

FALL 2020

THE ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

ATA Magazine

An artistic illustration of a person walking away from the viewer on a dirt path. The path leads through a landscape of sparse, thin trees and green hills. In the background, a bright sun is setting or rising, casting a warm orange glow over the scene. The text "Trauma is part of the human story." is written in a white, cursive font across the middle of the image, following the curve of the path.

Trauma is part of the human story.

LOOKING ABROAD

Teachers help jurisdictions navigate COVID crisis, research shows.

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OUR FEATURE

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MOST MEMORABLE LESSON

Remote teaching provides hilarious learning moment.

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The GIVE and TAKE of teaching

Between lessons, supervisions (and so much more!), it can be hard to find the time for both your personal and professional lives.

Fortunately, your EFAP has resources to help you manage. Visit our Employee Wellness page at asebp.ca to learn more.



Supporting your health journey





Feature

20 TRAUMATIC PAUSE

Nuanced and complex, trauma affects everyone differently.



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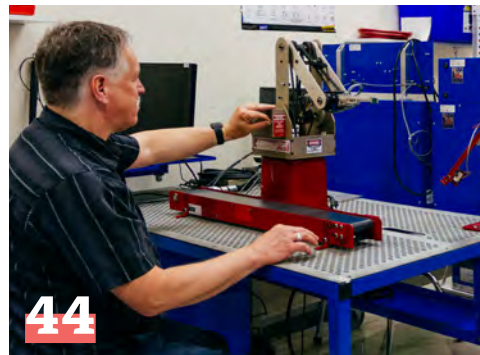
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WHAT'S ON YOUR DESK?

You'll never guess what some of your colleagues have been up to.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Joni Turville
joni.turville@ata.ab.ca

MANAGING EDITOR

Cory Hare
cory.hare@ata.ab.ca

SUPERVISING EDITOR

Sandra Bit

SECTION EDITORS

Jen Janzen
Kim Clement
Lindsay Yakimyshyn
Mark Milne
Shelley Svidal

ART DIRECTION AND DESIGN

Erin Solano
Kim vanderHelm
Yuet Chan

ADVERTISING

Trevor Batty Advertising Sales
trevor@tbasales.ca

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The Alberta Teachers' Association
11010 142 Street Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1
Telephone: 780-447-9400
Toll Free in Alberta: 1-800-232-7208
Website: www.teachers.ab.ca

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Central Brenton Baum

Edmonton McMurray Nancy Ball

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North West Peter MacKay

South East Heather McCaig

South West Katherine Pritchard



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Contributors



DOROTHY LEUNG cover, pp. 21 and 27



Dorothy Leung is an illustrator based in the Toronto area. A creative dabbler, Dorothy completed a degree in architecture at the University

of Waterloo and worked as a freelance wedding photographer and graphic designer before graduating from Sheridan College's illustration program in 2019.

Dorothy credits her artistic roots to her high school art teacher Ms. Chelin, whose quirky, amiable personality and palpable passion for art were contagious to all who studied with her.



CHRISTINA FRANGO pp. 26 and 28



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



RACHEL WADA p. 12



Rachel Wada was born in Japan, grew up briefly in Hong Kong and China, and now lives in Vancouver. She started drawing at a young age, and her

cultural roots and upbringing continue to inspire her work. She graduated with a BFA in illustration from Emily Carr University of Art and Design in 2016.



KEVIN THORNTON p. 44



Fort McMurray resident Kevin Thornton is a freelance essayist, poet and crime fiction writer.



NAOMI KILBURN p. 44



Naomi Kilburn is a recent Durham University graduate who specializes in the palaeopathological analysis of human skeletal remains. An

amateur nature photographer, Naomi was pleased to turn her lens on her father, In Profile subject Tim Kilburn.



RAY SUCHOW p. 43



Ray Suchow is a Leduc teacher

who enjoys writing about the many unique teaching moments occurring in and around his classroom. He is currently working on the second volume of his self-published book, *The Joy of Teaching!*

VALERIE STEEVES | p. 16



Valerie Steeves is a professor in the department of criminology at the University of Ottawa.

JODY CARRINGTON | p. 24



Jody Carrington is a child psychologist focused on shifting the way adults in caring roles think about their work.

TREVOR HARRISON | p. 34



Trevor Harrison is a professor of sociology at the University of Lethbridge and director of the Parkland Institute.

MICHELLE HOLDWAY | p. 53



Michelle Holdway taught Grade 5 at Isabel Campbell Public School in Grande Prairie. She is currently without a teaching assignment.

AMANDA KRISHKA-CHAPPLE | p. 54



Amanda Krishka-Chapple teaches grade 5/6 math and science at Hythe Regional School. Her plan was to teach there for one year; she is now in her fifth.

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



PHOTO BY RYAN PARKER

Joni Turville

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

From you and for you

BACK IN JANUARY, when the world was normal and the main topic of conversation was a deep cold snap that was blanketing the province, we at the *ATA Magazine* were discussing material for an upcoming issue. We took to our Facebook page and posed the following question: How do you perk up the classroom when your students' energy starts to dissipate? Guess what happened? In just a few hours, teachers posted 54 comments, providing us with a wealth of practical ideas that we featured in last issue's Teacher to Teacher section.

To me, this engagement shows that we're on the right track. It was just a year ago, in Fall 2019, that we published the first magazine following a comprehensive redesign that not only changed the look and content of the magazine, but also *how* we gather the content. Since the change, we've worked hard to help teachers better connect with each other by integrating the *ATA Magazine* with the Association's social media channels.

Speaking of digital integration, we are also excited to now offer the *ATA Magazine* as an interactive electronic publication. Accessible via the News and Info tab on the Association's website, the digital magazine can be "leafed through" on your computer or touch-screen device. Individual stories can also be read and easily shared on social media. We hope that this digital version will help many more Albertans understand the work that teachers do and provide more opportunities for you to connect with each other and to your Association. Meanwhile, we understand that some members prefer a paper copy, particularly at a time when there is a desire to be mindful of screen time, so we're continuing to print the magazine as well.

Throughout this past year I've also been excited to receive many responses from readers. Please keep them coming! With the magazine's new format still in its infancy, the publication will continue to evolve—your feedback and ideas are important. After all, this magazine is for you.

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

Une publication à votre image

C'ÉTAIT EN JANVIER DERNIER. La vie suivait son cours habituel; une vague de froid intense ressentie à l'échelle de la province alimentait les conversations. Nous en étions à planifier le contenu d'un prochain numéro de l'*ATA Magazine*. Nous avons alors publié la question suivante sur notre page Facebook : Comment vous y prenez-vous pour revitaliser votre salle de classe lorsque vos élèves commencent à manquer d'énergie? Devinez-vous la suite? En quelques heures seulement, nous avons reçu 54 commentaires d'enseignants, ce qui nous a procuré une foule d'idées pratiques que nous avons présentées dans la section *Teacher to Teacher* du dernier numéro.

À mes yeux, une telle participation démontre que nous sommes sur la bonne voie. Il y a tout juste un an, à l'automne 2019, nous avons publié notre premier numéro à la suite d'une reconception en profondeur. En plus de l'apparence et du contenu de la revue, nous avons alors modifié notre façon d'en rassembler le contenu. Nous travaillons fort depuis pour favoriser de meilleures interactions entre les enseignants, notamment en assurant une présence de l'*ATA Magazine* dans les comptes de médias sociaux de l'ATA.

