

THE ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

ATA Magazine



DIVERSITY

Starting a teacher GSA? Check out these tips from your colleagues.

PAGE 18

FEATURE

Trust, truth and respect are the foundation of collegial relations and a stronger education system.

PAGE 20

IN PROFILE

Displaced by war, teacher Judith Mawoko makes a new life in small-town Alberta.

PAGE 44



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Feature

20

COLLEGIALITY IS BEST

Teaching profession and public education benefit from collegial structure.



Winter 2021 / Vol. 101/N2

Feature

20 Collegiality takes work ... but it works.

Outlook

- 6 Letters
- 7 From the President
Mot du président
- 9 Then and Now
- 10 Looking Abroad
- 12 Unsung Hero

Bulletin Board

- 5 Editor's Notebook
Note de la rédactrice
- 14 Wellness
- 16 Technology
- 18 Diversity
- 32 Research Insights
- 44 In Profile

Learning Commons

- 38 From the Bookshelves
- 40 Kid Lit
- 42 In Focus

Teacher to Teacher

- 50 In My Humble Opinion
- 53 Teacher Hacks
- 54 Most Memorable Lesson



10

LOOKING ABROAD

Teachers' organizations mobilize during COVID-19 pandemic.



12

UNsung HERO

Teacher works to preserve Indigenous language for future generations.



54

MOST MEMORABLE LESSON

Improvised crisis management prompted by deceptive soundtrack.

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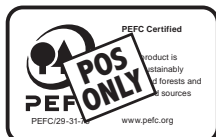
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Cover, pp. 21 and 27

 Nikki Ernst is an illustrator and designer based in the Toronto area. A recent graduate of the illustration program at Sheridan College, Nikki thanks her high school art teacher, Mr. McClure, for giving her the push to apply for art school and for making his students excited to push the boundaries of their artistic comfort zones.




MICHAEL HAUPTMAN
p. 26

 Michael Hauptman is the executive director of the Council of Catholic School Superintendents and is a sessional professor at Newman Theological College. He has 30 years of experience in education as a teacher, school administrator, superintendent of schools and school board trustee.




AJA LOUDON
p. 12

 AJA Loudon (AJA sounds like Ajay, short for Adrian Joseph Alexander) is an artist based in Amiskwaciwâskahikan (Treaty 6, Edmonton). A background in the sciences—including biology, chemistry, psychology and sociology—is a major influence on the concepts and processes behind his work.




MARGARET WELWOOD
p. 12


 Margaret Welwood enjoyed an intensely rewarding career teaching English as a Second Language to adults. Then, fueled by fond memories of creative writing in Miss Clark's English 30 class, she turned to writing as a second career that is also intensely fulfilling.




CAILYNN KLINGBEIL
p. 44

 Cailynn Klingbeil is a freelance journalist based in Calgary. Her writing credits include the *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, the *Globe and Mail* and the *CBC*. She has fond memories of making a newspaper as a Grade 6 student at Hillhurst School.


ANDI MOLLOY | p. 19

 Andi Molloy (they/them) is the director of the fine arts academy at an Edmonton junior high school. They are currently a co-chair of the Edmonton Catholic Teacher's Local 54 GSA, and the lead teacher for their school's GSA, called FISH Club.


TIFF PINO | p. 19

 Tiff Pino (she/her) is a 2SLGBTQ+ teacher who has worked with Edmonton Catholic Schools since 2004. She works hard to educate others about sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and creating safer spaces for all. Tiff is also the co-chair of the Edmonton Catholic Teachers Local No. 54 GSA.


CHRISTINA FRANGOU
p. 20

 A regular contributor to the *ATA Magazine*, Christina Frangou is a Calgary-based writer and journalist who specializes in health and social issues.

JULIE DIXON | p. 53

 Julie Dixon is the literacy and student services learning leader at Woodman School in Calgary. Originally from Ontario, she has spent the majority of her teaching career in Calgary, teaching grades 4–9 in what feels like every subject area

SARAH NICKONCHUK
p. 54

 Sarah Nickonchuk is a list-making, colour-coding overachiever who enjoys making people laugh. Her one-woman show is reserved for her grade 5 and 6 students at Good Shepherd School in Peace River.

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



PHOTO BY RYAN PARKER

Joni Turville

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

Curriculum needs a teacher's sense

THOSE WHO HAVE DONE POST-SECONDARY studies may have encountered a professor or instructor who clearly had knowledge of a particular field but weren't able to make it understandable to students. This is but one of reasons why I was very concerned when the government decided to stop working with the Association on curriculum development.

In August of 2020, Education Minister Adriana LaGrange announced the appointment of subject-matter experts to review and make recommendations on K-12 curriculum. Among the many issues raised, what struck me most was the lack of any K-12 teachers on the panel.

The Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta prepared me well for my chosen profession. My first year included coursework in mathematics, science, humanities, music, history, computer science and psychology. My second year introduced some of the "big picture" topics in education: child development, learning theory, educational psychology and curriculum design. And my final two years deepened my understanding by focusing on the specifics of curriculum, unit and lesson planning as well as teaching strategies.

Student teaching was also a vital part of the program, enabling me to integrate my classroom learning with the reality of life in a school classroom.

My story isn't unique. While the details may differ, every teacher in this province can write a similar story outlining how their understanding has been shaped by years of studying **not just subject areas, but how to teach**. And I'd bet that a common understanding among us all is that, while teaching is a discipline with a specific body of knowledge, research and practice, subject matter knowledge is but one small aspect of what teachers know and do every day.

And we won't let anyone, including this government, tell us anything different. 

L'élaboration du curriculum est une affaire d'enseignants


CEUX QUI ONT FAIT DES ÉTUDES POSTSECONDAIRES ont peut-être côtoyé un professeur ou instructeur ayant des connaissances très pointues dans un domaine précis sans pour autant savoir les transmettre, de façon compréhensible, aux étudiants. Voilà pourquoi, dès que le gouvernement a décidé d'arrêter de travailler avec l'ATA sur l'élaboration du curriculum, j'ai réellement commencé à m'inquiéter.

En aout 2020, la ministre de l'Éducation, Adriana LaGrange, annonçait la nomination d'experts en la matière chargés d'examiner le curriculum M à 12 en vue de formuler des recommandations visant à orienter son élaboration. Parmi les nombreuses questions soulevées par cette décision, ce qui m'a le plus frappée a été l'absence totale, dans ce comité, d'enseignants de la maternelle à la 12e année.

À première vue, la faculté d'éducation de l'Université de l'Alberta m'a bien préparée à exercer la profession que j'ai choisie. En effet, la première année d'études, j'ai suivi des cours de mathématiques, sciences, sciences humaines, musique, histoire, informatique et psychologie. La deuxième m'a fait découvrir certains « grands thèmes » de l'éducation dont le développement de l'enfant, la théorie de l'apprentissage, la psychopédagogie et la conception des programmes d'études. Et les deux dernières m'ont permis d'approfondir ma compréhension puisque les cours portaient essentiellement sur les spécificités des programmes d'études, la planification des unités et des leçons, et les stratégies d'enseignement.

Les stages pédagogiques constituaient aussi une part importante du programme, et m'ont permis d'intégrer tout ce que j'avais appris à la réalité de la vie en classe.

Mon histoire n'a rien d'unique. Tous les enseignants de la province peuvent écrire, à quelques détails près, une histoire semblable, et souligner avec force combien leur compréhension de l'enseignement a été façonnée par des années d'études et de réflexion **consacrées, certes, aux matières à enseigner, mais aussi à la façon d'enseigner**. Et je suis prête à parier que même si enseigner est une discipline qui comprend son propre lot de connaissances, de recherches et de pratiques, nous sommes tous d'accord que la connaissance approfondie des matières ne représente qu'une infime partie de ce que les enseignants savent et font au quotidien.

Et nous ne laisserons personne, y compris ce gouvernement, nous dire le contraire. 

Letters

PRACTICAL, REFLECTIVE AND READABLE

I have been retired since 2004 (33 years in the classroom with 18 as an administrator) and do go through [issues of] the ATA Magazine that arrive in my mailbox.

I want to tell you how pleased I was to receive the fall 2020 edition. It was full of practical articles and suggestions and actually reflected classroom behaviours and experiences. And highly readable!!!! Well done!

—Sylvia Zacharkiw, Mundare

We want your feedback

We'd like to hear from you! Please send us general feedback, your thoughts on items that you particularly liked (or didn't), suggestions for future content, letters to the editor.

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

Email your feedback to Joni Turville, editor-in-chief, joni.turville@ata.ab.ca or Cory Hare, managing editor, cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR — GUIDELINES

Word limit: 300

Please include

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

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



PHOTO BY YUET CHAN

“Trauma can have a huge impact on teachers” article resonates with readers

THE PARADOX OF TEACHING BY JASON SCHILLING, FALL 2020 ATA MAGAZINE

I'm writing this to you, having just finished reading your article on the impact of trauma on teachers.

Thank you for sharing a deeply personal story. I believe in the paradox of joy and pain, and I think teachers who embrace joy, and work through pain, ultimately gain wisdom through reflection.

—Alva Holliday, Principal, West Country Outreach School

TO JASON SCHILLING: THANK YOU

I just read your “From The President” piece in the ATA Magazine and was eager to read your story on trauma. Thank you for being vulnerable and sharing your story—knowing more about a person makes all the difference.

—Calvin Monty, Associate Superintendent Human Resources, Black Gold School Division

Digital version available

The ATA Magazine is now available in a new digital format that has been maximized for viewing on your computer or mobile device. Access the digital version of the latest issue by visiting www.teachers.ab.ca > News and Info > ATA Magazine.

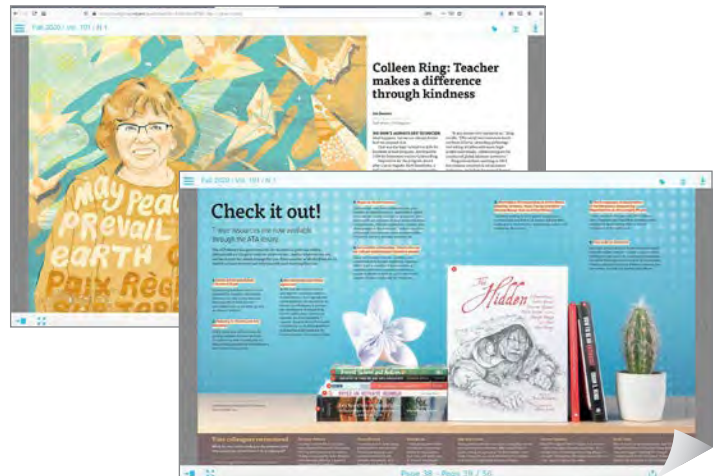




PHOTO BY RYAN PARKER

FROM THE PRESIDENT MOT DU PRÉSIDENT

Jason Schilling

President, ATA
Président de l'ATA

Collegiality makes teachers better


AS A TEACHER, ONE OF MY ALL-TIME favourite professional development activities was when the English teachers in my district worked together on an action research project that focused on developing reading strategies for our high school students. As we worked on this project over the year, the collegiality was amazing. We discussed pedagogy, research, texts, assessment, workload and the funny things our students did that make teaching a joy. We created a strong community among ourselves that carried forward for many years.

When I left my school to begin my term as ATA president, I was quite sad. I knew I would miss my students, but secretly I knew I would also miss the connections I had with the people I worked with.

One of the best parts of being president of the ATA is getting to meet teachers from across the province. One of my favourite events to attend is the induction ceremony of new teachers to the profession. As those who work in schools know, teaching as a professional is largely relational, so part of my address to new teachers is an encouragement to build strong relationships with their students, their school community and their colleagues.

Throughout my teaching career, I have benefited from my relationships with my colleagues, as they have taught me how to approach concepts from different angles.

Collegiality is an important part of our profession. All teachers have a voice and a role in creating respectful collegial relationships even when there is a disagreement.

The pandemic has shown us the importance of the relationships in our lives, and as we work our way through it, I would encourage all my colleagues, not just those new to the profession, to make time when you can to connect with your colleagues. 

La collégialité rend les enseignants meilleurs


L'UNE DE MES ACTIVITÉS DE PERFECTIONNEMENT professionnel préférées de tous les temps en tant qu'enseignant a été lorsque les enseignants d'anglais de mon conseil scolaire ont collaboré dans le cadre d'un projet de recherche-action portant sur l'élaboration de stratégies de lecture pour nos élèves du secondaire. Nous avons travaillé dans un esprit de collégialité extraordinaire tout au long de l'année. Nous avons échangé à propos de la pédagogie, de la recherche, des textes, de l'évaluation, de la charge de travail et des choses amusantes que font nos élèves et qui nous apportent la joie d'enseigner. Nous avons su créer une communauté forte qui s'est maintenue pendant de nombreuses années.

C'est le cœur lourd que j'ai quitté mon école pour entreprendre mon mandat à la présidence de l'ATA. Je savais que je m'ennuierais de mes élèves, mais sans l'avouer ouvertement, je savais aussi que mes relations avec mes collègues allaient me manquer.

Le fait de pouvoir rencontrer des enseignants de partout dans la province constitue l'un des principaux avantages d'être à la présidence de l'ATA. L'un de mes événements préférés est la cérémonie d'insertion dans la profession des enseignants débutants, à laquelle j'assiste avec grand plaisir. Ceux qui travaillent dans les écoles savent que la profession d'enseignant revêt une importante dimension relationnelle; c'est pourquoi je consacre une partie de mon discours à l'intention des nouveaux enseignants à les encourager à établir de solides relations avec leurs élèves, leur communauté scolaire et leurs collègues.

Depuis le début de ma carrière d'enseignant, je récolte les fruits de mes relations avec mes collègues, eux qui m'ont notamment fait découvrir différentes façons d'aborder les concepts.

La collégialité représente un aspect important de notre profession. Tous les enseignants ont leur mot à dire et un rôle à jouer en ce qui concerne l'établissement de relations basées sur le respect et la collégialité, et ce, même en cas de désaccord.

