 2025-02



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.

Off Script

with ATA President Jason Schilling



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

Engaging with our future colleagues

Recently I was asked by a former colleague of mine if I would be interested in presenting to his Social Context of Schooling course at the University of Lethbridge (U of L). I jumped at the chance, as I believe it is important for the ATA to work with preservice teacher programs across the province. After all, they are the future of the profession. Visiting the U of L is always fun for me since it's where I received my undergraduate degrees, and those walls hold many fond memories. I even had that moment of feeling old when one student indicated he was once in my Grade 11 English class at Kate Andrews. A full circle moment indeed.

The students in the class asked thoughtful and inquisitive questions about the issues facing education

today. The conversation ranged from funding to curriculum to artificial intelligence in schools to 2SLGBTQIA+ policies and the politics that surround education these days. This group of students had had one round of practicum experience and asked questions that really got to the heart of the issues they had experienced. Like many of us, they are concerned about public education and want to make a difference in the lives of young people. It was inspiring to be in that space, to witness and share their enthusiasm, if only for a few hours.

They also demonstrated the desire to engage authentically in learning and incorporate Indigenous ways and culture into their lessons and pedagogy. We even had a brief conversation about Kendrick Lamar's stunning

Super Bowl halftime performance and how important it is to incorporate what kids see in their lives into the classroom. Finally, as the clock ticked away the minutes, we talked about the importance of hope and how that intermingles with advocacy. As much as these students could see the issues in education, they also wanted to see the hope in education. This was a good opportunity to talk about the reasons why we all chose education as a career, how when times are tough, it is important to remember the reasons why we teach.

As I rolled out of the parking lot, it occurred to me that working with students — regardless of their age — will always put a smile on my face. And I can't wait to see these students join our profession very soon. ■

Stark realities

PARACHUTE offers pan-Canadian context for Alberta teachers' degrading working conditions

Submitted by the Canadian Teachers' Federation

The latest findings from the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF/FCE) Parachute Educator Survey Series paint a stark picture of the challenges educators are facing across the country. Responses from Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) members epitomized some of the survey's most notable challenges, as Alberta teachers struggle under worsening working conditions, increasing class complexity and a lack of government support. Alberta's results not only mirror the pan-Canadian situation but, in many ways, surpass it. These findings highlight the urgency of addressing the factors contributing to teacher retention and recruitment in Alberta and across the country.

Alberta teachers facing severe working conditions

An overwhelming majority of ATA respondents describe their working conditions as poor to very poor.

- 86% of Alberta teachers report poor to very poor working conditions
- 90% of Alberta educators say their workload has become unmanageable since 2019
- 92% work over 45–48 hours per week
- 87% report struggling to cope with daily work-related stress

Compared to the national average, where nearly 80 per cent of teachers report struggling to cope, Alberta's numbers are particularly troubling. The survey identifies three key factors exacerbating conditions in the province: the range and complexity of student needs, large class sizes and insufficient preparation time.

The growing complexity of classrooms

The increasing complexity of student needs is another pressing

issue. Alberta educators cite the diversity of student needs, the number of high-needs students without adequate support and large class sizes as the top contributors to classroom complexity. Nationwide, 77 per cent of educators report that student needs have become significantly more complex in the last five years.

Top factors increasing classroom complexity in Alberta:

- Diversity of student needs
- High-needs students lacking support
- Large class sizes

Nationally, 63 per cent of educators feel unsupported by their ministries, while that number in Alberta is 82 per cent. This reinforces that while Alberta may be experiencing an extreme case, the issue is a pan-Canadian one.

Rising violence in schools

Workplace violence has become an escalating concern for educators. Alarming, over half of Alberta teachers reported experiencing violence in the past year.

- 55% of Alberta teachers experienced workplace violence
- 97% of incidents involved students
- 60% of verbal or physical aggression came from parents/guardians
- 16% involved school staff

Alberta respondents reported that nearly 80 per cent of violent incidents resulted in no action from safety officials. At the national level, 25 per cent of incidents received appropriate responses from safety committees — still inadequate, but a stark contrast to Alberta's low levels of intervention.

Ensuring education support lands where its needed most.

CTF/FCE



Parachute.