Toujours sur le thème de l'intégration des technologies numériques, c'est avec grand plaisir que nous offrons désormais l'*ATA Magazine* sous forme de publication électronique interactive. On peut « feuilleter » la version électronique de la revue, accessible sous l'onglet *News and Info* du site de l'ATA, à l'aide d'un ordinateur ou d'un appareil à écran tactile. De plus, les articles individuels que vous avez lus peuvent facilement être diffusés dans les médias sociaux. Nous espérons que cette édition numérique permettra à un plus grand nombre d'Albertains de comprendre le travail des enseignants et qu'elle créera de nouvelles occasions d'interagir avec vos collègues et avec votre Association. Cela dit, nous reconnaissons que certains membres peuvent préférer le format imprimé, surtout dans le contexte actuel de vigilance concernant le temps passé devant un écran. C'est pourquoi nous continuerons à produire la revue en version papier.

J'ai eu le plaisir de recevoir, au cours de la dernière année, un grand nombre de commentaires de la part de nos lecteurs. Continuez de les envoyer! La publication continuera d'évoluer, la présentation renouvelée de la revue étant encore toute fraîche; votre rétroaction et vos idées sont donc importantes. Après tout, c'est à vous que s'adresse cette revue.

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

Letters

We want your feedback

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

Also please send us ...

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

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

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

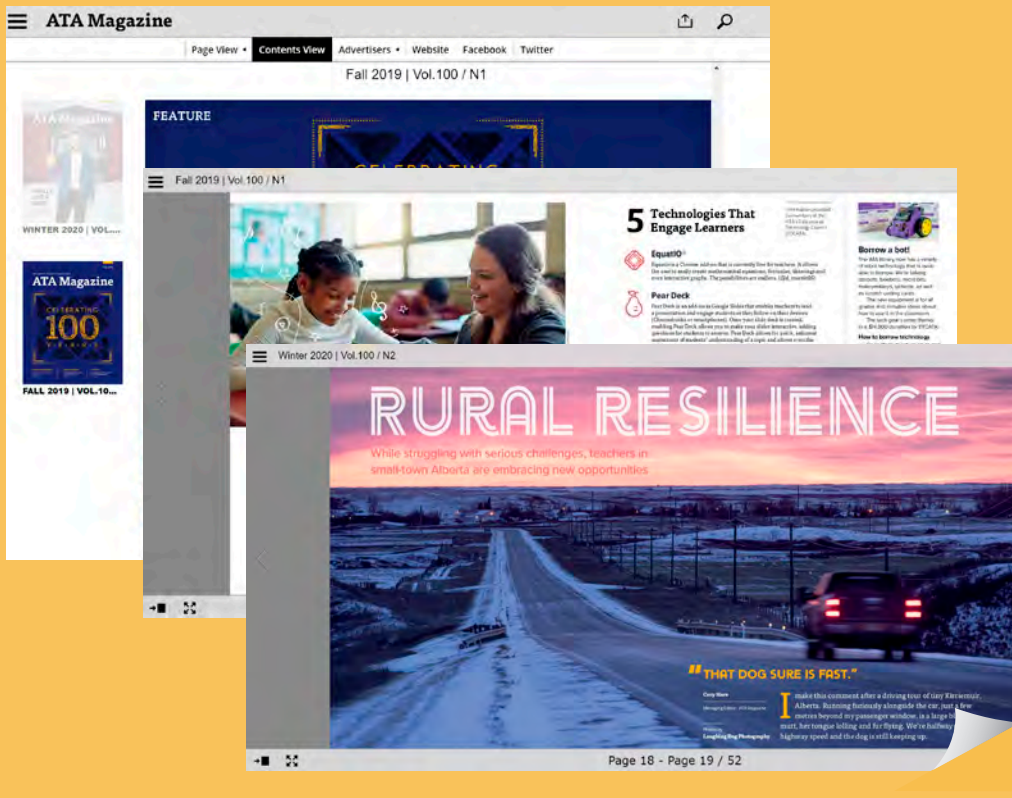
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR — GUIDELINES

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.



SCREEN CAPTURE

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.

BARN HEADLINE LACKS PROFESSIONALISM

I just wanted to connect with someone in regard to the latest cover of the ATA Magazine.

Years ago Premier Ed Stelmach warned us of the invading vitriolic slander of U.S.-style politicking. I find that he was correct, hence my concern with the cover of our magazine that contains the line "Smells Like a Barn."

I feel that public education and health care are under attack in Alberta, and that we would gain more mileage in refraining from any type of insult or negative rhetoric, but rather respond with professional research-based replies and possible warnings of the perils of such government policies. I believe that we can gain far more mileage from parents and stakeholders if we behave like professionals.

I think that the ATA must always maintain a professional posture.

—Craig Lerbekmo
Cremona School



EDITOR'S NOTE

The words chosen for the cover were meant to be a lively and engaging entry point to the feature on rural education. The editors regret if the chosen words conveyed any hint of disrespect toward rural education.



PHOTO BY RYAN PARKER

FROM THE PRESIDENT MOT DU PRÉSIDENT

Jason Schilling

President, ATA
Président de l'ATA


Complex problems call for our shared leadership

LEADERSHIP. The word holds a different meaning for everyone, and each person takes a different path on their leadership journey, but there are certain qualities we look for in our leaders.

We want our leaders to be trustworthy, flexible, resilient, inspirational and have all the answers. This can be a tall order for anyone to aspire to let alone achieve on a day-to-day basis. To me, leadership is best when it is shared. When we work together, tapping into each other's creativity and commitment, we can address and try to solve complex issues.

I have benefitted both professionally and personally from strong leadership, especially during chaotic and trying times. In this issue of the *ATA Magazine*, in our feature section on trauma, I detail a particularly difficult incident that impacted my life in all possible ways. If it wasn't for the leadership of my principal and vice-principal at that time, I probably would have left the profession, and our school would have struggled to overcome the trauma many of us were feeling. The administration at that time provided excellent leadership that I was able to surround myself with and that, in turn, impacted my own leadership style.

I am thankful for the work principals and other school and district leaders do to create safe and caring spaces in our schools. Being a leader can be a thankless and tiring job, especially during the pandemic we've experienced in recent months. The cancellation of in-person classes dramatically increased the pressures on our schools.

Like all members of the profession, principals and other school and district leaders rose to the challenge that COVID-19 presented. Was it perfect? No, but things rarely are in a pandemic. As we move forward in these uncertain times, we need to continue to work together, as one profession, and share in tackling today's complex and interconnected problems. 


La complexité des problèmes appelle au leadership partagé

LEADEURSHIP. Chacun donne à ce mot une signification particulière, et chaque personne en quête de leadership emprunte une voie différente, mais nous veillons toujours à ce que nos leaders possèdent certaines qualités incontournables.

Nous voulons qu'ils soient dignes de confiance, conciliants, résilients, stimulants, et qu'ils aient réponse à tout. Cela peut représenter un défi de taille à quiconque aspire à mettre en avant ces qualités jour après jour. Pour moi, le leadership atteint son apogée quand il est partagé. Lorsque nous travaillons ensemble, tirant parti de la créativité et de l'engagement de chacun, c'est là où nous pouvons réellement aborder des problèmes complexes et tenter de les résoudre.

Moi-même, j'ai profité à la fois professionnellement et personnellement d'un leadership fort, surtout lorsque je vivais des situations chaotiques et éprouvantes. Dans ce numéro de l'*ATA Magazine*, dans la section consacrée au traumatisme, je raconte en détail un incident particulièrement difficile qui a eu un impact considérable dans ma vie. Sans le leadership de mon directeur et de mon directeur adjoint, j'aurais probablement quitté la profession, et notre école aurait eu du mal à surmonter le traumatisme que beaucoup d'entre nous subissaient à ce moment-là. Les membres du personnel administratif de l'époque ont eux aussi fait preuve d'un excellent leadership dont j'ai pu tirer parti et qui, à son tour, a eu un impact sur mon propre style de leadership.