La pandémie a mis en lumière l'importance des relations dans nos vies. À mesure que nous nous frayons un chemin à travers l'épreuve, j'encourage tous mes collègues, et non seulement ceux qui débutent dans la profession, à prendre le temps d'échanger avec leurs collègues lorsqu'ils le peuvent. 



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Education does not exist in isolation from the social, economic and political climate.

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

Can you match the following excerpts with the year that they were originally published? 1921, 1940, 1965, 2007

1. TEACHING IN A TIME OF CRISIS

This is no time for panic. [...] I maintain that the hundreds of thousands of boys and girls in our schools today do count. Their minds are in a highly receptive state—more receptive than under ordinary circumstances because this is an extraordinary time. It is imperative that during a crisis such as the present these young people be entrusted to a seasoned, cool-headed, idealistic, teaching body.

Your guess: _____

2. IMBUING CLASS WITH CREATIVITY

The fact that the fine arts have been able to survive and even to stage an upsurge of recognition despite the concentrated emphasis on academic subjects is unquestionable proof of the creative urge in people. Creativity can add a new dimension to teaching, and in the never-ending search for more effective means of teaching, the Association, its specialist councils, school boards and school administrations would do well to assist an enterprise such as this. The door of creativity was opened for us. Please come in.

Your guess: _____

3. CREATING CRITICAL THINKERS

But in spite of these impediments to addressing controversial issues, the fact remains that contemporary teaching presents certain challenges, not the least of which is relevance. The value of a formal education is increasingly measured according to the degree that it is future-oriented and to what extent it helps students think critically and act upon social issues and problems.

Your guess: _____

4. FUNDING EDUCATION

Discussing the question on financing the increased expenditure necessary to provide greater facilities for education in continuation and secondary schools, Dr. Boyd, President of the Educational Institute of Scotland, recently remarked: "I venture to answer that the times being what they are, there is little question of affording or not affording as there was in the financing of the army and navy during the war. What is at stake now as then is the future of our people. We simply cannot afford not to afford. We must educate or perish." ^{ATA}

Your guess: _____

Answers: 1. "President's New Letter," June 1940. 2. "The Opened Door," Isabel Sharp, April 1965. 3. "Teaching Controversial Issues in the Classroom," Patrick Clarke, Summer 2007. 4. "We Cannot Afford Not to Afford," November 1921.



Teachers' organizations mobilize during COVID-19 pandemic

Lisa Everitt

Executive Staff Officer, ATA

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS CAUSED massive economic, social and political disruption across the world as many countries locked down, sealed national borders, closed many public institutions and shuttered nonessential businesses in order to flatten the curve and try to control the spread of coronavirus.

As the spread of coronavirus was declared under control and health officials and governments worked to reopen their countries, the attention shifted to how this might be done safely. In many countries, this examination included the potential reopening of public school buildings.

Teachers' unions around the world have collaborated with their members and others with the aim of improving school safety and creating a better society. The following examples have been selected from the *Forward to School* report authored by Education International, focusing on five different types of collaborations or coalitions with which teachers' unions have engaged over the course of the pandemic.

WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES

Nepal

The *World Bank Blog* reported that more than eight million Nepalese students were unable to attend in-person classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since many households in Nepal do not have access to computers or cable services but four out of five households have access to mobile telephone devices, the Nepal Teachers' Association mobilized teacher members to work on the Every Home a School campaign, which featured a toll-free phone line for students. *Education International* reports that union members from more than 750 local committees reached out to students to share lessons and raise awareness about COVID-19.

Lebanon

Hussain Muhammad Jawad, president of the Public Primary School Teachers of Lebanon, reports that Lebanon has the highest number of Syrian refugees worldwide, including approximately 450,000 school-aged children. Approximately 176,000 of them attend public schools

in Lebanon while the remainder access education through various aid agencies. When public schools were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Lebanon Ministry of Education did not facilitate distance education for students in refugee camps. Instead, union members, who often worked extremely long hours and who were not paid during the lockdown, volunteered to prepare televised classes; support parents over the phone; and provide assignments, guidance and feedback to Syrian refugee children.

WORKING WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Chile

As the pandemic unfolded in Chile, the Colegio de Profesoras Y Profesores de Chile (CPC) entered into ongoing dialogue with the medical association as well as meeting with the Chilean Paediatric Society and international epidemiologists to develop proposed health and safety guidelines for the reopening of Chilean schools. In October 2020, in response to

insufficient measures to protect health and well-being by the Chilean government, the CPC, appealed for support to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. This appeal was done in coordination with the National Coordinator of Secondary Students, the Coordinator of Parents and Guardians for the Right to Education, and the National Council of Organizations of Education Assistants of Chile.

Kenya

The Kenya National Union of Teachers and the Universities Academic Staff Union, along with civil society organizations, worked together to issue a joint report to the Kenyan government with recommendations on safely reopening schools and educational institutions. The report included advice to postpone national examinations and to train teachers and lecturers on COVID-19-adapted pedagogies that adopt a focus on gender perspectives, disability issues and supports for COVID-19 survivors.

WORKING TOGETHER

Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwe Teachers' Association and the Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe, along with smaller unions, challenged the government of Zimbabwe's plan to reopen schools for exams in June. The union coalition outlined that the return to school buildings was unsafe because COVID-19 infections were increasing in the country. The coalition took the government to court, and the court ruled in favour of the union. In September and October, teachers' unions went on strike because teachers' conditions of practice were so poor and their wages had been cut so severely they could not afford to travel to school or meet their basic needs. On Oct. 10, 2020, eight teachers' unions issued a joint letter to the government. By November, Zimbabwe teachers had been on strike for at least three weeks.

Uruguay

Various education unions partnered up to address the needs of vulnerable students and their families. They collected and handed out solidarity baskets to three cooperatives consisting almost entirely

of women heads of households with dependent children and sex workers. Participants included the Federación Uruguaya de Magisterio de Trabajadores de Educación Primaria, the National Federation of Secondary Education Teachers of Uruguay, the Uruguay Secretariat for Gender, Equity and Sexual Diversity of Plenario Intersindical de Trabajadores–Convención Nacional de Trabajadores.

WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT

Denmark

Denmark is widely recognized for its successful return to school as well as for its handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. Foundational to the return to school was the high level of trust that already existed between the government, teachers' unions and teachers due, in part, to the high level of consultation between teachers' unions and the government throughout the pandemic. For example, when schools were shut down, the Danish government consulted with teachers and teachers' unions as it drafted regulations for emergency teaching as well as set out the policy framework for when schools reopened.

Argentina

In Argentina, the government and the National Federation of Education Workers collaborated to achieve a landmark collective agreement in June 2020. The language of the collective agreement addressed teachers' changing working conditions during the lockdown—workload in particular. This important agreement also defined for the first time the right to disconnect in recognition of the shifting boundaries and expectations that could occur during the move to emergency remote teaching.

WORKING WITH THEIR MEMBERS

Italy

In Italy, after the government announced that schools would be reopened, teachers' unions mobilized their members to conduct more than 200 rallies online to protest the conditions of practice the government was proposing as well as its lack of action at the negotiating table.



"In Italy, teachers' unions mobilized their members to conduct more than 200 rallies online to protest the conditions of practice."

The online rallies were supported by approximately 400,000 education workers, showing massive support for their member organizations.

Canada

The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) has engaged in several activities to advance the interests of teachers during COVID-19. Drawing on the pandemic survey created by the Alberta Teachers' Association in the spring of 2020, the CTF sponsored a pan-Canadian survey to understand the impact of school closures on teachers, school leaders and students in terms of their well-being, the impact of emergency remote teaching and equity for students. In addition, the CTF has developed recommendations for public school re-entry as well as lobbied the federal government for additional supports for teachers and students as schools reopened. The efforts of CTF, aided by the responses to the pandemic survey, helped secure up to two billion federal dollars to assist in reopening schools across Canada. ATA

Education International, www.ei-ie.org/en/detail/16541/teachers-and-unesco-team-up-to-define-professionalism-for-teaching-and-learning-across-the-world



sinájúná wúnádū sámógídídlón gīmīyīnīsín

Victoria Wanihadie: Teacher preserves Indigenous language for future generations

Margaret Welwood

Freelance contributor

THERE ARE 7,000 LANGUAGES spoken in the world today. Half of the population speaks 50 languages, and the other half speaks the other 6,950—one of which is the Beaver language (an Athabaskan or Tsa'a Dene language). And teacher Victoria Wanihadie is determined that the Beaver language, with only about 300 speakers left, will not go extinct.

Termed a “knowledge holder” by the Beaver people, Wanihadie is working to create accurate and accessible resources that honour the Beaver language, culture and history.

After growing up in Grovedale, a hamlet just south of Grande Prairie, Wanihadie served in the Canadian Armed Forces and the US Marines, spent time at home to raise her family, then obtained a BEd and became a substitute teacher in the Grande Prairie area—all the while thinking she was Cree.

When conversations with her relatives made it clear that she had some Tsa'a Dene ancestry, Wanihadie was shocked to learn that she had grown up on Tsa'a Dene ancestral land. She knew nothing about these ancestors.

“I went in search of my identity,” she explains. “My grandparents were taken to the residential school, and, as a result, they stopped speaking their Tsa'a Dene language. This was a huge loss for myself and my family. My grandparents passed away many years ago, and when they passed, thousands of years of knowledge went with them.”

Wanihadie says this loss can be redressed by revitalizing the Beaver language, and, with it, knowledge of the land and the

history, culture, stories and ceremonies of the first people in the Peace Country. She believes that hearing and sharing the stories and language will help the Beaver people to reconnect to the land, their ancestors and thousands of years of history.

Creating a space where the Beaver language and knowledge are readily accessible is an immensely ambitious undertaking, but Wanihadie is not working alone.

Travelling around the Peace Country, Wanihadie is meeting with native speakers of Beaver to record their words and stories, and with non-speakers of Beaver who still remember the stories. While this is perhaps the most labour-intensive—and urgent—aspect of her work, another vital aspect is visiting schools to share these words and stories with Alberta’s teachers and students.

“The Beaver language, culture and ceremonies are a way of bringing us back together and empowering us,” Wanihadie says. “I want to make my ancestors proud. And I will continue to share my Beaver language and culture with anyone who wants to respectfully learn.” ^{ATA}

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

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

Language barrier

Prior to European contact there were approximately 300 Indigenous languages spoken. Of these, 70 are still spoken in Canada today. Statistics Canada 2016 census data showed that only 15.6 per cent of the Indigenous population reported being able to conduct a conversation in an Indigenous language.

ILLUSTRATION BY AJA LOUDEN
TSA'A DENE TRANSLATION BY BRUCE STARBLIGHT AND VICTORIA WANIHADIE



ISTOCK ADAPTED


Mind your stress

How you think affects
how you feel

Information provided by the ATA's
Council for School Counsellors (CSC)

MINDFULNESS, a quality within the formal practice of meditation, invites you to notice your thinking patterns to reduce stress.

Step 1: Pay attention to your thoughts and emotions, naming them, to shift from being on automatic pilot to piloting with awareness.

Step 2: Take a deep breath—in fact, take a few deep breaths. By manipulating your breathing to a slower rhythm, you shift your reactive state. Four square or boxed breathing are the simplest ways to begin. 



HELPFUL RESOURCE

Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life

Jon Kabat-Zinn

Published by Hyperion (1994, 2004).

Welcome to teaching!

Are you ready for retirement?

Myra J Rybotycki

Executive Staff Officer, ATA Teacher
Employment Services

When you begin teaching, retirement seems so far off that it hardly feels real. However, don't let this stop you from planning for your future. Colleagues nearing retirement will likely tell you that time slips by, and maximizing your income in retirement becomes more difficult if you don't start preparing early.

Over the next few years you might still be paying off student loans or acquiring new expenses such as a mortgage or starting a family, but a well-considered retirement plan can make a huge difference in your life after the classroom.

STEPS YOU CAN TAKE NOW

1. **Estimate your retirement income needs.** The *MyPension* portal provided by the Alberta Teachers Retirement Fund (ATRF) contains tools that can help you contemplate your pension options and calculate estimates of your pension at various ages and service periods.
2. **Learn about your pension.** For most Alberta teachers, the largest source of retirement income is the pension they receive from the ATRF. This defined benefit pension is an important and valuable piece of your compensation, which is why Alberta teachers are fighting so hard to protect it.
3. **Seek financial advice.** Your needs—as an individual and as an Alberta teacher—are unique and you may have many questions:
 - How much should I set aside annually for personal savings?
 - How is my RRSP contribution limit affected by the pension adjustment?
 - What is a pension adjustment?

What does it mean to have a defined benefit pension?

Your defined benefit pension is guaranteed based on a defined formula that protects you from wild fluctuations in the stock market. This is far more secure than a defined contribution pension, which is similar to an RRSP wherein the employee assumes all the investment risk. If you retire with 30 years of service, you could receive *approximately 50 per cent* of your preretirement income. Plus, every January, a cost-of-living adjustment equal to 70 per cent of the annual increase in the Alberta Consumer Price Index will be applied to your pension.

Why should I use the ATRF MyPension Portal?

On the ATRF *MyPension* portal, you can

- find current information about your pension savings,
- sign up a pension partner,
- change a beneficiary,
- see the cost of purchasing service and
- apply for your pension.

Visit mypension.atrf.com to register or sign in.

The ATA is here to help. Contact Teacher Employment Services if you have any questions and for information on presentations to locals on financial wellness.

Welcome to teaching, future retirees! 

Embrace gratitude

The daily practice of gratitude can help you

- feel more positive emotions, improve your health, deal with adversity and build strong relationships (Harvard Health 2011); and
- increase your happiness by around 25 per cent (Emmons 2008).

Recognizing these benefits, how do we develop a mindful expression of daily gratitude?