Pan-Canadian Educator Survey Series

The PARACHUTE survey was distributed by the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF/FCE) in collaboration with its 18 member organizations and was open to K–12 public school educators, including principals, vice-principals, and support staff, from October 21 to November 16, 2024. The survey garnered 4,771 complete responses. The next edition of the survey series will be launching in spring 2025.

A path forward: Addressing the crisis

Teachers in Alberta and across Canada agree on key measures needed to improve working conditions and ultimately address the recruitment and retention crisis. In Alberta, teachers overwhelmingly support the need for class-size reductions, provisions for handling class complexity and more dedicated preparation time.

- 75% of educators nationwide support class-size reductions
- 71% call for increased support staff
- 66% advocate for class complexity provisions
- 65% emphasize the need for more preparation time

These changes are critical to not only alleviating teacher burnout but also ensuring students receive the quality education they deserve.

Alberta's teacher workforce is in crisis, facing some of the most severe

working conditions in Canada. While these struggles reflect a national issue, Alberta teachers report even greater levels of stress, overwork and violence.

We are at a critical juncture in the story of Canada's public education system; but as much as the crisis is a deafening alarm bell, it is also an undeniable rallying call.

Educators cannot afford to work in isolation as governments attempt to devalue the profession, and equipped with irrefutable evidence, must work to inspire Canadians to demand more from ministerial leadership. Educators and the children they teach deserve a safe, well-funded and inspiring public education system.

As we progress through 2025, the Canadian Teachers' Federation will draw on our country's rich palette of insight and paint a future so vivid and achievable that Canadians will not only admire it, but demand its realization. ■



Want to Serve on a CTF/FCE Advisory Committee?

Each year, the Association is eligible to submit nominations for the CTF/FCE advisory committees.

Apply today!

Application deadline: April 7

All active and associate members of the Alberta Teachers' Association are eligible for the positions. Members must hold the highest level of membership available to them.

Find more details and application information on the ATA website



All applicants are encouraged to reach out to their district representative(s) to better understand the work of Association representatives.

If you have any questions, please contact Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsey.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca, 780-447-9425 or 1-800-232-7208.

COMM-162-11 2024 12

CALLING ALL MEMBERS

Apply to serve on an ATA committee!

The committees

Each year, a number of practising teachers are selected to serve on Association committees as well as to represent the Association on boards and committees of other organizations and provincial bodies. The list of opportunities for 2025/26 is now available at teachers.ab.ca/advocacy/volunteer.

The commitment

Standing committee positions are generally three years in length. Committee members attend the committee's meetings, prepared to speak—from their perspective as a field member—to the forces affecting the respective committee's work.

Travel and incidental costs, as well as release time, are covered to enable committee members to attend meetings.

The deadline for applications is April 7.

Find more information on the ATA website.



The ATA embraces diversity and inclusion and is committed to representing members belonging to equity-seeking groups.

Members belonging to equity-seeking groups are encouraged to apply.



All applicants are encouraged to reach out to their district representative(s) to better understand the work that Association committees undertake.

If you have any questions, please contact Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca, 780-447-9425 or 1-800-232-7208.

COMM-209 2024 12



Make the most of your teacher pension.

Upcoming Member Webinars



March 12, April 3, and April 15 at 5 p.m.

Steps to Receiving Your Pension: Learn more about deciding to retire, the steps you need to take to retire, your pension options, and post-retirement considerations.



March 18 at 5 p.m.

Pension Essentials: Focused on new members, covering contributions, maintaining your spouse/beneficiary information, pension eligibility, purchasing leaves/substitute service, and transferring service.



April 8 at 5 p.m.

Purchasing Service: If you had or are planning to take a leave, taught as a substitute teacher, or have purchasable service, find out what you need to know about taxes and much more.

Reserve your spot online at mypension.atrf.com

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DIGITAL NEWS

The ATA News is available online.

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

Seasonal resources available through ATA library

If you've ever needed another reason to use the ATA library, here it is!

With seasonal, cultural and religious observances held throughout the year, the ATA library has online resources available to make it easy for you to support your students and colleagues.

Take a look at web guides for upcoming dates this spring.