Je tiens à remercier les directeurs d'école et autres leaders scolaires du travail remarquable qu'ils ont effectué afin de créer des espaces surs et accueillants dans nos écoles. Il est vrai que le rôle de leader peut être ingrat et fatigant, surtout pendant une période de pandémie comme celle que nous vivons depuis plusieurs mois. Sans parler de l'annulation des cours en personne qui a considérablement augmenté les contraintes imposées aux écoles.

Néanmoins, comme tous les membres de la profession, les directeurs et autres leaders scolaires ont su relever le défi de la COVID-19. Ont-ils été parfaits? Non, mais rien n'est jamais parfait en période de pandémie. C'est pourquoi, malgré cette période d'incertitude, nous devons continuer à travailler ensemble, au nom de la profession, et faire face à la complexité des nombreux problèmes actuels. 



ISTOCK ADAPTED

How do different media inform and influence education over time?

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? 1940, 1956, 1960, 2010

1. TV AS TEACHING TOOL?

The first Alberta Conference on Television in Education will be held on the University of Alberta campus in Edmonton ... The purposes of this conference are to explore the possible contribution of television in education at all levels, to provide information on the development of television in education in other countries, and to outline recent technological advances. Special study will be made of the contribution which TV can make to Alberta education.

Your guess: _____

2. THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Having students supply their own digital learning equipment is appealing, because educational technology is costly and needs to be replaced frequently. Many supporters of this strategy are already thinking of how to best spend the dollars saved to provide a better e-learning experience for students. Students who have not been raised in an enriched environment have the most to gain from a rich [mobile]-learning environment, but in many cases they can't afford the leading-edge technology, so they will once again sit on the wrong side of the digital divide. It is the school district's responsibility to provide the necessities of learning, so schools will have to ... provide the device if the family is not in a position to do so.


Your guess: _____

3. TRIVIAL INFORMATION

To those concerned with the well-being of children, one of the most serious offences committed by the publishers and purveyors of crime and love comics is the endless and senseless exaltation of triviality. Especially in an age such as ours, where technology has run so far ahead of cultural morality, and when clear and logical thought is so much needed, it seems pitiable that the substance of good minds must be subjected to millions of reams of triviality each year.

Your guess: _____

4. FUNDRAISING FOR CLASSROOM TECHNOLOGY

By now I may have convinced some of you of the value of radio in education, and so I shall proceed to explain how simple a matter it is to obtain one for your class. First approach a dealer or wholesaler through your Divisional Board and obtain his price list. Select the cheapest one you can get, as you require, actually, only Edmonton, Calgary or Lethbridge on the dial. The price of the radio, complete with batteries, should not be more than \$30. To defray the cost of the radio it has been a good policy to combine a raffle with a dance or concert. The proceeds from these should be enough to cover the cost of the machine. The pupils by contest or sales talks may be induced to sell many more tickets than is usual for a raffle. 

Your guess: _____

Answers: 1. Alberta Conference on Television in Education, May 1960. 2. "Mobile Technologies in the Classroom", Fall 2010, Gerald Logan. 3. A noted American psychiatrist wonders "Are They Cleaning Up the Comics?", December 1956, Fredric Wertham. 4. "Radio in the School", June 1940, W. R. Wynnychuk.

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LET NEW ADVENTURES BEGIN!



COVID-19 and schools around the world

Trust in teachers brings better results

Lisa Everitt

Executive Staff Officer, ATA

IN LATE DECEMBER 2019, reports emerged from China that a cluster of viral pneumonia cases had been identified in Wuhan. As a result, the World Health Organization (WHO) began to work with Chinese authorities to track this new virus and provide advice on how to contain its spread. By January 23, Wuhan was completely locked down. Businesses and public spaces, including schools, were closed.

As January progressed, other countries began to report cases of novel coronavirus, and by March 11, the WHO had declared a worldwide pandemic. Countries around the world locked down their borders and parts of their economies, including schools. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reported that 188 countries had closed their schools, leaving 1.7 billion children, youth and families without access to the buildings. Teachers, school leaders and families around the world scrambled to provide emergency remote learning online, over the radio or through prepared documents

delivered to students. As the virus spread slowed, governments around the world began to reopen their economies and services, including schools.

Reopening schools is important for children for many reasons. A 2020 OECD report indicates that “researchers have documented the effects of ‘summer learning loss’ demonstrating that extended interruption of one’s studies causes not only a suspension of learning time, but causes a loss of knowledge and skills gained.” In addition, the United Nations pointed out that the impact of closing schools would be disproportionately felt by poor and marginalized populations. The UN identified concerns for students related to lockdowns, including physical safety, mental well-being, food security, extreme poverty and child abuse, to name a few.

During the pandemic, the decision to reopen schools must be balanced against the overall context of each jurisdiction, the health and well-being of students, and the ability to provide safety through adequate health measures. In this regard, an April

2020 report coauthored by the UN, United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, the World Food Bank and the UN Refugee Agency advises, “School reopenings must be safe and consistent with each country’s overall COVID-19 health response, with all reasonable measures taken to protect students, staff, teachers and their families.”

While the specific details of school reopening vary from country to country, international organizations such as the UN, Education International (EI), the OECD and UNICEF have all issued broadly stated guidelines for the return to public school buildings.

The EI guidelines help the teaching profession because they not only speak to the role of society, families and students but also focus on what teachers and teachers’ organizations can do and have done to ensure safe schools reopenings. The EI report *Forward to School* emphasizes five key areas that are instructive to the work being done in Alberta by teachers, school leaders and system leaders as well as the Association.



“The pandemic has not caused inequalities in education, but rather it has greatly deepened existing inequalities and made them more visible.”

—The EI report *Forward to School*

1. Dialogue

Drawing from documents from the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), EI defines dialogue in two parts: social dialogue and policy dialogue. Social dialogue consists of information sharing, consultation and negotiation. Embedded within these foundational concepts is the notion that teachers’ organizations and school authorities hold equal weight in the dialogue and that there are formal mechanisms available for dispute resolution.

Policy dialogue is also characterized by meaningful consultation and discussion, where expert knowledge is gathered and worked into the formation of appropriate policy for returning to schools during a pandemic. As described by EI, policy dialogue includes the expert voices of teachers, both at the grassroots and through teachers’ unions. EI also provides several examples from around the world where teachers’ unions have engaged in meaningful dialogue to ensure that students and teachers are safe as schools reopen. According to EI, dialogue is essential because “unfortunately, periods of crisis often tend to reinforce authoritarian and top-down attitudes, including in the field of education.”

2. Ensure health and safety of school communities

EI points out the importance of health and safety measures for both educational workers and schools. Health and safety must be supported by strong policy, the implementation of evidence-based public health measures and additional support for vulnerable students and marginalized populations. Providing access to medical care, including testing for COVID-19, physical distancing, handwashing facilities and cohorting, are among a few of the measures that will help limit the

spread in schools. EI calls for resources to schools to be enhanced. Furthermore, EI calls for strong evidence-based measures to deal with cases of COVID-19 in schools. Finally, EI recommends that advisory groups, including health and education professionals, be established to ensure a safe return to public school buildings. EI recognizes that, on a worldwide basis, there are different needs—some countries are rich and others are not—but while the challenges may be unique to each country, the need for safety at school is not.