- **Introspective practices** focusing on reflection and peace, such as prayer and meditation
- **Active exercises** for specific articulation of gratitude, like writing thank-you letters and keeping a personal daily gratitude journal
- **Framing gratitude** in terms of the past, the present and/or the future, expressing thanks for past actions, appreciation for present “good fortune” and optimism about the future (Harvard Health 2011)

References

- Emmons, R. 2008. *Thanks!: How Practicing Gratitude Can Make You Happier*. Mariner Books.
- Harvard Health Publishing. 2011. “Harvard Mental Health Letter: In Praise of Gratitude.” Harvard Health Publishing website. www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/in-praise-of-gratitude (accessed October 27, 2020).

Contributed by the Canadian Mental Health Association, Alberta Division



3D printing gains popularity in the classroom

Information provided by Trish Roffey and Nicole Lakusta of the ATA's Educational Technology Council (ETCATA)

3D PRINTING IS A POWERFUL ADDITION to any educational environment. Whether you're bringing history or literature to life or engaging students in STEAM, 3D printing is one of the most active prototyping-to-creation opportunities for young learners. It's known as "additive manufacturing," where successive layers of material are laid down on top of each other in a cumulative process. 3D printing is an excellent resource to help students develop their proficiency in numeracy, communication, collaboration, problem solving and numerous other curriculum competencies.

Although 3D printing is now three decades old, it really has only just entered into the classroom in the last decade thanks to more affordable equipment and supplies.

Dive into 3D printing with a simple project

TO GET STARTED WITH 3D PRINTING, learners will first need to develop their ability to virtually manipulate and combine shapes in a three-dimensional world. Though there are several great programs to get your class started, tinkercad.com offers a fantastic (and free) place to start.

Students begin by adding, subtracting and altering basic shapes like cubes, cones and spheres on a 3D grid. The interface is quite user friendly and easily accessible to learners of all ages. One of the benefits of this learning phase is that it allows students to freely create without the need to print. Teachers can have their students create several project exercises before ever having to fire up the printer.

This simple yet rewarding project will allow students to create and print their name using the tinkercad.com website.

1 Open the Tinkercad website.

Select “Create a New Design.” A blank work plane should appear.

2 Select your letters.

On the right-hand side of your screen, you will see a panel with various shapes. Change from the “Basic Shapes” menu to the “Text and Numbers” menu.

3 Compose your nameplate.

Select and drag the letters you wish to use onto the grid.

4 Align your letters.

Left click your mouse and drag a box to encompass the entire name. Click the “Align” icon in the upper right corner of the work plane. Several lines with black dots will appear. Click on the dot connected to the bottom horizontal line.

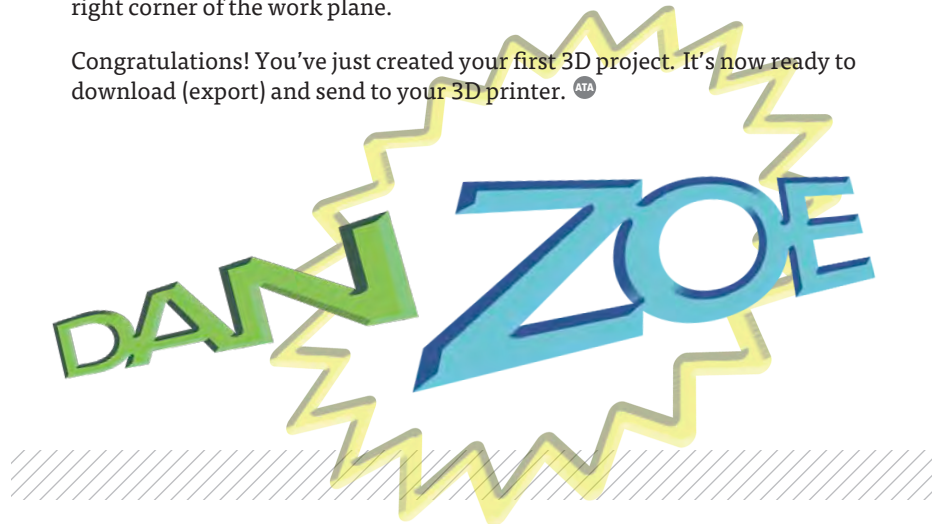
5 Overlap the letters.

Click on the second letter of your name and using the arrow keys, nudge the selected letter closer to the first until they slightly overlap. Repeat for each of the remaining letters.

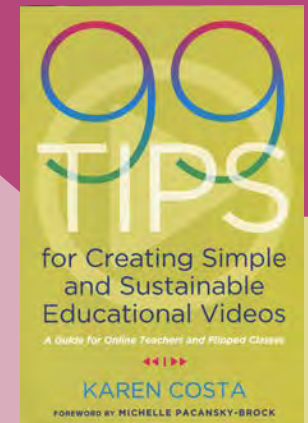
6 Group the letters.

Select your entire name once again and click the “Group” button in the upper right corner of the work plane.

Congratulations! You’ve just created your first 3D project. It’s now ready to download (export) and send to your 3D printer. 



RECOMMENDED RESOURCE



99 Tips for Creating Simple and Sustainable Educational Videos: A Guide for Online Teachers and Flipped Classes

Karen Costa

Author Karen Costa discusses how teachers can connect with students through the use of teacher-created videos. She describes the different types of videos teachers can create and the effectiveness of each kind.

Available through the ATA library.

Ideas and resources

Visit makerspaceforeducation.com for many 3D printing ideas and project resources.





PHOTO BY PAUL THURLIN EDGE PHOTOGRAPHY

Strength in alliances

What are teacher GSAs and QSAs?

Information provided by ATA executive staff officer Dan Grassick

QUEER-STRAIGHT ALLIANCES (QSAs) and gay-straight alliances (GSAs) provide safe spaces for individuals of all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions to meet, socialize and support one another.

The many benefits of GSAs/QSAs are not limited to those groups that focus on supporting 2SLGBTQ+ students and their allies. Research continues to affirm the value of teacher-focused GSAs/QSAs as well, as our locals can become key spaces for supporting sexual and gender minority teachers.

Several locals have already formed teacher GSAs/QSAs and others are in the works.

First-hand experience

A Q&A with Andi Molloy and Tiff Pino, co-chairs of Edmonton Catholic Teachers' GSA (ECTGSA)

Q The Edmonton Catholic Teachers' Local No. 54 founded the first teacher GSA in Alberta. What sparked the creation of this teacher GSA?

A The ECTGSA was started in 2015 after a teacher made a request for a GSA committee to then local president Greg Carabine, who was very receptive to the idea. The first official meeting was exciting and scary. Only a handful of people attended the first few meetings, and we remember being nervous to take a group photo—some sat out to protect their identities. We knew we were doing something that would put us at risk but, meeting together, we were reminded that this type of task defines bravery.

Q What has been the response of teachers in the local?

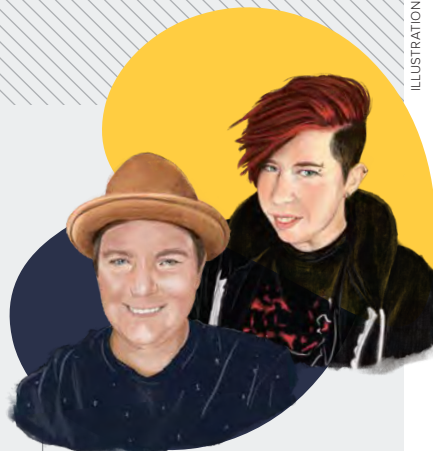
A In the first year, the group grew quickly, with members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community and allies attending. The numbers have settled to around 15 to 20, but grow again at big events. While most attendees are teachers, we open our doors to anyone who is looking to build a safer community in education.

Q What happy surprises or challenges did the local encounter?

A Finding solidarity with locals across the province and realizing how many allies exist within our education community have been happy surprises. Early on, there was pushback from some who did not believe a GSA belonged in a Catholic local. However, we have had such meaningful support in our local and experienced so much success since then.

Staff are feeling safer about coming out and being authentic versions of themselves, though work must continue to ensure 2SLGBTQ+ staff feel truly safe, valued and as though they belong. We hope that eventually our GSA will gather less to discuss concerns and more to celebrate who we are and how far we've come. ^{ATA}

@ECTGSA can be found on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



Tiff and Andi's advice on forming a local teacher GSA



Speak with your ATA local executive to gain support.



Connect with established teacher GSAs.



Consider using social media to organize activities—both important work and fun events.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



Gender in World Perspective
Raewyn Connell and Rebecca Pearse
Available through the ATA library.

Forming a teacher GSA/QSA in Alberta

A Guide for Teachers



Forming a teacher GSA/QSA in Alberta: A Guide for Teachers

The Alberta Teachers' Association

Available at www.teachers.ab.ca under My ATA > Professional Development > Diversity, Equity & Human Rights > Resources

► **Get social!** Join the Alberta GSA Network on Facebook!
[@AlbertaGSANetwork](https://www.facebook.com/AlbertaGSANetwork)

Collegiality takes work ... but it works.

When trust, respect and effective communication are in place, the result is a better education system

Christina Frangou

Freelance contributor

THE FIRST TIME THAT TEACHER Shannon Stark received formal mentorship from a principal she was in her seventh year of teaching.

By then, she'd taught in schools in Australia, the United Kingdom and Ontario. The level of support she received varied from school to school, and often depended on the personalities and priorities of people in the principal's office. In some institutions, she felt like teachers viewed administration as an adversary or vice versa—like when Stark needed assistance with a violent student in her class in Ontario. After her repeated requests for support fell on deaf ears in the principal's office, she called on the teachers' union to intervene.

"That was devastating to me," she says.

When she accepted a job in Alberta in 2019, she wasn't sure what to expect. So she was surprised, and delighted, when her vice-principal immediately recommended her for an ATA mentorship program for new teachers, and then continued to support her by coming to her meetings and being available to talk throughout the year.

"My vice-principal went to bat for me, huge, as a new teacher in the province," says Stark, a Grade 1 French immersion teacher in Calgary.

The key difference between Alberta and other jurisdictions where she has worked is the collegial relationship between principals, vice-principals and teachers, Stark says. She attributes this spirit of professional co-operation to the formal structure of the teaching profession in Alberta, where principals and teachers are governed by the same association—the ATA.

"We all have the same set goals and we're headed in the same direction," Stark says.





IMAGE BY NIKKI ERNST
ADDITIONAL IMAGES ISTOCK

“ My vice-principal went to bat for me, huge, as a new teacher in the province.”



ATA policy

Over the years, the Alberta Teachers' Association has adopted a number of policies in support of collegiality.

Policy 8.1.0.1

To facilitate student learning, schools and school systems should be administered in a way that fosters collegial relationships among central office personnel, principals and classroom teachers.

Policy 18.2.5.2

The process of supervision should

1. take place in a climate of trust and support;
2. be a shared responsibility between the supervisor and the person being supervised;
3. be collegial and collaborative;
4. be adapted to the needs of the person being supervised;
5. provide the person being supervised with input into the methods and process to be used; and
6. provide the person being supervised with feedback on an ongoing basis, including access to any notes taken during the supervision process.

— MEMBERS' HANDBOOK 2019

Improved co-operation

In other places like the United Kingdom, Ontario and British Columbia, teachers and principals fall under separate professional organizations. While the distinction may sound like a bureaucratic one, it's anything but. Alberta's set-up means fewer divisions between the roles of administrating and teaching along with a greater sense of co-operation, mentorship and shared purpose in improving the quality of education for students.

"I would hold up our current system as being exemplary," says José da Costa, professor of education administration and leadership at the University of Alberta, who has studied school systems in Alberta, British Columbia and California.

When teachers and principals do not share the same professional association, their goals and priorities are more likely to differ, he said. Although there has been limited research on the effect of professional organizations on collegiality,

anecdotal reports indicate an improved environment of co-operation when teachers and principals are under the same umbrella organization, says da Costa.

He's heard from administrators in British Columbia who say that their role is akin to "running a factory" with a focus on management rather than the in-the-classroom needs of teachers and students. Unions become intermediaries between principals and teachers, adding an awkward third-party to difficult discussions around issues like instruction or curriculum.

It's very union focused rather than education focused, he said.

"In Alberta, we see the ability for principals to act and serve as instructional leaders, where they're able to move in and out of classrooms, and have conversations with teachers without having to worry about whether they're stepping on toes," says da Costa.

He added that the collegiality between teachers and principals has led to improved co-operation that extends beyond



Colleagues or bosses?

A cross-Canada snapshot of principal membership in teachers' organizations show that in 9 out of 13 provinces and territories, the collegial approach seen in Alberta—assembling principals and teachers in the same professional body—is employed.

British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia all have separate professional associations for principals, however.

INFORMATION GATHERED BY ATA LIBRARIAN SANDRA ANDERSON.

the ATA. Teachers, administrators, parents, school boards and governments have a history of working together in shared decision making in the province, he said.

“We have an amazing context in which we work where people come together to see what they can arrive at, and what they arrive at is usually best for children and for learning.”

Founding principle

Collegiality has been an chief tenet of the ATA from its beginnings as the Alberta Teachers’ Alliance, the precursor to the present-day organization, says ATA archivist Margaret Shane.

ATA co-founder John Barnett spent years teaching in the United Kingdom, where the National Union of Teachers was a robust organization in its 50th year by the time he emigrated to Alberta in 1911. He was appalled at what he saw here, says Shane. It was the wild west for teaching.

“Your average teacher was 18 to 22 years old, unmarried and usually female—not a powerful being. Teachers were treated poorly and, in some

cases, in abusive ways,” says Shane, who maintains an archive of old letters that teachers wrote to Barnett describing their working conditions.

Barnett helped create the ATA to overcome the isolation and exploitation of teachers. One of the first official acts of the new organization, set up in 1917, was to establish a code of honour that laid out rules by which teachers would hold themselves to a high professional standard as a united group—with no difference between teachers and principals.

“Implicitly and explicitly once the code was put together, it was an expectation ... that teachers would espouse and demonstrate collegiality with other teachers,” says Shane.