February

- Black History Month
- Freedom to Read Week (Feb. 23 to Mar. 1)
- Pink Shirt Day (Feb. 26)

March

- Francophone Heritage Month
- Ramadan (begins Mar. 1)
- Holi: Festival of Colour (March 14)
- Pi Day (March 14)
- St. Patrick's Day (March 17)

April

- National Poetry Month
- Passover (Apr. 10-20)
- Earth Day (Apr. 22)



ATA librarian Sandra Anderson with one of the ATA library's offerings.

LINDSAY YAKIMYSHYN

ATA LIBRARY

5 REASONS TO USE YOUR ATA LIBRARY

	1 HELPFUL STAFF	Ready to help you find information and recommend resources.
	2 SAVE TIME	Get your time back! Find great sites instantly on our curated web guides.
	3 TECHNOLOGY	Borrow cutting-edge education robots and technology.
	4 SAVE MONEY	Borrow the newest books, tech and videos before you decide to add to your collection.
	5 FREE SHIPPING	Free shipping both ways province-wide!



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FEATURE PERFORMANCES



Photo credit: Andy Phillipson

Gravity & Other Myths Presents
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SPLASH'N BOOTS

This beloved Canadian children's music duo creates concert experiences that bring happiness and joy to children of all ages.



St. Albert Children's Theatre Presents
DISNEY'S ALICE IN WONDERLAND JR.

Fall in love all over again with this timeless story of adventure, imagination and pure fun!



Darrell Brertton Jr. Presents
AHKAMĒYIMOK

Rooted in First Nations culture, this showcase of the art of powwow dancing is a celebration of identity, resilience and the unbreakable spirit within us all.



THE MERRY MARCHING BAND

Take a musical trip around the globe with a zany brass band in this hilarious show that combines world music with clowning!



MARIO THE MAKER MAGICIAN

Contagiously upbeat and full of heart, Mario leads you through an explosion of energy, belly laughs, robots, and magic – for all ages.

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Book your Children's Festival experience for your class online at tickets.stalbert.ca

- Use presale access code **SCHOOLICF25**
- Groups of 10 or more will automatically get a **25% discount!**
- Feature performances \$13.69
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Need help planning your day? Contact our School Liaison at 587-920-9851 or childrensfestival@stalbert.ca

Indigenous Education Initiatives Grant

Locals can receive up to \$2,000 in ATA grant funding to support projects fostering reconciliation and community connections. Apply by March 30.

teachers.ab.ca/scholarships



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2025

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The Alberta Teachers' Association

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TES-MS-15-10 EXT 2022 05



TALENT

February 18, 2025 | Volume 59, Number 9

TEACHERS' CONVENTION

MAKING CORE MEMORIES



Superfan

Kristi Nelson, Beaumont

There are so many memories over the years! One is just seeing my children's teachers in a more informal, collegial way.

I also remember one panel focused on how to better support our 2SLGBTQI+ students. It was meaningful to me, particularly as a school counsellor. It really made me think about what I say and how I can do better. It was an opportunity to take that learning and put it into my practice.

I really am a convention nerd (in a good way) and always love sharing what I've learned with my colleagues.



First-timer

Bobbi Houle, Hinton

This is my first ATA teachers' convention. I used to teach at reserve schools and so would attend other conventions. I am with a new school this year, teaching Indigenous languages and cultures, and so get to attend NCTC.

I'm so excited to make new memories here!



Team Red

For more than 80 years, the ATA's teachers' conventions have created space for meaningful professional growth for Alberta's teachers. And each year is an opportunity for our members to build core memories as teaching professionals.

This year, conventions kicked off on Feb. 6 and 7 in Edmonton with North Central Teachers' Convention (NCTC), where members made new memories — and some shared a few!



Session buddies

Bobbi Luymes and Glenda Ferguson, Didsbury

Over the years, we've attended sessions by some great presenters, like math teacher Peter Hill and author Phil Callaway. Another standout was Temple Grandin, who presented on living and learning with autism. Education for her couldn't look the same as it did for everyone else, and that was something that resonated with us as teachers of kids who all have different needs.



Sage on the Stage

Head of Class



Note Takers



Media Mixers