3. Equity

EI’s guidelines for return to schools insist that equity be made a central priority and that policies be designed to ensure that this can be assessed and improved. EI identifies that social divisions must be addressed, including race, class, disability, social dislocation (refugees) and gender. It recognizes that while many countries were in lockdown, many students had no access to the internet and education and that while away from school, vulnerable students were more likely to be subject to child abuse, child pregnancy or child labour as examples.

“The pandemic has not caused inequalities in education, but rather it has greatly deepened existing inequalities and made them more visible,” the report states.

EI calls for equality gaps to be addressed intentionally by all stakeholders and provides several examples of what has happened around the world in that regard.

4. Well-being

EI notes the importance of robust physical and mental health at all times for teachers, school staff and students. Through a resolution passed at their 2019 EI World Congress, delegates highlighted the importance of mental well-being during


the pandemic. Delegates asserted that “all teachers, education support personnel and students should be entitled to support for their mental health and well-being, and encouraged to access such support without criticism, penalty, or stigma.” EI also shared that there is a lack of research on the impact of COVID-19 on well-being, though it does cite some examples, including the Alberta Teachers’ Association’s pandemic study conducted this past spring while schools were locked down.

5. Trust

EI points out that, on a worldwide basis, trusting teachers to exercise their professional judgment has allowed for the most successful continuation of education while countries were in lockdown.

The *Forward to School* report noted that one of the main takeaways from policy discussions on the COVID-19 crisis is that jurisdictions that invested the tools, time and trust into educators before and during the crisis saw the greatest returns when it came to effectively transitioning into emergency distance education practices.

In many places, high-stakes testing was cancelled, and teachers were able to work collaboratively to develop lessons and pedagogical approaches as well as adapt to using new technologies. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates that in countries where teachers are highly trusted, the outcomes are better, and this raises important considerations as we move through the pandemic and into a new normal.

The EI report, like other reports, emphasizes increased resources for schools through a collaborative approach; a focus on wellness and equity; support for teachers in terms of professional development; and the enactment of evidence-based policies and safety measures in schools to keep students, teachers and educational staff safe. As schools reopen around the world, we are seeing various approaches being adapted, and undoubtedly, we will continue to learn and adapt as the pandemic unfolds. 



May Peace
PREVAIL ON
EARTH QUE LA
PAIX RÉGNE
SUR TERRE

Colleen Ring: Teacher makes a difference through kindness

Jen Janzen

Staff Writer, *ATA Magazine*

WE DON'T ALWAYS GET TO DECIDE

what happens, but we can always decide how we respond to it.

That was the logic behind the Kids for Kindness school program, developed in 1994 by Edmonton teacher Colleen Ring.

Inspiration for the program struck after a local tragedy: Barb Danelesko, a well-known presence in the community, was murdered in her home just a couple of blocks away from where Ring was teaching. Many of Ring's students knew Danelesko, and her death left them reeling. The Kids for Kindness program, in which students were given kindness-inspired assignments and recognized for being kind to their peers, was a welcome offset to the grief that hung heavily in the halls of the school.

Shortly after this, Ring heard of something similar, called Random Acts of Kindness Week, taking root in the United States. She and her sister, Debbie Riopel, who was also a teacher, helped to establish Random Acts of Kindness Week in Edmonton. It eventually spread throughout Alberta and Canada.

The sisters' work with Random Acts of Kindness led to other opportunities, such as in 1996, when Ring was invited to Tokyo to attend a conference put on by the Small Kindness Movement of Japan. When the World Kindness Movement began, they were founding members.

"It was always very surreal to us," Ring recalls. "[We were] two classroom teachers from Alberta, attending gatherings and sitting at tables with some high-profile individuals, collaborating on the creation of global kindness networks."

Ring retired from teaching in 2011 but remains involved in social justice initiatives, including the annual Season of Nonviolence, which takes place from January 30 to April 4 and focuses on creating a culture of peace and nonviolence.

Why the focus on kindness and peace? Ring's explanation is simple.

"It is time for all of us to recognize the role that we can play in creating a world in which basic human rights for all is the norm, and the beauty of human diversity is embraced and celebrated," she said. "The ultimate lesson which I hoped my students would take away is that they have a voice and that they can make a difference." ^{ATA}

► **Got an idea?** *Unsung Hero* is a space dedicated to honouring ATA members past and present who have had notable achievements, either within the ATA or in their private lives. If you know of a member who you feel should be recognized, please contact section editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca.

Colleen Ring

AWARDS

Hilroy Fellowship in recognition of the creation of the Kids for Kindness Program

Global Television Women of Vision 1999 (along with her sister Debbie Riopel)

ILLUSTRATION BY RACHEL WADA



Be involved ... but also take time for you

Fred Kreiner

Executive Staff Officer, ATA Teacher Employment Services

WHILE TEACHERS FREQUENTLY get involved in many activities in their schools and their school communities, the Teaching Quality Standard defines the job of teaching according to six categories:

1. Fostering effective relationships
2. Engaging in career-long learning
3. Demonstrating a professional body of knowledge
4. Establishing inclusive learning environments
5. Applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit
6. Adhering to legal frameworks and policies

To effectively teach while ensuring that you are meeting the TQS requires a great deal of effort and time. A workload study that was completed in December of 2015 found that “the typical work week for a teacher was 48 hours...” During certain periods of the year, such as report card time or September, a teacher’s work week is even longer.

If you spend that amount of time doing the job of teacher, how much time can you commit to other school-based activities? The answer is different for every teacher.

Some activities may actually help you meet the Teaching Quality Standard. Coaching a sports team certainly helps foster effective relationships with students. Volunteering to be on a committee to ensure First Nations, Métis and Inuit issues are addressed in the school will also help you better apply foundational

knowledge in your classroom. These activities add to your work week, but may also support your teaching.

Too much time at work can have consequences for your personal life. Spending quality time with loved ones increases teachers' resilience to the stresses of day-to-day teaching. If you no longer have time away from work to look after yourself, your teaching effectiveness may be hampered. Teachers must take time for themselves to ensure they are at their best. ^{ATA}

Division puts a lid on after-hours communication

Cory Hare

Managing Editor, *ATA Magazine*

AFTER-HOURS ELECTRONIC

communication is bad for our health and productivity. We all know this, don't we, based on the wealth of research that's emerged in recent years plus our own lived experience?

Has this knowledge motivated you to change your habits? How often do you slip into old ways?

At Chinook's Edge School Division (based in Innisfail), officials were troubled by evidence suggesting that a growing number of staff were "plugged in" for up to 18 hours each day. So last year the division implemented "Weekdays 'til 6," a new practice that confines nonemergency outbound emails and texts to before 6 p.m. on weekdays.

This means no more evening or weekend electronic communication from school administrators to staff or parents. The division also asked parents to adhere to this time restriction in their communications to division staff, including teachers, and asked teachers not to respond to after-hours communications until the next day.



"I've heard all kinds of testimonials from different staff members around the division. I think all have really appreciated the efforts and the actual outcomes," says Trevor Sanche, president of Chinook's Edge Local No. 17.

The initiative came about after discussions between the local and division administration. The change has provided more down time to division staff, which has helped them bring more energy to their practice when they are working, says Ray Hoppins, the division's associate superintendent of people services.

"We've had a remarkable decrease in the number of emails," Hoppins says. "It's been good for all of us." ^{ATA}

IN THESE UNPRECEDENTED TIMES ... STOP THE CLICHÉS!

The coronavirus has been on the top of our minds and the tip of our tongues since early 2020. The media has become so saturated with pandemic messaging that it was only a matter of time before certain COVID clichés emerged.