Even with a code of conduct, true collegiality isn’t something that can be forced on coworkers. By definition, collegiality requires co-operative interaction among colleagues. To get there, teachers and principals need to trust and respect each other, says Brett Cooper, assistant superintendent of human resources for Pembina Hills School Division. While these qualities are possible in every school regardless of teachers’ organizational

structure, they can be more challenging to achieve when a professional divide separates teachers and administrators, he said.

“It takes a while to earn trust,” says Cooper, who spent 13 years working in British Columbia, “and when you add in a barrier by saying ‘this is the principals’ group and this is the teachers’ group,’ you need to work harder on building trust.”

But collegiality is never a given, he adds. In a school environment driven by bells, tight schedules and unpredictable challenges, collegiality takes work. School leaders need to put time into building relationships with staff and setting out agreed-upon norms of communication, respect and expectations. School and district leaders and teachers have to nurture and model collegiality. In the end, those positive relationships set the tone for better interactions with students and parents, Cooper said.

While the organizational structure in Alberta does have limitations, the U of A’s da Costa gives the system an A grade overall.

“Alberta actually has an ideal blend of support for ensuring that children receive the best possible education.” 

What resources (i.e. books, podcasts, etc.) do you recommend for inspiration on collegiality and leadership?



Brett Cooper

Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources, Pembina Hills School Division

This is not an exhaustive list by any means, but I feel that these have had a positive impact on me as a leader.

- **7 Habits of Highly Effective People**
Stephen Covey
- **Bridges of Trust**
David Irvine and Jim Reger
- **Cognitive Coaching: Developing Self-Directed Leaders and Learners**
Arthur Costa and Robert Garmston

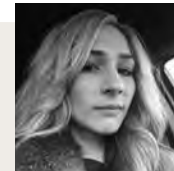


José da Costa

Professor of Educational Administration and Leadership, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta

The following book is grounded in research and can form the beginnings of a foundation for understanding trust in our educational contexts.

- **Trust and Betrayal in Educational Administration and Leadership**
Eugenie A. Samier and Michèle Schmidt



Shannon Stark

Grade 1 French immersion, CBE online hub, Calgary

- **Positive School Leadership: Building Capacity and Strengthening Relationships**
Joseph Murphy and Karen Louis
This book has a lot of research-based information on the qualities of a good leader and strategies to develop leadership skills.
- TED talk **Every Kid Needs a Champion** by Rita Pierson.
- Video **Know Your Why** by Michael Jr.

A shout! out!

From: Teachers

To: School and division leaders



Odessa Nguyen

Homesteader School, Edmonton

My principal has been very caring and an incredible leader during the pandemic. I feel supported when I have concerns and really enjoy working with someone so compassionate. I have learned so much from her.

Susan Hauser

Robert W. Zahara Public School, Sexsmith

A huge thank you to our admin at Robert W. Zahara Public School for showing kindness and grit through true leadership this fall! They are extremely supportive of the staff and students alike!

Charlene Brown Brightwell

Robert W. Zahara Public School, Sexsmith

I second this! They have created a school that celebrates our students and staff, a safe space to come and work together. A true gift in these challenging times!

Karlee Hren

Ellerslie Campus, Edmonton

Shout out to my teaching partner who is always pulled to help troubleshoot people's technology problems and does so willingly! He enjoys helping others find solutions!

Lynn Karasiuk James

Christ the King School/STAR Outreach, Leduc

Shout out to our superintendent at STAR Catholic for keeping the lid on our division.

Barbara Weir Shepherd

The Learning Connection, Edson

Shout out to my colleagues at The Learning Connection for taking on virtual learning this fall and doing an amazing job navigating this new world!

Leanne Breadner-Rein

Good Shepherd School, Peace River

Huge shout out to my pod-mates. This crazy year ... it's been my cohort peeps that lift me up and keep me going.

Carleen Pocklington

Fireside School, Cochrane

Shout out to the administrative team at Fireside School in Cochrane with Rocky View Schools. The leadership they have shown to start up our school year during a pandemic. I always feel so supported by these two! I cannot personally thank them enough for making work a safe and caring place.

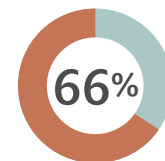
Collegial collaborative model

An approach to professional supervision in which the teacher being supervised has input into the methods and processes to be used and has access to observations and documents generated during supervision.

— *ATA Members' Handbook*

Coronavirus cultivates collegiality?

During a study conducted in the spring of 2020, the ATA asked teachers "what are you learning about your school community and culture during the COVID-19 pandemic?"



of respondents stated that they were experiencing strong collegial relationships and professional autonomy.

"Strong and collaborative staff helps keep everyone positive."

— Survey participant

Teacher comments gathered through Facebook.



Collegial vs non-collegial

One conversation,
two opposing approaches

Stories by Konni deGoeij,
ATA Associate Coordinator,
Administrator Assistance

Screenplays by Cory Hare,
ATA Magazine Managing Editor

When teacher and principal meet in a school setting, are they two colleagues sharing ideas, or is it a boss passing down orders to an employee?

Part of the answer will depend on the province in which they work.

In Alberta, teachers and principals are members of the same profession, so interactions are meant to be collegial, even though principals have supervisory responsibilities. In some other provinces, such as B.C. and Ontario for example, principals are considered managers and teachers are considered employees.

The following Hollywood-style scripts depict a conversation that may take place between a principal and a teacher.

The second conversation is conducted in a collegial fashion; the first one, not so much.

WHO'S THE BOSS, BABY?

A very short film

FADE IN:

INTERIOR - SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

WE OPEN as teacher KEENAN EAGER walks through the administration area of a school that is NOT in Alberta. Looking slightly nervous, Keenan proceeds past various co-workers who are working at computers, talking on the phone and processing documents in the copy room. Everyone remains focused on their work.

Keenan continues down a short hallway to a large corner office whose walls are adorned with no-nonsense posters conveying the importance of effective management and school division procedures.

Seeing Keenan enter, principal ARTHUR O'TARIAN swivels in his chair and turns to face Keenan, motioning for the teacher to sit in one of the visitor's chairs across the desk from him.

ARTHUR (businesslike): Thank you for meeting with me.

KEENAN (slightly apprehensive): No problem.

ARTHUR (with authority): During my recent observation of your teaching practice, I noticed that one of the students in your class was sleeping during the teacher-directed portion of your lesson and continued to sleep during seat work. This behaviour is unacceptable in our school. Why do you allow students to sleep in your class?

KEENAN: You must be referring to Ashley. She has confided to me that her family is going through a rough spell ... specifically the parents. I've found that Ashley sometimes comes to school very tired so I --

ARTHUR (agitated): I'm really not interested in excuses. In walking past your classroom over the course of this school year, I've noticed that this has been a regular occurrence.

Again, I reiterate, sleeping in class is not condoned nor tolerated at our school. This is unacceptable behaviour and you must address it if it occurs in your classroom.

Keenan shifts nervously - appears unsure what to say.

KEENAN: I understand what you're saying ... (trails off)

ARTHUR: You will be receiving a letter of caution that will be placed in your file.

Keenan sits upright - appears resigned.

KEENAN: I see. I'd like to discuss this further but given the situation I can't continue with this meeting until I can have a union representative present.

ARTHUR: Well, actually, I've said what I need to say and there will be no further discussion on this matter. This meeting is over.

FADE OUT

COLLEGIALLY YOURS

A slightly longer short film

FADE IN:

INTERIOR - SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

WE OPEN as teacher KEENAN EAGER walks through the administration area of an Alberta school. Keenan strides easily, exchanging greetings with various co-workers who are working at computers, talking on the phone and processing documents in the copy room.

Keenan proceeds down a short hallway to a large corner office whose shelves and walls are covered by upbeat figures and posters conveying the importance of teamwork and collaborative leadership.

Seeing Keenan enter, principal JEAN YULLEEDER smiles and rises from her chair behind the desk. With a motion of her arm, Jean indicates to Keenan that they are to meet at a round table located at one end of the office.

JEAN (friendly): Let's sit here where it's less formal.

Jean pauses and reflects briefly.

KEENAN: Sounds good.

JEAN: Keenan, I applaud your efforts to accommodate Ashley. You obviously care about her and have her best interests at heart. However, I do have concerns that this particular accommodation may send a message to other students that it is alright to sleep in class.

Keenan sits. Jean sits beside her.

JEAN: So how's your family? Are you managing okay during this busy time?

KEENAN: We're all fine, thank you, and managing pretty well.

Keenan nods.

JEAN: I'm glad to hear it, and thank you for meeting with me.

KEENAN: I see what you're saying.

KEENAN: No problem.

JEAN: This could also lead to confusion among parents, with them thinking that you are OK with students sleeping in class when they don't know the reason why Ashley is doing so.

JEAN: I wanted to discuss something I noticed last week when I came in to observe you teach. One of your students was sleeping during the teacher-directed portion of your lesson and continued to sleep during seat work. What was going on there?

KEENAN (pensive): Hmm, I can see how that could be an unintended consequence. Do you have a suggestion?

KEENAN: That's Ashley. She's confided to me that her family is going through a rough spell ... specifically her parents. I've found that Ashley sometimes comes to school very tired, so I've adjusted our schedule so that her strongest subject happens during first period. The class is aware because Ashley has confided in them too. When the students have their break, I review with Ashley what she missed.

JEAN (cheerfully): Yes, I do. When Ashley needs to rest, send her to the office. We'll have her lie down in the infirmary, then send her back to class at break time. That way, when she's tired she can sleep in a comfortable bed and other students won't get the message that sleeping in class is acceptable. How does that sound?

JEAN: I see. Is there anything else?

KEENAN: I think it's a good idea. Thank you for suggesting it and thanks also for supporting Ashley.

KEENAN: The other thing I will say is that I don't intend for this to be permanent. I just need a way to differentiate for Ashley given her current circumstances. That pretty much sums it up.

JEAN: Let's hope it works out, at least for the time being. Hopefully things eventually improve for Ashley at home.

JEAN: Thank you for sharing with me. I wasn't aware of Ashley's situation.

KEENAN: Yes, I hope so too.

JEAN: Since you already have an established relationship with Ashley, can you communicate the change to her?

KEENAN: Yes, absolutely!

FADE OUT

One conversation at a time

How collegiality, consultation and collaboration averted a school closure catastrophe

Michael Hauptman

Executive Director, Council of Catholic School Superintendents of Alberta

I SAT AT THE BACK OF THE GYM, a hoodie covering my head, as one person after another stepped up to the microphone to criticize the interim superintendent and the board of trustees.

“I am trained in reading body language and you are a bunch of liars,” one person said.

He was not the only one who, feeling uninformed and unheard, was looking for a pound of flesh. Throughout the entire public meeting, the views expressed were polarized and unyielding. Announcing a school closure can do that to a community.

As the new incoming superintendent, I had one overarching question on my mind: how do we turn this around?

To me, the only way was an immediate stop to the current process, a radical change of direction that would mean, in many respects, starting over. As the new person on the block, did I really want to stick my neck out on this one? My choice was simple: say nothing and watch the community implode, or say something and watch some people explode.

The next day, a Saturday, I called an emergency school board meeting. I was either ending my career

or setting the course for a months-long ride that would get extremely bumpy. I got right to the point.

“There is no road to success for you or me if we don’t step back and start again, one conversation at a time.”

I could see that trustees’ minds were churning and I waited for one of them to walk me to the door. Instead, the chair looked at me and said, “OK then, what next?”

As a group we discussed the fundamental elements of systemic change and dealing with “tough conversations.” We agreed on a plan—we were ready to set off down the road of engagement, which would prove to be both rewarding and challenging.

An ‘aha moment’

Alberta Education provided senior managers to review our school building infrastructure so we could identify the potential for future upgrades and retrofits. We asked dozens of teachers to conduct literature reviews around grade configurations and possible models for school communities. We reached out to every parent council and school staff in the community for their input. We held engagement sessions with students, asking “what do you like about your current school community? Where do you see a need for improvement?”

Yes, there were emotional outbursts and people were passionate, but they had stories to tell, a superintendent who had promised to listen, and oh yes, they expected me to do exactly what they wanted.

Each time I walked into a staff room, library or classroom, I felt the weight of anxiety and doubt. Was this the right process? Would we get the best results? Was the direction truly going to make a difference for kids?

As a person who liked to make everyone happy, I knew I could not, which was gut wrenching and painful. After each day and night of engagement, I went home, sat back with a favourite beverage and counted the number of consultation sessions we had left. But that first round of engagement was easy compared to round two.



By that point we were considering the closure of a school and reconfiguring all the others from a K-9/10-12 system into a K-4/5-8/9-12 system. It was radical and people were skeptical.

I recall walking into the music room of our French immersion school, parents glaring at me as if I had already said something wrong, and before I could even begin my usual presentation, hands went up and the comments came.

“The last superintendent promised us a new building. We were promised more room, more options.”

This was reiterated by one parent after another. “What do you know about French immersion?”

This was another comment thrown out from the crowd.

I found myself trying to defend the process, the options and my own expertise—not one of my stellar moments.

There were other struggles, disgruntled individuals and even tears. I received emails from parents venting their frustrations, staff came into my office to offer alternatives, and some people simply told me I was “out to lunch.” Some parents threatened to leave the system when the options did not meet their needs.

There were also small moments of jubilation, as when teachers urged me to “stay the course.”

The whole process was exhausting, but my intuition told me that the result would pay off for the students, the families and even the teachers. In fact, teachers were central to bringing about a successful conclusion.

For me an “aha moment” came at one of the engagement sessions. Rather than speaking to the system leaders and trustees who were walking around wearing “Ask Me” buttons, parents and students directed their questions and comments to the teachers who were present. This trust in teachers made the difference, I believe. It allowed parents to trust the process and the system leaders and pushed the community from a place of cynicism to one of “let’s give this a try.”

What was most impressive to me, which speaks to the strength of teachers’ professionalism, was their ability to work through the immediate emotional responses and move to a place of solidarity with the system, with their students and their students’ families.

What’s best for students?

In the end, the school division closed a different school, reconfigured several others and moved staff and students accordingly. Although it was difficult, it was understood.



COLLAGE BY NIKKIERNST
ADDITIONAL IMAGES ISTOCK

People need to be heard and acknowledged
... authentic engagement demands it.




I will never forget the day the media came to the school that was being closed hoping to find disgruntled parents and students. Only one parent spoke, but she summed it up well.

“Although I do not like the fact that my child’s school is closing, it was the decision that made sense,” she said.

The key was to welcome every conversation, every response and always finish with, what do you think is best for the students? People need to be heard and acknowledged, and see themselves in the data provided and the options presented. Authentic engagement demands it.

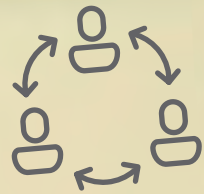
The key message here is simple. School communities are going through tumultuous changes, disruptions and uncertainty. Surviving these precarious times requires acting in solidarity, not polarity. School board trustees, senior leaders, staff, families and students within a school division must speak openly, transparently and with truth so that together they can find solutions to their challenges.

Although I recognize that Alberta Education, school boards and system leaders are called upon to make extremely difficult decisions, with teachers as allies in the process, we can achieve so much more than we can in isolation (no pun intended). 



Practical advice

How do you build trust and respect with your colleagues?



transparency honesty



caring for others



actively listening

COLLEGIALITY ↔ OPEN DIALOGUE

I BELIEVE THAT THE BEST WAY to build trust with all staff is through transparency, honesty and actions being in line with your words. Making difficult decisions occurs all day every day in education. Teachers, administrators and system leaders can earn the trust of everyone through these simple values. People may not always agree, but at least they have the information to see why you made the decision.

Another key to building trust and respect is being available — allowing people to be heard is critical without getting defensive or confrontational. I know it sounds cliché, but always have an open door. Be in the room when people have concerns.

— Brett Cooper

BUILDING TRUST AND RESPECT originates by being selfless, caring for others' well-being, consulting them and following through with promises made.

It takes years to cultivate trust and respect, all of which can be eliminated by a single action that leads others to question the motives behind it.

— José da Costa

BUILDING TRUST AND RELATIONSHIPS TAKE TIME. Actions, not just words, are the key to developing trust with colleagues.

Accountability, integrity and respect are key factors in developing and maintaining trust. Actively listening to others' concerns and personal lives, taking time to develop those relationships and being considerate all go a long way in developing relationships with colleagues.

I also try to remember the small details. Asking a colleague about their child or pet by name shows that you are actively listening and that you care enough to try to remember those details.

— Shannon Stark

Fostering effective relationships

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

Achievement of this competency is demonstrated by indicators such as (h) engaging in collegial relationships while modeling and promoting open, collaborative dialogue.

— Leadership Quality Standard

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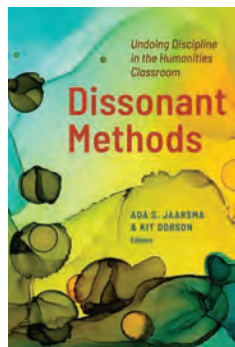
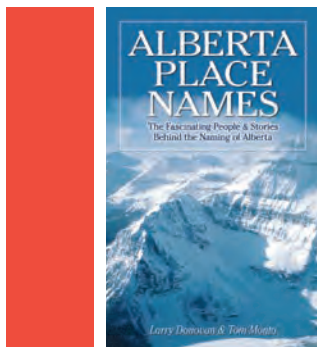
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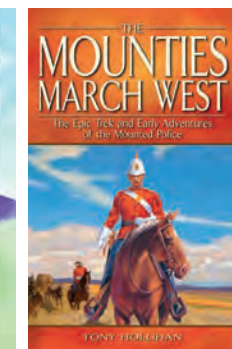
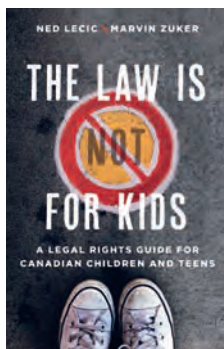
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Chris Fisher and John Acorn

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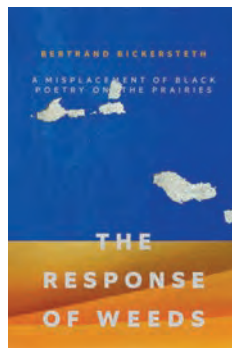
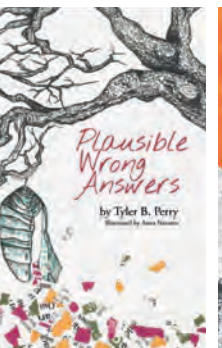
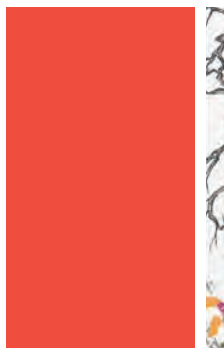
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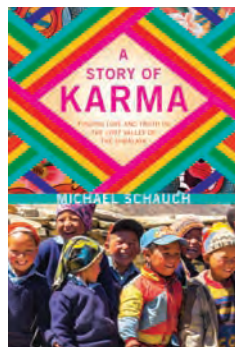
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Pulse of the profession

Pandemic-related issues brought to light by ATA research

Phil McRae

Associate Coordinator, Research, ATA

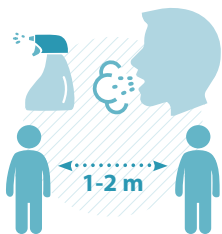


Teacher and school leader well-being is of critical concern given the reporting of extreme and unsustainable levels of fatigue, stress and anxiety within the profession. ”

—ATA pandemic pulse survey results

ONE DAY IN THE FUTURE, when preservice and practising teachers or educational researchers look back on the COVID-19 pandemic, they will wonder what it was like for teachers and school and district leaders on the front lines of this public health crisis. How did teachers experience the first lockdown and rapid movement into emergency remote teaching? What was it like during the first week back at school in August 2020? What were the essential questions, issues or concerns as COVID-19 spread through schools in the fall of 2020?

The Alberta Teachers' Association made a commitment to capturing this perspective from Alberta teachers and school and district leaders, then engaging in public reporting and advocacy. What follows is a brief summary of the ATA's research findings from lockdown in the spring of 2020 to school re-entry during the fall and winter of 2020. At the time of writing this article in late October 2020, Alberta was just entering the second surge of the disease, with 11 per cent of all Alberta schools experiencing infections within their student and staff populations.



TOP 3 RE-ENTRY STRUGGLES

1. Maintaining physical distancing
2. Students staying home when sick
3. Classroom cleaning

AUGUST 2020

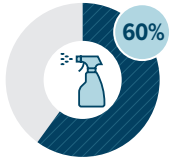
First full week back in schools

Generally, teachers came back to school demoralized with the Alberta school re-entry plan, with a majority of respondents to the first re-entry survey (65 per cent) preferring a return to scenario two, where in-school classes would have partially resumed with additional health measures.

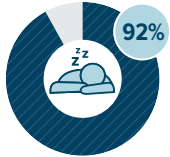
There was much confusion given the last-minute changes within school jurisdictions, with 27 per cent of teachers not yet knowing their teaching assignment(s) for classes taking place two days later, and 70 per cent of schools still working on their timetables for classes given the shifting preferences of families between face-to-face and online learning.



1 in 4 teachers have classes with **more than 30 students**, with physical distancing of 1–2 metres impossible.



6 in 10 teachers spend **20–60 minutes** cleaning and/or sanitizing their classroom(s)/school.



92 per cent of teachers report being **exhausted** at the end of each day.

Alberta teachers and school leaders prodigiously recognized the three most significant struggles with re-entry that would unfold with COVID-19 general preventative health measures:

1. Maintaining physical distancing (94 per cent)
2. Students staying home when sick (80 per cent)
3. Classroom cleaning (74 per cent)

Unfortunately, 70 per cent of teachers and school leaders did not receive two reusable masks from the Government of Alberta for their personal safety when all staff returned on their first day to school buildings.

“We need more substitute teachers!!!!”

—Alberta classroom teacher

SEPTEMBER 2020

Monitoring COVID-19 prevention, infection and control

As Alberta students attended their first full week back in face-to-face classrooms and online learning environments, a majority of teachers and school leaders (64 per cent) were invigorated by having students come back into their classrooms and school communities.

The most positive finding with a return to school was the high compliance with mask wearing across Alberta K–12 schools. Students were being observed frequently wearing a mask in the

Reporting from 1,600+ Alberta teachers and school leaders

COVID-19 SCREEN CHECKLISTS



84 per cent of respondents do not receive daily confirmation of COVID-19 screen checklists completion before a student(s) enters the classroom.

SCHOOL COHORTING



Only 18 per cent of respondents believe that the cohorting of students in place at their school will prevent or contain COVID-19 infection(s).

LARGE CLASS SIZES



Large and growing class sizes are deemed a significant factor in limiting physical distancing as a preventative health measure. Over 9 per cent of teachers have more than 35 students in their classroom.

MASK WEARING



Over 86 per cent of respondents report compliance with mask wearing when students are interacting with others in classrooms and hallways, but with some challenges at different grade levels.

HAND WASHING



Student hand washing is rare, while disinfectant use is more common.

VENTILATION IN SCHOOL

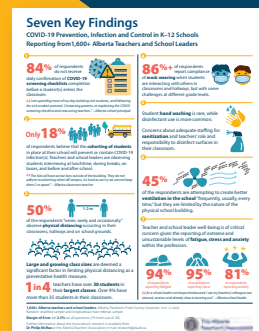


45 per cent of the respondents are attempting to create better ventilation in the school “frequently, usually, every time,” but they are limited by the nature of the physical school building.

FATIGUE, STRESS AND ANXIETY



Teacher and school leader well-being is of critical concern given the reporting of extreme and unsustainable levels of fatigue, stress and anxiety within the profession.



► The full results and individual summary reports and infographics for all ATA pandemic pulse surveys can be found on the Association’s website at teachers.ab.ca > News and Info > Issues > COVID-19.

classroom(s) while alone at a desk and within the classroom (or cohort), when interacting with other students (89 per cent) and in the hallways (86 per cent). Yet one in four teachers was working in classes with more than 30 students, with physical distancing of one to two metres close to impossible.

“We can’t effectively distance due to class sizes. Classrooms are too small for the group size. Furniture doesn’t allow for students to face the same direction and all have access to a table surface.”

—Alberta school leader

Unfortunately, however, during this first full week back to school, hundreds of students and dozens of teachers were exposed to COVID-19 and were required to isolate in their homes for 14 days to monitor symptoms and get tested for the virus.

Of particular relevance to this COVID-19 spread was that 84 per cent of

the teacher and school leader respondents were not receiving confirmation that the COVID-19 daily screening checklist had been completed before students entered their classroom environment. The COVID-19 screening tool was seen as ineffective by 45 per cent of respondents, with another 30 per cent “unsure” it would reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Teachers also had low confidence in the cohorting structures at the various schools given their observations of students regularly breaking cohorts throughout the school day. In particular, students were seen interacting with many others outside their cohort(s) at lunch time, on buses and at bus stops, at recess or breaks, and before and after the school day. While 73 per cent of respondents noted that they were implementing a strict cohorting model—not switching daily contacts or having students randomly interacting with others outside this cohort group—only 18 per cent believed it would prevent or contain COVID-19.

“The kids all have active lives outside of the building. They do not adhere to cohorting when off campus. As hard as we try we cannot keep them 2 m apart.”

—Alberta classroom teacher

“This is my 25th year of teaching. I have less preps, more classes, more supervision and dealing with COVID cleaning. I love teaching; however, I am deeply disappointed in the lack of concern for our well-being.”

—Alberta classroom teacher

OCTOBER 2020

Pandemic spikes in fatigue, stress, anxiety and depression

The third pandemic pulse research survey, which focused on well-being, workplace safety and COVID-19 information reliability, was conducted in the first week of October when nine per cent of all schools in Alberta were reporting a case of the disease and Canada was just beginning to enter into a second surge of COVID-19, with an upward trend in both hospitalizations and deaths across the country.

While 45 per cent of teachers identified that, a month into school, they felt more comfortable with new school routines related to COVID-19, the most concerning finding was that 87 per cent of teachers and school leaders were stressed, with 92 per cent reporting being exhausted at the end of each day. These findings on stress and exhaustion have remained at extreme (and unsustainable) levels since the first pulse survey on Aug. 28, 2020.

A significant indicator of the state of teachers’ and school leaders’ mental well-being was revealed using a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) scale measuring anxiety and depression. Using the CDC scale, this survey found that 45 per cent of respondents were feeling nervous, anxious or on edge more than half of the days each week and/or nearly every day. Twenty-nine per cent were feeling depressed or hopeless more than half of the days each week and/or nearly every day.

“I have never in my 16 years of teaching seen so many staff members breaking down to the point of tears.”

—Alberta classroom teacher

Teachers were also starting to lose faith in the reliability of information on COVID-19 coming from the Government of Alberta and Alberta Health Services (AHS), not surprising given the mandatory orders for private gatherings to be

continued on page 36

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limited to 15 people while one in four Alberta teachers continued to report having more than 30 students in their largest classes.

“I think it’s a problem that I got excited when my Math 30-1 class went down to 38 students. The class sizes are absolutely ridiculous and there is no way to physically distance.”

—Alberta classroom teacher

Trust was also on the decline, with 81 per cent of teachers concerned with the transparency of government decision making during the pandemic. Further, one in two respondents noted that it is difficult to understand AHS recommendations on how to protect students and themselves from COVID-19 in schools.

“Nothing feels clear coming from the government or the school boards. It’s hard to know what to do.”

—Alberta classroom teacher

The need to protect students and staff from COVID-19 transmission added a layer of complexity to the working conditions of teachers and principals. Evidence of growing work intensification during the pandemic appeared in October, with six in 10 teachers spending between 20 minutes and one hour each day cleaning and/or sanitizing their classroom(s)/school.

“Online instruction requirements are far heavier than in the spring, in terms of time spent online and the number of subjects taught. Preparing materials for online takes much longer. It is the general consensus among my online grade-level learning community that the number of hours we are working to get everything done is unsustainable.”