We asked you to share a few chestnuts that you'd be happy to never hear again. Here are the terms that received the most mentions, along with a sampling of your comments.

1. Unprecedented

"There have been so many pandemics in the past! This absolutely ISprecedented."

Caitlin Perry

2. New normal

"Furthest thing from normal I can think of."

Janel Winslow-Sherwin

3. We're all in this together

"Maybe it's just me, but I immediately get that high school musical song stuck in my head."

Brenna Lane

4. Homeschooling

"I'm sick of [people] calling this homeschooling. It really devalues what we have done as teachers."

Kristen Kokura

5. Flattening the curve

6. Speaking moistly

7. Stay safe

8. Let's Google Meet

"Before all this I had no clue what a Google Meet even was!"

Rosa Bianca

"Going teacher" at the grocery store

"I'm guilty of giving teacher looks at people coming towards me down one-way aisles."

Leigha Heather

"Or if they pick up something and put it back. Ha! The stink eyes I've given!!!"

Cameron Ashton Reidy



The view from across the eDesk

Students' perspectives of tech in the classroom

Valerie Steeves

Professor, University of Ottawa

OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS, The eQuality Project team has conducted a number of qualitative studies with young people between the ages of 11 and 17 to explore their online lives. Although this kind of qualitative research isn't generalizable, it does provide a rich picture of the kinds of attitudes and perspectives that can be found within the general student population. For teachers interested in using technology effectively in the classroom, the data provides a number of standout findings.

Four notable findings about tech in the classroom

1 School is important.

First, the good news. All of the young people we spoke to in a recent study we conducted with our partner MediaSmarts identified school as the most important place to learn how to use technology well. Although parents continue to play a pivotal role, students credited their teachers with providing them with the skills they need to identify good educational resources and get the most out of their devices. Even better, these skills translated to students' daily lives, making them better able to use tech to explore their own interests and keep in touch with their friends. This is a clear win for digital literacy education and underlines the importance of having an engaged teacher in the wired classroom to help students learn how to use devices effectively.

2 Surveillance feels creepy.


On the other hand, our research participants consistently report that the kinds of protective surveillance schools use—to filter offensive content and monitor for cyberbullying, for example—continues to interrupt their learning. Certainly, being blocked from good educational content can be annoying for both students and teachers, but the real problem from the students' perspective is that this kind of monitoring feels “creepy” and “stalkery” to them. Many of them tell us that they are less likely to try new things, explore nonmainstream ideas or take risks that may fail because a digital copy of their actions may haunt them throughout their education.

3 Technology is losing its lustre.

Students' discomfort with the online surveillance they experience at school (and at home and in the marketplace) may also explain why they no longer tend to talk about technology as exciting or liberating. Devices have definitely become the infrastructure of their day, but the playful attitude that they had 20 years ago has given way to a fatalistic acknowledgment that those devices come with downsides. Many of them worry about the effect tech has on their sleep, their sense of connection with family and friends, and their willingness to get off the couch and go outdoors.

4 Tech can be confining.

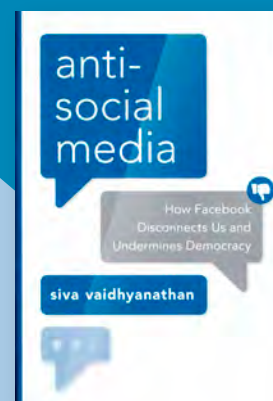
Most surprisingly, they are starting to think critically about when tech can help them learn and when it can be a barrier. Over the past three years in particular, we've heard from a number of students that devices can cause problems, especially when they are doing math or science homework; they want to be free to put down their devices and use paper and pencil to solve equations because paper and pencil are better suited to the nonlinear nature of the task they've been assigned. Similarly, many indicate that they prefer to use books when they are researching a topic, precisely because the content in books has been curated, and libraries organize books in ways that make it easier to find relevant material. This suggests we need to ensure that school infrastructures that require homework to be completed or handed in online, for example, don't nudge students into using the wrong tool for the task.

* *The importance of both the teacher and the physical classroom has been underlined by our recent qualitative study exploring students' experiences of emergency remote learning during the COVID-19 isolation. Our research participants unanimously reported that, although electronic communication was “better than nothing,” they learn best when they are physically in a classroom with a teacher who can guide their learning, provide them with examples and challenge their thinking.* 



Check out this research at
equalityproject.ca.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCE



Anti-Social Media

Siva Vaidhyathan

Available through the ATA library.

STUDENTS ARE “GETTING IT”

We all agree that schools need to be thoughtful about how tech is used in the classroom. I would suggest that students' concerns about technology do more than identify issues; they demonstrate the success of digital literacy education. Students who are aware of online surveillance seek to protect their privacy, think critically about the tools they use to shape their work, and are precisely the kinds of digital citizens teachers are hoping to shape. Listening to their perspectives and taking their views into account is just one more way to ensure the networked classroom provides students with the best possible educational experience.

— Valerie Steeves



The power of pronouns

It's important to address each other through the thoughtful use of pronouns

Information provided by ATA staff officer Dan Grassick

OUR IDENTITY PLAYS A POWERFUL ROLE

in how we interact with those around us. Along with our names, we constantly refer to each other through the use of pronouns. As such, pronouns have become integral elements in defining our identity. As teachers, one of the best ways we can contribute to the comfort and acceptance of our students and colleagues, regardless of their sexual or gender identity, is to be sensitive to how we address them. Referring to someone by the incorrect pronoun has the same effect as calling them by the wrong name.

A MATTER OF IDENTITY

A person's pronouns are an integral part of their identity. As author Ivan Coyote shared at the Calgary City Teachers' Convention in February 2020, "Pronouns aren't preferences. When I'm flying, I prefer

the window seat, but I can sit in the aisle or the middle seat if I have to. I use the pronoun *they*. That's the pronoun that suits me the best and that's the one you should use."

WHAT PRONOUNS ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

In the English language, singular first-person pronouns (i.e. me, I, myself, mine, my) and singular second-person pronouns (i.e. you, yourself, your, yours) are not gendered. Our nonbinary students and colleagues (those who identify outside the m/f gender binary) may decide to be referred to by any of the following singular third-person pronouns:

- he/him
- per/per
- she/her
- they/them
- xe/xem
- ze/hir
- ze/zir
- and many others!

Some people prefer that no pronouns are used and that they are referred to by their name only. Others may go by different sets of pronouns in different settings (such as at work versus social settings). Never assume. If you have any doubt about which pronouns to use, just ask.

INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

Sharing your own pronouns is the best way to encourage others to share theirs. By offering this information about yourself, you create a safe space where others are more likely to share their pronouns. Say something like, "Hi, I'm Dan. I go by he/him and they pronouns. How should I refer to you?"

A majority of the population will likely identify with the traditional binary pronouns (he/him and she/her) and that's alright. By sharing your pronouns with others, you're acknowledging that you're sensitive to their pronoun choice and want to get it right. Don't force anyone to share their pronouns if they don't want to. Sharing your pronouns and inviting them to do the same is enough.

If you are organizing an event, consider providing a place on your nametags for attendees to indicate the pronoun

of their choice. Stickers are now readily available that specify the various pronoun combinations. If you're attending an event, it never hurts to be proactive and bring some sticker sheets with you to drop off at the registration desk. No matter what the situation, including your pronouns on your own nametag goes a long way.

WHAT IF I MISGENDER SOMEONE?

Everyone makes mistakes. If you have inadvertently misgendered someone,

- **apologize as soon as you can.** A private, one-on-one conversation is best. A public apology in front of a group is not appropriate.
- **be accountable.** Don't try to defend your intentions or justify your mistake. Own your discomfort and be willing to listen.
- **commit to do better.** Acknowledge the importance of getting their pronouns correct in the future.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCE

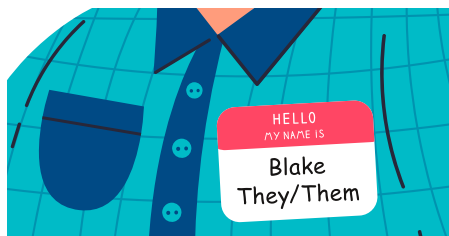
www.mypronouns.org

Quick tips

They/them pronouns are generally accepted as gender-neutral pronouns that can be used as a replacement for the traditional binary he/him and she/her pronoun sets in daily life and teaching.

They/them should not be used to refer to an individual who has identified other pronouns they want used. Doing so is also misgendering.

In its definition of *they*, the *Oxford English Dictionary* explains that the singular *they* emerged by the 14th century, about a century after the plural *they*. It has been commonly employed in everyday English ever since. ^{ATA}



ISTOCK ADAPTED

Turn a page on racism

The following books are a great first step on the path to a greater understanding of racism and how you can address it as a teacher, community leader and global citizen. All are available through the ATA library.

Use this link to access the material online: <https://teachers-ab.libguides.com/antiracism>.

- ***Algorithms of Oppression***
How Search Engines Reinforce Racism
- ***How to Be an Antiracist***
- ***Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?***
And Other Conversations About Race
- ***Teaching to Transgress***
Education as the Practice of Reform ^{ATA}

RECOMMENDED RESOURCE



Empower Our Girls

Lynmara Colón and Adam Welcome
Available through the ATA library.

Trauma can have a huge impact on teachers

A personal account by Jason Schilling

President, ATA

Teaching, to me, is a paradox, an amusing mixture of joy and pain. It's a profession rooted in interactions and the building of relationships, and while these relationships are typically a source of tremendous satisfaction, they can also bring gut-wrenching heartache.

When I was in my sixth year of teaching, I transferred schools, moved to a new city and started over. This is when I met Jack, a new student in my English 20 class. Little did I know he would change my life forever.

Jack was pleasant enough, at least as pleasant as surly teenage boys are able to be in the morning, and was by no means difficult. But I could tell from his strained interactions in class that he was struggling to fit in. I could empathize, for new schools can be tough.

One morning, I noticed that Jack appeared especially gloomy, keeping his head down and paying no particular attention to the proceedings.

"Jack, could you please lift your head and join the class?" I said, not thinking much of it.

What happened next was like one of those moments in the movies when the camera shifts its focus and tilts. Jack hurled a lengthy list of expletives in my direction that included a threat to end my life, then stormed out of the room and slammed the door, knocking the phone off the wall and the breath out of my chest.

I spent a few minutes getting the class settled, then contacted the office

about what had happened and to see if Jack had made it there. But, of course, he had not gone to the office; he'd left the building.

The situation escalated from there. After leaving the school, Jack had returned to his house and retrieved a weapon. The police were notified and were quick on the scene. Due to Jack's threat toward me and concerns over what could happen next, the school went into lockdown.

We had practised a lockdown drill several times, but a real one feels entirely different. It was tense. Some students were curious as to what was happening; some had heard in the hallway what had happened in my class. As the time dragged on, our collective patience waned. Then, more than three hours later, the lockdown was lifted and we learned of Jack's suicide.

Things moved very quickly at that point. Announcements were made, staff and grief counsellors gathered in the staff room to hear the events of the day, and I was quickly shuffled into the office to debrief the day. It all seemed surreal. People, noises, conversations swirled around me as I struggled to make sense of what had happened.

This remains the darkest day of my career and the moment when everything changed. I thought I'd been in control, but control is deceptive. I felt that, if I'd been in control, Jack would have not taken his life.

This incident sent shock waves through our school. The district's



ILLUSTRATION BY DOROTHY LEUNG

emergency response plan was implemented, allowing for counselling for all students and staff. Teachers are expected to be steadfast in times of crisis and help students with the immediate impact of traumatic situations, and that is exactly what we did. We were taught the signs and symptoms of students struggling with the aftershocks of the lockdown. The media attention died down, the wealth of counsellors returned to their respective schools, and our normal routine of bells and classes resumed.

Following “the incident,” as we called it, staff were well-supported in the short term, but as the year progressed, a wall of silence grew around it. While others in the school moved on, I remained stuck, reliving a nightmare I could not contain nor change. I was devastated by the loss and began to lose the sense of self and confidence that I had acquired throughout my early career. Over the course of several months, I struggled and faltered, exhibiting characteristics of post-traumatic stress disorder. I was quick to anger, had little patience, felt numb and carried a tremendous amount of guilt over what had transpired. Several

months after the incident, I caught myself staring blankly into the bathroom mirror, brushing my teeth for close to 45 minutes.

I believe there are two types of people in the world: people who own their problems and those who are owned by their problems. I realized in that moment that I was owned by the

had been carrying. I became a different person after the incident as I came to realize that we do not have control over all aspects of our lives. I became more present in my life with my students, friends and family. I like to believe that I became a better teacher through the coping strategies I developed. I realized that it was okay to talk about what

“ I like to believe that I became a better teacher through the coping strategies I developed.

loss of Jack. I was carrying the weight of his suicide, and it was crushing me.

I knew had to get myself back to a new sense of normal. Recognizing this was not a journey I could manage alone, I sought counselling assistance, and I was fortunate to have administration and staff who supported my recovery. I was not made to feel weak, broken or incapable.

I worked hard through therapy to recapture my inner self. It allowed me time to reflect, think, heal and eventually forgive. I forgave myself and laid down the burden of his death that I

I was going through, it was okay to seek the help of a professional, and it was okay to not be okay.

This experience has framed my thinking around trauma and was the catalyst of my master’s work. Trauma can have a huge impact on teachers. My career did not end after the suicide of my English student, but it could have. I think about Jack often, and I am sorry that we failed him. Losing Jack made me find myself, made me a better teacher, a better colleague and ultimately, a better person. ^{ATA}

TRAUMA

WHAT IS TRAUMA?

“Trauma is the Greek word for ‘wound.’ Although the Greeks used the term only for physical injuries, nowadays trauma is just as likely to refer to emotional wounds.”

As the Klinik Community Health (2013) trauma tool kit states,

Traumatic events happen to everyone; it is part of the human experience. . . . However, how a person responds to these circumstances is unique to that individual’s social history, genetic inheritance and protective factors that may be in the person’s life at the time. (p. 6)

It is not the event that determines whether something is traumatic to someone, but the individual’s experience of the event and the meaning they make of it.

Those who feel supported after the event (through family, friends, spiritual connections, etc.) and who had a chance to talk about and process the traumatic event are often able to integrate the experience into their lives, like any other experience. (p. 9)

WHAT CAN CAUSE TRAUMA?

- War
- Poverty
- Abuse
- Discrimination or racism
- Neglect
- Accident or illness
- Loss or grief
- Violence

POSSIBLE SIGNS OF TRAUMA

.....