—Alberta online teacher

SOLVING THE CHALLENGES


Among the tens of thousands of qualitative responses gathered in these research

studies, six immediate actions were consistently identified to help reduce the burden on schools in this pandemic. Five of these actions remain outstanding:

1. Reduce class sizes to allow one to two metres of physical distancing.
2. Reduce the cleaning and sanitization tasks that school boards were delegating to teachers/school leaders, and hire more cleaning staff.
3. Reduce teachers’ supervision duties given the large student populations in the school and multiple entry and exit times, recesses or breaks.
4. Reduce the burden of bureaucratic tasks hindering school leaders from being effective instructional leaders. For example, AHS contact tracing and health surveillance of families in isolation is not a school leader’s new job because AHS doesn’t have capacity.
5. Teachers need additional support structures for the large number of students and staff being isolated in schools each week. Teachers are frequently being asked to prepare live streams of instruction, post all materials daily online, answer numerous emails from students in isolation, all while continuing to teach large classes of students in face-to-face learning environments.

CONCLUSION

What will be written about the state of the profession at this historical moment? Most likely that Alberta teachers—as front-line professionals of the COVID-19 pandemic—were dedicated in their commitment to students and public education, and valiant in their daily efforts to enact emergency remote teaching during the spring of 2020.

Sadly, it will also be reported that Alberta teachers and school leaders were underresourced and poorly supported by the Government of Alberta during the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be shameful to reflect back on the rising rates of inequity, poverty and dislocation, all while teachers—as citizens first—operated under unsustainable levels of stress, anxiety and fatigue in what will be seen as the greatest crisis of our age. 

“Work load has increased. Cleaning that I should not be doing has increased. Teaching multiple grades, programming for more needs with NO support. Assignable times increased—physical distancing is NOT HAPPENING.”

—Alberta school leader

About the studies

To conduct these multiple research studies, the Association used a random stratified sampling of teachers and school leaders across the province in combination with a longitudinal sample and chain referral mechanism that followed a group throughout the pandemic. The results of the random and longitudinal samples consistently tracked closely together. In the spirit of radical transparency and agile and rapid response, all of the research studies have been posted, sharing the full research instruments, questions and demographics, in the hope that the results might be used by education partners to effect rapid and positive change(s).

The Association has kept (and will continue to keep) the only large-scale historical record of teachers’ experiences in schools during the COVID-19 pandemic in Alberta.



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Check it out!

These resources are now available through the ATA library.

The ATA library has great resources for teachers in print and online. Library staff are happy to mail out whatever you need to wherever you are, and we prepay the return postage for you. Drop us a line at library@ata.ab.ca and let us know how we can help you with your teaching this year.

1. *When Kids Lead: An Adult's Guide to Inspiring, Empowering, and Growing Young Leaders*

Taking a different view of students' capabilities, educator-authors Todd Nesloney and Adam Dovico consider how to develop students' leadership skills now, before they grow up. They provide guides for teaching these skills and ideas for celebrating leadership in their classrooms.

2. *Digital Storytelling in Indigenous Education: A Decolonizing Journey for a Métis Community*

Written by a Métis professor in Alberta, this book looks at how education is interwoven into Indigenous survival and how digital storytelling can work in a community-based education project to create stronger ties within the Indigenous community.

3. *Next Steps with Academic Conversations: New Ideas for Improving Learning Through Classroom Talk*

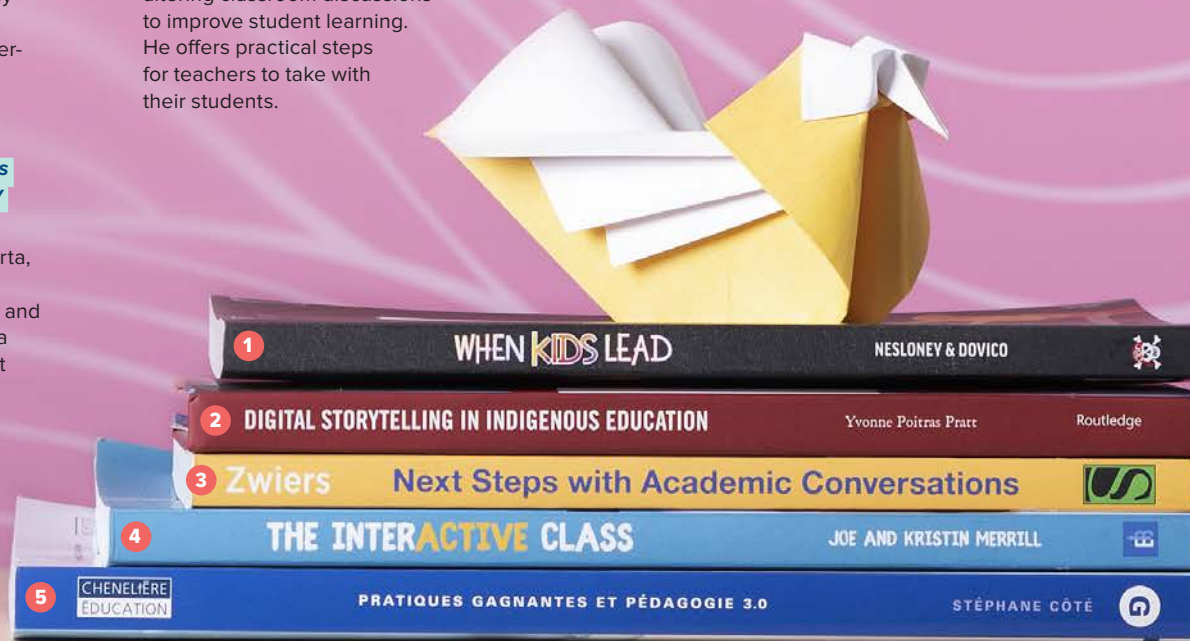
Jeff Zwiers, an educational researcher, worked closely with teachers to develop ways of altering classroom discussions to improve student learning. He offers practical steps for teachers to take with their students.

4. *The Interactive Class: Using Technology to Make Learning More Relevant and Engaging in the Elementary Classroom*

In this engaging book, the authors present practical ideas for using technology to make your classroom more interactive for students.

5. *Pratiques gagnantes et pédagogie 3.0*

Cet ouvrage explique aux enseignants comment augmenter leur efficacité en se concentrant sur les pratiques pédagogiques qui mènent aux meilleurs résultats scolaires. L'auteur présente des exemples concrets de la vie en classe ainsi qu'une vaste gamme d'outils dans le but de réorganiser les pratiques des enseignants.



Your colleagues recommend

Teachers suggested these reads via Facebook.

Andy Funke

I am quite enjoying *The Miracle of Mindfulness* by Thich Nhat Hanh. It has short chapters with excellent ideas for cultivating mindfulness and peaceful thoughts.

Theresa Davidson

All Things Being Equal: Why Math is the Key to a Better World by John Mighton. This Canadian publication aligns with my perspective as it promotes access for all—how supporting the weakest supports all going forward.

6. *Children and Teenagers Who Set Fires: Why They Do It and How to Help*

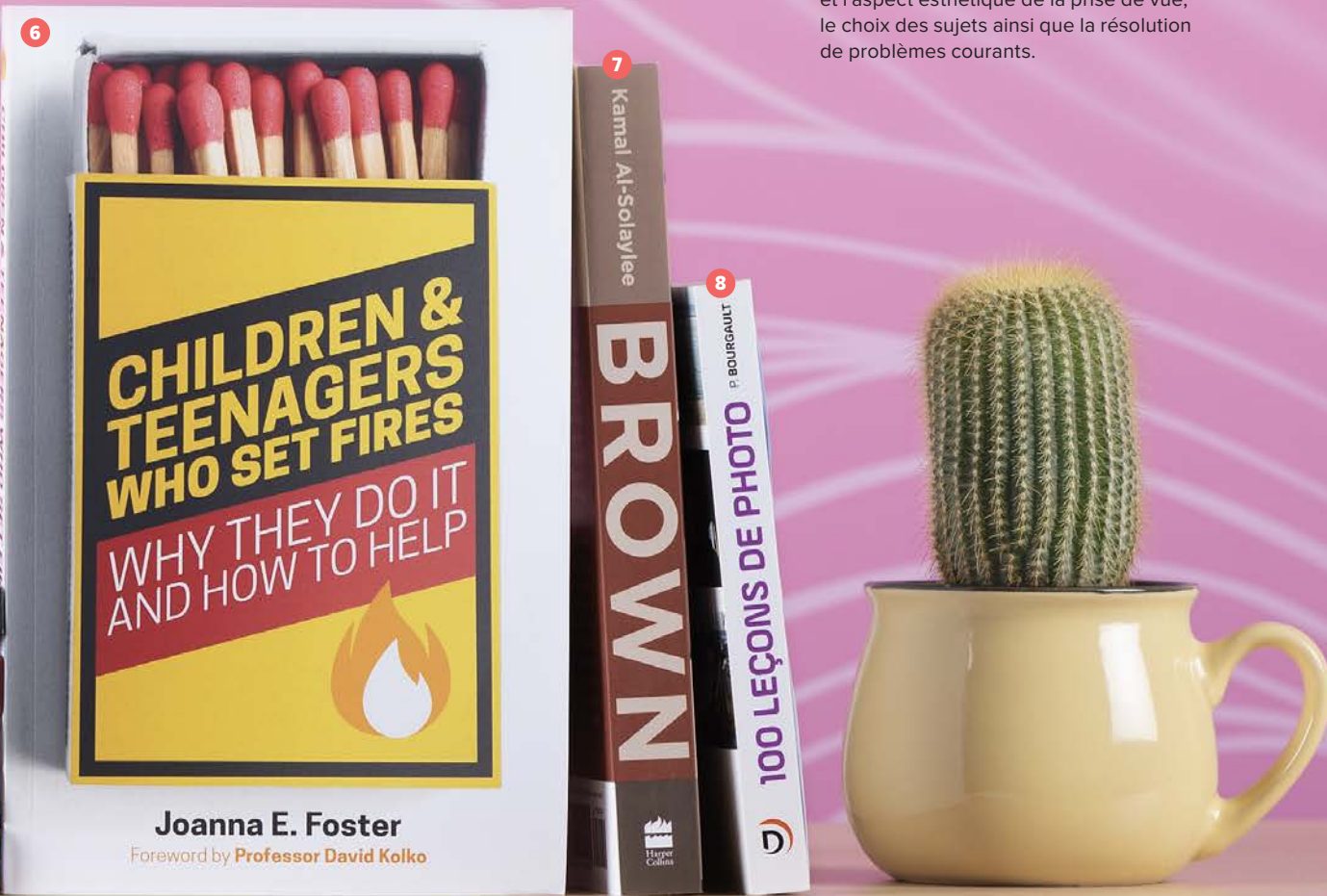
Author Joanna Foster examines what the research says about why youth set fires and the best practices that have been established to help them stop. She includes many activities and resources that can be used.

7. *Brown: What Being Brown in the World Today Means (to Everyone)*

This Canadian book examines the people left out of the Black Lives Matter movement but who often experience much of the same discrimination as African Canadians while being on “the cusp of whiteness.”

8. *100 petites leçons pour bien débuter en photo*

Guide présentant les notions élémentaires pour s’initier à la pratique de la photographie. Sont abordés les principes fondamentaux de la photo numérique, les techniques et l’aspect esthétique de la prise de vue, le choix des sujets ainsi que la résolution de problèmes courants.



Information provided by
ATA librarian
Sandra
Anderson.

PHOTO BY YUET CHAN

Val Hanson

Anxious People by Fredrik Backman. This is a poignant comedy about a crime that never took place, a would-be bank robber who disappears into thin air, and eight extremely anxious strangers who find they have more in common than they ever imagined.

Charis Crandall

Compassion Fatigue in Schools: A Guide for Counsellors, Administrators and Educators by Alison Dubois and Molly Mistretta. I highly recommend it for educators right now, especially during these crazy pandemic times. Our students are getting more and more complex, and we wear so many hats as teachers. We need support to effectively support our students with complex traumas without burning out.

Recommended books for bringing diverse voices into your classroom

Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You

I recommend *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You*; *Born A Crime*; *The Poet X*; and *Long Way Down*. These are incredibly engaging, current and they offer centre stage to strength-filled voices and perspectives that have been marginalized.

Trish Ryan

Voices in the Park

This book is all about how each character views an afternoon of playing in the park. The characters are from different families and different ages, with different interests and social backgrounds.

I teach kindergarten and I like to teach my students what a voice, view and perspective are in various ways. This funny, engaging and amusing book is just one of the ways I promote diversity in my classroom.

Donna Knopper-Singleton

Front Desk

My read-aloud of *Front Desk* by Kelly Yang really resonated with my Grade 5s and 6s last year. It is a funny story about a young Chinese immigrant struggling to find success in America. Many students connected with Mia's struggles to fit in with classmates, to learn English and to find the right thing to wear when there is no money to buy the "right" clothes.

Lori Astle

From the Ashes

This is the memoir of a Métis–Cree man named Jesse Thistle. His story is heartbreaking yet uplifting. He is the definition of perseverance and indomitable spirit. His memoir is brutally honest about the difficulties faced by many Indigenous youth. I think it's important for all Canadians to read so that these issues can be discussed and rectified.

Rae Ross

The Wretched of the Earth

The book is an analysis of the dehumanizing effects of colonialism on the individual and the nation, and discusses the broader social, cultural and political implications inherent to establishing a social movement for the decolonization of a person and of a people.

Dougal MacDonald

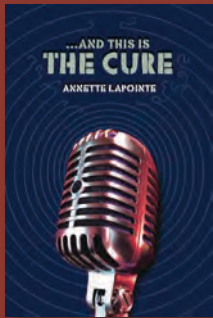
Genesis Begins Again

This is a beautiful story about how 13-year-old Genesis strives to help her family and others, and in the process learns to adopt a new mindset and love herself for the wonderful person she is. It's very relatable to all kids in the middle years who are grappling with societal expectations and trying to figure out who they are.