HEALTH ISSUES

- Compromised immune system
- Difficulty sleeping
- Depression
- Increased physical and mental stress
- Weight loss or gain
- Psychosomatic symptoms (mental health difficulties that present as physical difficulties, such as headaches or stomach aches)

COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT

- Anger
- Constant alertness
- Difficulty paying attention
- Difficulty understanding cause and effect
- Difficulty self-regulating
- Forgetfulness
- Hyperarousal or hypervigilance
- Lack of self-understanding
- Nightmares, flashbacks and troubling thoughts
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Suicidal thoughts

RELATIONSHIP INSTABILITY

- Attachment difficulties
- Tendency to avoid engaging with others
- Clinging and compliance
- Conflictual relationships
- Difficulty building relationships
- Social isolation
- Distrust and suspicion of others

BEHAVIOUR

- Aggression (against self and others)
- Compliance (robotic, detached)
- Defiance
- Disassociation (doesn’t react, seems “spaced out”)
- Easily startled
- Impulsive and destructive behaviour
- Irritability
- Rigid or chaotic behaviour
- Tantrums

MMA

WHAT DOES TRAUMA DO TO A PERSON?

Traumatic experiences have a profound impact on several areas of functioning. Childhood trauma affects the organization of the brain, and prolonged activation of stress hormones in early childhood can reduce neuroconnections in the areas of the brain dedicated to learning and reasoning at the time when new connections should be developing. After a prolonged series of traumas and losses, refugee students may be functioning at a primal level in fight-flight-freeze mode.

WHAT SHOULD TEACHERS DO IF THEY RECOGNIZE SIGNS OF TRAUMA?

Remember that although teachers can be effective at prevention and noticing symptoms, they are not trained medical professionals. It is important that teachers recognize their limitations and when to involve other professionals.

Teachers are not therapists, and being a trauma-informed teacher does not mean that you must treat your students' symptoms of trauma. Rather, being a trauma-informed teacher means that you are aware of the prevalence of trauma among students and how trauma can affect them. It means that you are able to recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma as well as trauma responses. It means that you seek understanding of the unique needs of your students affected by trauma in a compassionate way and that you can integrate your knowledge of trauma into your teaching practice to create a safe, supportive and regulated learning environment.

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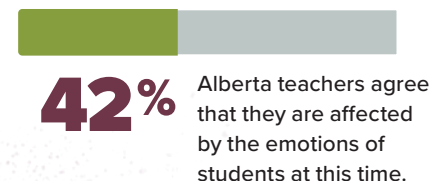
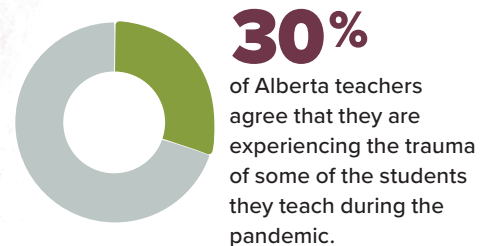
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COVID AND COMPASSION FATIGUE

Compassion fatigue is the emotional and physical exhaustion that can develop when helpers (for example teachers, nurses and others) are unable to "refuel and regenerate" as a result of their emotional labour and dedication to others.

One of the main characteristics of compassion fatigue, as found within the research literature, is the experiencing of secondary (vicarious) trauma. This can be through one profound experience of secondary trauma or by cumulative exposure.

A study conducted by the ATA during the initial weeks the COVID-19 pandemic found the following:



With one-third of respondents indicating that they are empathizing with the trauma of their students, teachers may experience a very high rate of compassion fatigue. The ATA is currently engaged in a further study on the impact of compassion fatigue on teachers.

Connection is *key* to trauma recovery



PHOTO SUPPLIED

Insights from a recognized expert

Jody Carrington is a clinical psychologist who has spent most of her career working with children and families who have experienced trauma. She believes in the power of the relationship in helping children and families who are struggling with emotional dysregulation. A regular speaker at teachers' conventions, she is the author of *Kids These Days: A Game Plan for (Re)Connecting with Those We Teach, Lead, & Love*.

It seems like we've been hearing a lot about trauma in the media in the last year or two. Is this an accurate assessment? If so, why do you think that is?

I would certainly agree that a desire to be “trauma-informed” has been a big and important shift in the world of mental health in recent years.

I believe that a contributing factor to this shift is the fact that, as a society, we have never been more disconnected than we are right now. Being able to process or make sense of hard things requires human connection; face-to-face connection is the best, from a physiological perspective, and we have never been more disconnected from one another than we are right now. Subsequently, kids (and us big kids) are struggling to make sense of hard things. The result in the classroom is significant increases in emotional dysregulation that are often identified as violence.

Why are we struggling to understand what trauma means?

What is considered traumatic is very difficult to articulate because it's not

an entity. The definition of trauma is simply this: any experience encoded in terror. Depending on your circumstances, this can be nearly anything for anybody. If you are in a state of terror and have nothing or nobody to help you make sense of that experience, it will mess you up.

How well do we understand the effects of trauma, and how much remains to be learned?

From a neurological perspective, I think we have a lot of insight about just how damaging disconnection following an event that was encoded in terror can be. I think where we need the most shift is in understanding how best to connect to each other again.

In previous generations, many were raised from a very behavioural perspective—reward the good behaviour, punish the bad behaviour and results should happen. In previous generations, however, we had much more physical connection to one another. We lived in smaller spaces, taught in one-room schoolhouses. We had more opportunity to make sense of

hard things because we made much more eye contact.

We are struggling, I think, to understand the root cause of the increase in school shootings and violence in the classroom by looking for answers like “it must be the guns,” or “it’s the video games.” I think our main understanding of trauma and the subsequent emotional dysregulation that our most “difficult” students struggle with comes down to one thing—connection. And here’s the kicker: the ones who need it the most are the hardest to give it to.

In Alberta, to what extent are teachers learning about trauma?


It has been so amazing to witness (and to be a part of) a shift in education toward attempting to understand the “why” behind the “behaviours” that some kids present with. There is certainly a focus on becoming trauma-informed across this province (and this country). Incredible resources are emerging, developed from a relationship-based perspective, that are allowing our educators to understand behaviour (even

the most off-putting and unacceptable behaviours) as connection-seeking and not attention-seeking.

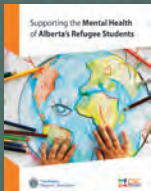
There is, however, no standard of practice in education to date that helps to clarify what it means to be trauma-informed.

You can’t learn even the finest presentations of literacy and numeracy if you are emotionally dysregulated. I think the answer lies in creating a trauma-informed, relationship-based practice for every mental health team in every school division across this

province. There needs to be a standard of practice when assessing, treating and building intervention plans that allows educators to feel competent and confident when faced with trauma in the classroom.

Along with four divisions in this province, we have created the Carrington Connections Network and are currently training divisions across this country to become trauma-informed and relationship-focused, which we hope will change the face of education in North America. 

ATA RESOURCES AND WORKSHOPS



Supporting the Mental Health of Alberta's Refugee Students

The Association recently developed a resource containing a variety of information related to trauma, including potential triggers and strategies for creating a trauma-informed classroom.

The Association also has a series of resources entitled *Working with Immigrant Students and Families*. These teachers' guides outline the histories and cultures of countries that are home to many of Alberta's refugee students.

These resources are available online at teachers.ab.ca.



Trauma-Informed Practice: Safe, Supportive and Self-Regulated Classrooms

Participants in this interactive workshop will receive information and tools to help them provide safe, supportive and self-regulated environments for students who have experienced trauma. They will be provided with background information on trauma

and its effects on the child and adolescent brain, how to create trauma-informed environments, and how to help build resiliency and self-regulation skills in students.

To book a workshop or arrange a presentation, please contact Professional Development by phone at 1-800-232-7208 (toll free in Alberta) or 780-447-9485 (Edmonton area), or by email at pdworkshops@ata.ab.ca.