Erica Legh



PHOTO BY YUET CHAN



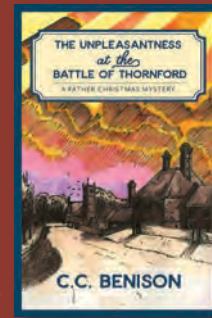
A novel about the weight of unresolved baggage.

ANVIL PRESS | FICTION



A YA story collection that celebrates racial, gender, and religious diversity.

ARSENAL PULP PRESS | YA FICTION



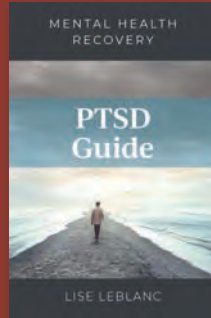
“... this Father Christmas is welcome all year round.”
— Miranda James, ny times bestselling author

AT BAY PRESS | FICTION/MYSTERY



“Matt Mayr perfectly captures small-town life [in his] powerful new novel...”
— *Toronto Star*

BARAKA BOOKS | FICTION



You don't have to stay in a loop of perpetual stress and suffering.

BLUE MOON PUBLISHERS | SELF-HELP



Reclaiming the story of Sylvester Joe, the Mi'kmaq guide engaged by colonial explorer Cormack.

BREAKWATER BOOKS | HISTORICAL FICTION



A gender-fluid trickster character leaps from Cree stories in new work by an award-winning poet.

BRICK BOOKS | POETRY



One boy's true story of living through the war in Syria.

FREEHAND BOOKS | FICTION



A unique picture book about discrimination and learning to live in “a world of lions.”

LINDA LEITH PUBLISHING | FICTION AGES 4-8



A much-needed conversation about the nature of consent.

PLAYWRIGHTS CANADA PRESS | DRAMA



A sister and brother set sail on a rollicking round-the-world adventure in this rhyming tall tale.

RUNNING THE GOAT | CHILDREN



A beautiful meditation on bees, beekeeping, and Alberta's northern landscape.

WOLSAK & WYNN | NON-FICTION



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Appuyer les membres dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions professionnelles

FOR SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

Key services

- Copies of the *ATA News* and the *ATA Magazine*
- Advice and consultation on all issues related to employment
- Consultation on Employment Insurance and help with appeals
- Legal advice and assistance dealing with criminal charges that may arise in the course of teaching
- Eligibility to participate in specialist councils, teachers' conventions and local PD activities, and to serve on committees
- Access to ATA scholarships and fellowships
- Representation through the collective bargaining process

FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

Key services

- Advice for school leaders on administrative and personnel concerns
 - » in resolving difficulties related to their own employment;
 - » concerning their role in personnel and/or legal matters involving their staff members;
 - » on procedural issues related to discipline, supervision/evaluation, transfer and termination recommendations; and
 - » to resolve internal disputes with their school staff.
- Workshops and presentations designed to help fulfil their leadership responsibilities. ^{ATA}

A substitute teacher is automatically granted active membership the first time during a school year they work as a substitute, remaining active until the end of the school year or until they are no longer on the board's substitute roster, whichever occurs first.

Un enseignant suppléant devient automatiquement membre actif de l'ATA dès la première fois qu'il fait de la suppléance au cours d'une année scolaire et le demeure jusqu'à la fin de l'année scolaire ou jusqu'à ce qu'il ne soit plus inscrit sur la liste de suppléants d'un conseil scolaire, selon la première de ces éventualités.

À L'INTENTION DES ENSEIGNANTS SUPPLÉANTS

Services clés

- Exemplaires de l'*ATA News* et de l'*ATA Magazine*
- Conseils et service de consultation concernant les questions liées à l'emploi
- Service de consultation au sujet de l'assurance-emploi et assistance en cas d'appel
- Service de consultation juridique et assistance en cas d'accusation criminelle en lien avec leurs activités d'enseignement
- Admissibilité à participer aux activités des conseils de spécialistes, aux congrès d'enseignants, aux activités de PP organisées par les sections locales, ainsi qu'à siéger à des comités
- Admissibilité aux bourses d'études offertes par l'ATA
- Représentation de leurs intérêts dans le cadre du processus de négociation collective

À L'INTENTION DES LEAUEURS SCOLAIRES

Services clés

- Conseils aux leaders scolaires au sujet des tâches administratives et de la gestion du personnel, notamment en ce qui concerne :
 - » la résolution de problèmes liés à leur propre emploi;
 - » leur rôle dans la résolution de questions relatives au personnel ou de questions juridiques impliquant des membres de leur équipe;
 - » les questions de procédure en matière de discipline, de supervision ou d'évaluation, ou concernant la recommandation de muter un enseignant ou de résilier son contrat;
 - » la résolution de conflits internes avec les membres du personnel de leur école.
- Ateliers et présentations conçus pour les aider à exercer leurs responsabilités en matière de leadership. ^{ATA}

COMMITTEES, MONOGRAPHS AND COUNCILS—OH MY!

COMITÉS, COMPTES RENDUS ET CONSEILS —ÇA ALORS!



Apply to serve on an ATA provincial committee like the Substitute Teachers Committee or the School Leaders Issues and Concerns Committee.

Présentez votre candidature pour siéger à des comités provinciaux de l'ATA tels que le *Substitute Teachers Committee* ou le *School Leaders Issues and Concerns Committee*.



Check out ATA research reports on topics related to substitute teaching or school leadership.

Jetez un coup d'œil aux rapports de recherche de l'ATA portant sur des thèmes liés à la suppléance et au leadership scolaire.



Join one of the ATA's 21 specialist councils, such as the Council for School Leadership and le Conseil français.

Adhérez à l'un des 21 conseils de spécialistes de l'ATA, dont le *Council for School Leadership* ou le Conseil français.



JOHN HALL



SABRE CHERKOWSKI



DAVID MARQUET



MUNA SALEH



CATHRYN VAN KESSEL



CARLA PECK

ATA leadership series

As a school leader, you need to balance the immediate needs of your school and division while providing leadership to school staff. The ATA's Leadership Speaker Series gives school leaders an opportunity to hear from a variety of experts. These sessions are free for school leaders who are ATA members at the highest membership level available to them.

Being Top of Mind So You Can Accomplish More With Less	John Hall	March 18
Leadership For Flourishing: Noticing, Nurturing and Sustaining Well-Being in Schools	Sabre Cherkowski	April 8
Leadership is Language: The Hidden Power of What You Say—and What You Don't	David Marquet	May 18

HOW TO REGISTER

Visit <https://surveys.teachers.ab.ca/s3/Leadership-Essentials-Speaker-Series-Registration>. Questions can be directed to Nikki Cloutier, 780-447-9400 (in Edmonton) or toll free 1-800-232-7208 or e-mail Nikki.Cloutier@ata.ab.ca.

DEHR speaker series

The Association's Diversity, Equity and Human Rights (DEHR) committee has a series of webinars designed to provide teachers with professional development related to antiracism and antioppression education. All webinars have been recorded and are available as video, audio and text files for you to access at your convenience. Other webinars will be offered approximately on a monthly basis.

AVAILABLE WEBINARS

Interrupting, Disrupting, and Countering Single Stories	Muna Saleh Concordia University of Edmonton
Considering the Emotionality of Antiracist Education	Cathryn van Kessel University of Alberta
Teaching Difficult Histories: Challenging but Necessary Conversations for Social Justice	Carla Peck University of Alberta

Webinars are available at www.teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Professional Development > Online Professional Development.

QUESTIONS?

Please contact Dan Grassick at dan.grassick@ata.ab.ca.

Conférences sur le leadership

En tant que leader scolaire, vous devez à la fois répondre aux besoins urgents de l'école et du conseil scolaire et montrer la voie à suivre au personnel de l'école. Lors de cette série de conférences de l'ATA, les leaders scolaires auront le privilège d'entendre plusieurs intervenants spécialisés dans divers domaines. De plus, ils pourront y assister gratuitement s'ils sont membres de l'ATA au niveau d'adhésion le plus élevé auquel ils peuvent prétendre.

Being Top of Mind So You Can Accomplish More With Less	John Hall	18 mars
Leadership For Flourishing: Noticing, Nurturing and Sustaining Well-Being in Schools	Sabre Cherkowski	8 avril
Leadership is Language: The Hidden Power of What You Say—and What You Don't	David Marquet	18 mai

POUR VOUS INSCRIRE

Consultez <https://surveys.teachers.ab.ca/s3/Leadership-Essentials-Speaker-Series-Registration>. Pour toute autre question, veuillez contacter Nikki Cloutier au 780-447-9400 à Edmonton ou sans frais au 1-800-232-7208 ou encore à Nikki.Cloutier@ata.ab.ca.

Série de webinaires

Le comité Diversity, Equity and Human Rights (DEHR) de l'ATA dispose d'une série de webinaires sur l'éducation antiracisme et la lutte contre l'oppression. Ces webinaires, tous enregistrés, ont été conçus dans une optique de perfectionnement professionnel pour les enseignants. Ils sont disponibles sous forme de fichiers vidéo, audio et texte de sorte que vous puissiez y accéder à votre convenance. D'autres webinaires seront offerts environ une fois par mois.

WEBINAIRES DISPONIBLES

Interrupting, Disrupting, and Countering Single Stories	Muna Saleh Concordia University of Edmonton
Considering the Emotionality of Antiracist Education	Cathryn van Kessel University of Alberta
Teaching Difficult Histories: Challenging but Necessary Conversations for Social Justice	Carla Peck University of Alberta

Les webinaires sont disponibles à www.teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Professional Development > Online Professional Development.

QUESTIONS?

Veuillez contacter Dan Grassick à l'adresse dan.grassick@ata.ab.ca.



From the frying pan into freedom

After fleeing war-torn Zimbabwe, teacher Judith Mawoko finds peace in small-town Alberta

Cailynn Klingbeil

Freelance contributor

MORE THAN 40 YEARS HAVE PASSED, but Judith Mawoko still vividly remembers her favourite teacher and how he brought the outside world into her Grade 4 classroom.

In a rural village in Zimbabwe, then known as Rhodesia, Mr. Mupeti used magazines to show Mawoko and the other students photos of things they had never seen before, such as airplanes and trains.

Science field trips, meanwhile, took place in the thick bush behind the school, which sat at the foot of a mountain. There, Mawoko and her classmates learned about animals in their natural habitats, from monkeys swinging in high branches to slithering snakes.

Mawoko remembers her teacher as enthusiastic and able to make any subject come alive.

"I always try to teach like that in my classroom; there's never a dull moment," says Mawoko, a Grade 3/4 teacher at Ecole Providence School in the northern Alberta town of McLennan, population 692.

For Mawoko, it's been an arduous journey to her current classroom, where principal Krista Veitch says Mawoko's students are always engaged and excited for school.

"She's a phenomenal teacher," Veitch says.

Mawoko's story begins with a carefree childhood in the Kwambana village, upended by a guerrilla war that killed loved ones and villagers, including her

beloved teacher, Mr. Mupeti. It was he, as well as her upbringing, that inspired her to become a teacher.

She had nine siblings and was always helping out with the younger kids, a role she enjoyed and approached with great patience.

"My parents always said, 'You are a teacher, this is where you belong,'" Mawoko remembers.

SHARING HER STORY

Mawoko's experiences, starting from when she was around the age of her current students to when she left Zimbabwe as a refugee, are recounted in her self-published memoir, *From The Frying Pan Into the Fire*.

In the book, Mawoko describes her childhood with three brothers and six sisters, raised in an extended family of subsistence farmers.

"Every day had its own adventures," she writes. "There was never a dull moment. There was no boredom, no loneliness and no stress. The word poverty was unknown to us. What was poverty? Our grain storage rooms were full of corn. We had livestock. We went to school. We had friends. We had loving parents and countless aunts, uncles and cousins. We had roofs above our heads to protect us from the rain. We had no worries, no problems."

That changed in 1975, when Mawoko was 10 years old and the Zimbabwe War of Liberation, also

called the Rhodesian Bush War, interrupted village life.

Mawoko remembers visiting in bush camps with Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army soldiers, who were fighting to liberate the country from colonial rule. She listened with keen interest to a history she hadn't heard before: how the British had used guns to fight against Blacks armed with spears, bows and arrows. After the massacre, the settlers had driven people off arable lands to establish their own farms.

"I began to see things a little differently. Life was not as good as I had thought," Mawoko writes.

As violence spread, Mawoko and the other children stopped playing in the river and roaming the forests to collect wild fruit and herbs.

"We started living in fear," Mawoko says.

One day, at the school's morning assembly, a popular teacher was missing.

"The headmaster later visited each classroom individually to break the sad news. A bus had been blown up by a land mine. Mr. Mupeti had perished in it," Mawoko writes.

Loss persisted. An unknown number of villagers died when bombs were dropped on the village in April 1977. During the continuous assault, accompanied by deafening explosions, Mawoko and her family rushed into their hut for cover. But when Mawoko's mother looked out a small window and saw several nearby huts burning, she led everyone back outside.

"That split second decision she made that day saved our lives. Our hut immediately burst into flames," Mawoko writes.

The village school eventually closed and Mawoko was out of the classroom for two years, until her dad's job was transferred and her family left their war-torn village for a city.

The war ended with independence for Zimbabwe in 1980, causing what Mawoko describes as a "brief romance" with autonomy, until the supposed democracy turned into a brutal dictatorship and peace was lost again.

ABANDONING EVERYTHING

After the war, Mawoko studied at the University of Zimbabwe to become a teacher, started her career and married. But further tragedy struck when Mawoko was seven months pregnant and her husband died suddenly, at age 27. She gave birth to their daughter two months later.

Mawoko spent a decade teaching high school English in Zimbabwe. Near the end of her memoir she describes



▲ Judith Mawoko's graduation at the University of Zimbabwe with her mother (left) and aunt
◀ Mawoko (right) and her high school classmate

a country marred by rampant corruption and greed that permeated every aspect of life. Citizens were more afraid of the police than they were of criminals. She couldn't find a spot for her daughter in a decent secondary school unless she paid a bribe to the headmaster and was unable to drive without being stopped by police demanding a bribe.

Eventually, political violence and intimidation made it dangerous to be a teacher in Zimbabwe, so in 2001, Mawoko abandoned everything and fled to Canada, where one of her brothers lived.

"I just found no future in the country and that's when I came here," Mawoko says. "It was the most painful experience to leave home."

The experience was especially painful because her daughter, then age 12, stayed at a boarding school in Zimbabwe for the first year.

While she's faced many challenges throughout her life, Mawoko says her memoir is ultimately not a tragic story.

"There are some sad parts, but when I describe my early childhood, it's a lot of fun reading about it," she says.

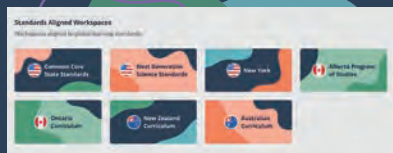
Principal Veitch, who worked with Mawoko at Ecole Providence for five years, says excitement abounded at the school when Mawoko published her book in 2018. Veitch even caught older students sneakily reading it in class.

"To suddenly realize your teacher has had all of these things happen in her life, and has witnessed all this

Continued on page 48

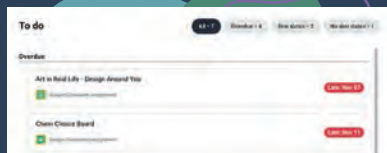
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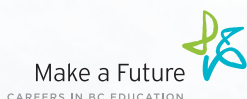


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PHOTO BY YUET CHAN


Continued from page 46

tragedy and has overcome it, you just see the person in a different light. Kids can look at that ... and think, 'oh, if she's overcome that, I can overcome this,'" Veitch says.

Veitch describes Mawoko as an excellent teacher who excels at whatever she puts her mind to, even when there's obstacles along the way.

Those qualities have helped Mawoko succeed in Canada, starting with her first job teaching junior high in Attawapiskat in northwestern Ontario. Wanting to live in a city, Mawoko later moved to Calgary, working as an education assistant and spending her summers at the University of Calgary to earn the credits she needed for an Alberta teaching certificate. After substitute teaching in Calgary, Mawoko moved to McLennan in 2015 and began teaching elementary school students for the first time in her career.

While it hasn't been an easy journey to Mawoko's current classroom, where her favourite subjects to teach are English, math and religion, she feels content.

"I'm just so happy," Mawoko says. "This is where I belong." 

A FIRESIDE CHAT WITH

Judith Mawoko

What motivated you to write your memoir?

As an educator, I was motivated by a desire to teach. I wanted to tell the story of life in Zimbabwe from the vantage point of personal experience. I also wanted to inspire, comfort and encourage others to persevere through their own challenges.

What are some of the misconceptions you've heard about Africa from your students?

Students think that Africa is one country, in which all people are Black and speak the same language. They all live in mud huts, surrounded by wild animals. Students believe that the whole African experience is about poverty, disease and war.

I tell them that Africa has over 50 different countries and over 2,000 languages and a diversity of ethnicities and cultures. And yes there is poverty, but that's not the full story. There are millionaires, cities and technology. (When I told my students that I had talked to all my siblings in Africa on the phone on the weekend, one student gasped, "There are phones in Africa?")

What do you miss about Africa?

First and foremost I miss my family, siblings, cousins, nieces and nephews. I also miss the sunshine. It's summer throughout the year. I miss the organic food, music, dance and celebrations.

How does teaching in Canada compare to teaching in Zimbabwe?

First, teacher education is equivalent. When I arrived in Canada, the Ontario College of Teachers evaluated my credentials and certified me to teach in Ontario without any need for further education.

Secondly, students are the same everywhere. They are curious and they want to learn. They all need a motivated, compassionate and creative teacher who cares about them.

What do you like about living in a small town in Alberta?

After living four years in Toronto and eight years in Calgary, I find myself most at peace in small town McLennan where everyone knows everyone else. People here are very warm and welcoming, which gives me a sense of community and a feeling of belonging. In my school, class sizes are smaller and I get to know my students and their families at a personal level.

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

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BRAIN STORY CERTIFICATION



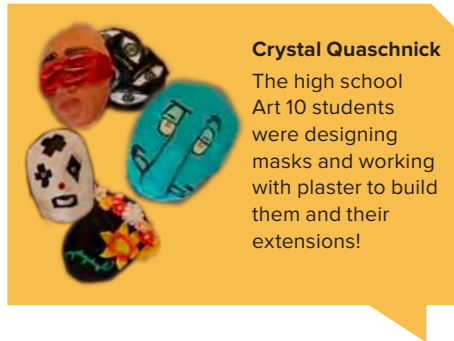
The part that's art

We asked teachers to show some of the art their students have created this year



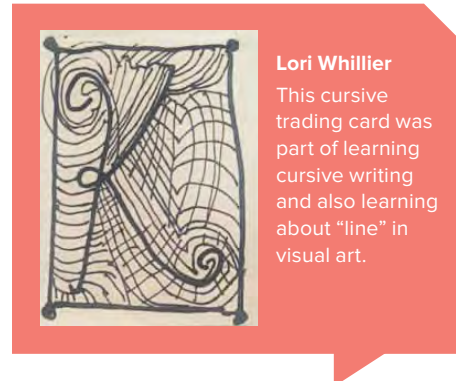
Patricia Gagnon

It was a collaborative project. Each student in the class contributed a variety of dots which we glued onto the heart shape. Established to celebrate creativity, courage and collaboration, the celebration is easily one of the most fun days of the year! Celebrated by both children and adults, International Dot Day is a day to connect, collaborate and create. It's also a great day to foster self-expression.



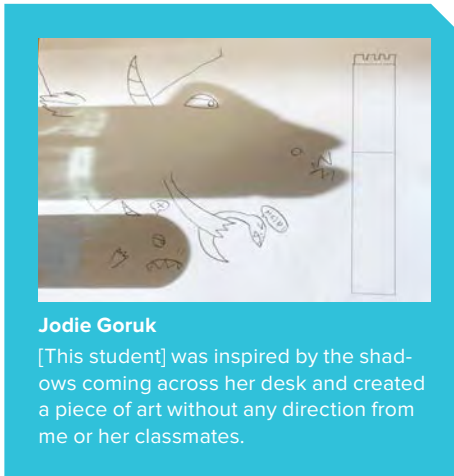
Crystal Quaschnick

The high school Art 10 students were designing masks and working with plaster to build them and their extensions!



Lori Whillier

This cursive trading card was part of learning cursive writing and also learning about "line" in visual art.



Jodie Goruk

[This student] was inspired by the shadows coming across her desk and created a piece of art without any direction from me or her classmates.



Camille Haggart

One-point perspective with shading.



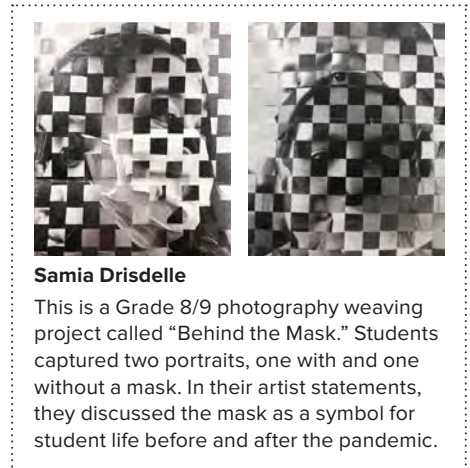
Lara Ledger

I am a pretty lucky teacher to teach my own daughter, who has an art passion.



Fan Hildisheim

Our students were learning about the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival (we are a Mandarin bilingual school).



Samia Drisdelle

This is a Grade 8/9 photography weaving project called "Behind the Mask." Students captured two portraits, one with and one without a mask. In their artist statements, they discussed the mask as a symbol for student life before and after the pandemic.

► See more at facebook.com/ABteachers.



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Sharing is caring

Taking time to let students connect pays off in greater focus

Julie Dixon

Grade 7 language arts and Grade 9 leadership, Woodman School, Calgary

I START EVERY MONDAY'S class by giving students the chance to share about their weekend. I don't cut them off or limit their time, and if every student wants to share and it takes some time, I let it happen, letting go of my own anxieties over covering curriculum. My goal is to build rapport with my students in order to create a safe learning space, one in which students are willing to take risks.

My middle school students love sharing about their worlds, problems and experiences, and through this process they learn to connect with and listen to one another. This process also helps

remind me that a young person sits before me, not just a student I am meant to teach. This sharing helps me connect with them, and they with one another, so in moments when curriculum, learning or their own hardships get tough and they need to persevere, they feel safe to make themselves vulnerable and ask for help, whether for academic or personal reasons.

Through this sharing we become a class whose members care about one another and, in the end, I teach the curriculum with a focused group of young people who are ready to engage in the material. It also provides lots of opportunities to laugh, share joy and remind ourselves of the importance of social connection which, during these strange times, is more important than ever. ATA

“My junior high students love sharing about their worlds and their problems, and they learn to connect and listen to one another.”

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

Quick in a crunch

Movement break leads to off-the-cuff crisis management

Sarah Nickonchuk

Grade 5/6 French Immersion,
Good Shepherd School, Peace River



ILLUSTRATION BY ERIN SOLANO

THE CHALLENGE

Maintain integrity of person and property while executing an emergency barrel roll.

AS A MIDDLE SCHOOL

French immersion teacher, I spend a lot of time listening to French-language music to find tunes that I know kids will relate to and enjoy. I have background music playing throughout much of the day while we work.

One day, while taking a movement break, my students and I were playing a ball-throwing game where we have to always throw the ball to the same person, but at the same time, someone is throwing another ball to you. We keep adding more and more balls until we can't keep up with the pattern. And what game is not made more fun with music?

On that Friday afternoon, I crushed the play button on a Google Music playlist called Pop with Drops. Perfect, I thought. Electronic dance music, no lyrics, good beats to keep us passing the balls at a fast pace. I cranked up the volume and got back to playing.

We had five or six balls being thrown around in our circle of 12, so things were


“What game is not made more fun with music?”

getting complicated! Everyone was having fun and grooving to the music when, in one star-crossed moment, three things happened.

First, everyone went simultaneously silent. Second, in that same silent moment, the electronic dance music suddenly decided to add a vocal layer: a man rhythmically chanting an obscenity while, third, a dress-wearing Mme Sarah shape flew through the air, barrel rolled over the desk, slid onto her chair and ripped the cord out of the speakers.

This all happened in less than five seconds and left a puddle of Grade 6 students laughing on the floor.

And what are the memorable lessons here?

- Playlists may not be what they seem. Preview them carefully.
- I can barrel-roll across a desk and not injure myself or destroy school property.
- Unanticipated events can produce memorable moments. 

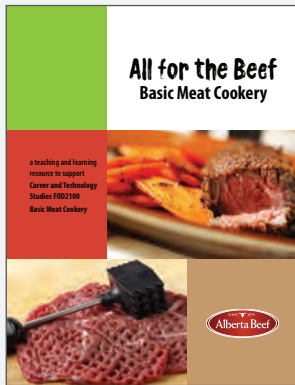
► **Got an idea?** Maybe you created a lesson that totally flopped or were on the receiving end of a lesson that was truly inspiring. Whatever your story, please summarize it in up to 300 words and email it to managing editor Cory Hare at cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

All for the Beef

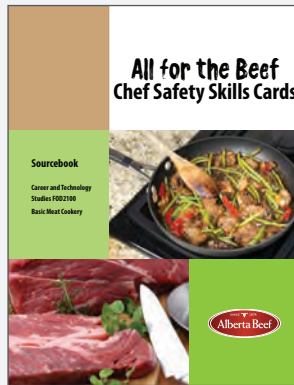
Alberta Beef provides **FREE RESOURCES** for CTS FOD2100 and a new, updated elementary program for K to Grade 5.



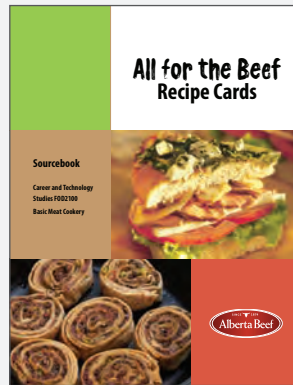
"All for the Beef" Sourcebooks



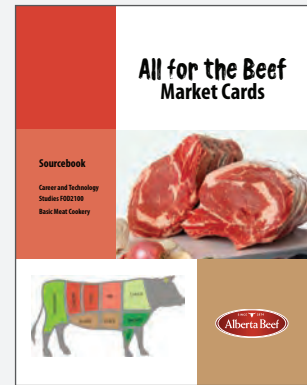
Basic Meat Cookery



Chef Safety Skills Cards



Recipe Skills

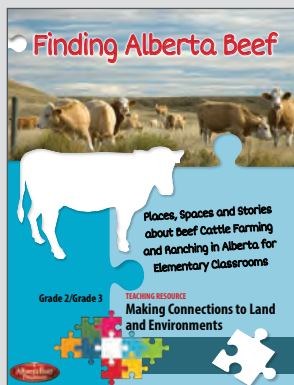


Market Cards

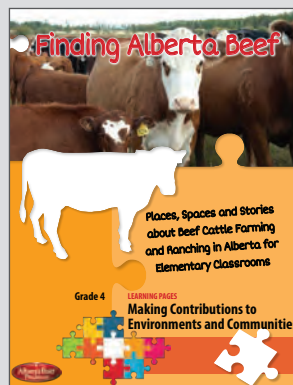
"Finding Alberta Beef" Teaching Resources & Student Learning Pages



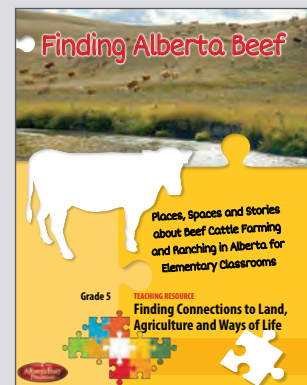
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