PROVINCIAL INITIATIVES TO EDUCATE ON TRAUMA

Brain Story Certification

www.albertafamilywellness.org/training

Calgary and Area Child Advocacy Centre

Being Trauma Aware

calgarycac.ca/education/being-trauma-aware

Crisis and Trauma Resource Institute

ca.ctrinstitute.com

ATA LIBRARY

The ATA library has a wealth of resources related to the topics of refugees and trauma-informed classrooms.

Visit library.teachers.ab.ca.

Email library@ata.ab.ca.

Picking up signals

Teachers can identify signs of trauma and support refugee students

Christina Frangou

Freelance contributor

Rim Younis stopped going to school regularly in Grade 2 when her parents fled their home in Syria.

After a few years in Turkey, she arrived in Canada at 10 years old with her parents and four siblings as part of the Canadian government's program to resettle Syrian refugees. Upon starting school in Calgary, she kept her head down in class, too nervous to make eye contact. "I just wouldn't feel comfortable," says Younis, now 14 and in Grade 10.

What she didn't say to anyone was that she feared teachers. In Syria, students could be hurt for being late, getting an answer incorrect or speaking out of turn. One teacher, as a punishment, placed pencils in between each of Rim's fingers and then squeezed her hand.

Younis credits time, support and one particular teacher with helping her learn to feel safe at school.

Younis told this teacher privately that she felt numb all the time—she couldn't feel anger, happiness or sadness. The next day, the teacher brought her a journal and said Younis could write about how she felt at home and at school. "I would write in it and give to her. She would read it and write her comments back to me," Younis said.

Almost universally, teachers become the most important people in the lives of refugee children outside of their immediate families, according

to Annalee Coakley, the medical director of the Mosaic Refugee Health Centre in Calgary. "Not only are they the people teaching them science and language, but they're their mentors and their guides in interpersonal relationships."

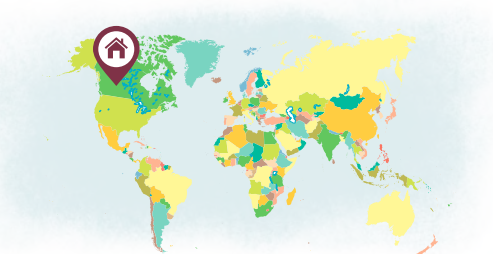
Many refugee children have experienced or witnessed extreme trauma—including war, missing family members, poverty, violence and upheaval. Studies have shown that refugee children have high levels of PTSD, depression, anxiety and traumatic grief.

"A teacher should be attuned to picking up signals. Most teachers can understand the dazed look that differs from the engaged look."

—Mary Frances Fitzgerald, counsellor

Not every child who has experienced trauma will suffer long-term psychological effects, says Erin Luong, a Calgary-based school counsellor and president of the ATA's Council of School Counsellors.

"It's not the experience of what happened to a person that causes trauma—it's their personal story that matters. It's what they replay and can't let go," she said.



Alberta resettled more than 8,600 refugees aged 17 and under between January 2015 and October 2019, according to statistics from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

She urged teachers to learn about a student's personal background. "The more we get to know our kids' stories without labelling it as being trauma, the easier it's going to be to support those kids."

Cultural factors may explain some of their behaviour in the classroom, said Luong. For example, kids who've relocated frequently for safety might move around a classroom when they feel unsafe. Those who've lived in refugee camps might collect items from other people's desks because they have had limited experience with personal property, she said.

Luong said kids who are suffering from the effects of trauma can't be treated by a teacher or school counsellors without specialized training, but teachers play a critical role in identifying and supporting kids.

"Our role at a school is to notice the signs and symptoms and connect those families with agencies that specialize in that type of support," she said.

Signs of prolonged reaction to trauma can vary, says Mary Frances Fitzgerald, a counsellor and education consultant for diversity and mental health at Edmonton Public Schools. Some children and youth struggling with trauma will display overabundant behaviour, but more will fall into silence and lethargy. Many refugee children become overly compliant because, in their past, disobedience may have been met with violence, Fitzgerald said. Sometimes, they fall into silence, which can be the result of both trauma and language barriers.

"But a teacher should be attuned to picking up signals. Most teachers can understand the dazed look that differs from the engaged look," Fitzgerald said.

Coakley said teachers in Alberta have shown remarkable sensitivity and dedication in helping refugee children who have arrived here over the last five years.

Many kids who struggled with trauma and mental health issues have developed healthy relationships and set personal goals after they become comfortable at school, she said. "Being in school is the best form of trauma therapy for kids."

Coakley urges teachers to be on high alert for refugee students who retreat into themselves.

"They're the quiet child in the back of the classroom and they're not terribly engaged," she said. "Those are ones I worry most about." ATA



ILLUSTRATION BY DOROTHY LEUNG

"It's not the experience of what happened to a person that causes trauma—it's their personal story that matters. It's what they replay and can't let go."

—Erin Luong, school counsellor

From the ashes

Trauma from Fort McMurray wildfire gives way to growth

Christina Frangou

Freelance contributor

Nearly four years after Fort McMurray schools were evacuated under smoke-filled skies, something new is in the air—a feeling of hope.

“We’re a healthier school district. We’re better able to handle challenges. We’re no longer reacting to a crisis,” explains Shannon Noble, assistant superintendent for Fort McMurray Public Schools.

School officials say that the changes in Fort McMurray reflect a phenomenon known as post-traumatic growth, a psychological transformation that can develop as a consequence to a traumatic event.

Although the term was coined by two American psychologists in the early 1990s, the concept of post-traumatic growth has appeared in religious and philosophical teachings for thousands of years. It’s also a recurring theme in pop culture and literature: heroes, like Batman, for example, experience traumatic events that motivate them to greater things.

Post-traumatic growth involves a positive response in at least one of five ways: embracing new opportunities, an appreciation for life, improved personal

relationships, increased emotional strength and spiritual change.

Not everyone who encounters trauma experiences positive growth afterward. There’s no clear explanation why, but some research suggests the positive outcomes result from a person turning inwards and assessing their traumatic experience over time.

Natalie Doucette, a school counselor in Fort McMurray and a specialist in counselling psychology, uses the analogy of a plant. A plant grows organically without requiring thought. Likewise, the psychological changes that contribute to post-traumatic growth can happen organically and can’t be coached.

“But when you bring awareness to that process, it increases its positive outcomes,” she said.

It’s only in the last decade that researchers have begun to examine post-traumatic growth in children, but the evidence suggests that the

USEFUL TIPS

Teachers can nurture post-traumatic growth in the following ways:

- Listen without judgment.
- Help all students become involved in activities that will help them feel that they are contributing positively to the class/school/greater community. This helps students gain control over their thoughts and feelings and begin thinking about the future again.
- Plan low-risk activities where students work together to create, build, etc. This creates an environment in which students can feel genuinely accepted by their peers.



“You don’t forget about what happened, but you can move on and grow from it.”

— Natalie Doucette

phenomenon can happen in children after all kinds of trauma.

Trauma forever changes a person and should never be considered desirable, but some changes can be beneficial in the long term, Doucette says.

“You don’t forget about what happened, but you can move on and grow from it,” she said.

After the Fort McMurray wildfire, officials in the community employed trauma-informed practices that can foster the type of inward assessment that promotes post-traumatic growth. The result has been stronger community bonds and better mental health supports in schools. Students and teachers are encouraged to talk more about their personal experiences and struggles, and there’s a heightened awareness in the community about the effects of trauma and the need for support.

“Our experience shed a positive light on the connection of humanity when something goes wrong,” Doucette said. “I saw a growth in our community’s willingness to be open and connect with each other.”

But dealing with trauma isn’t a linear, one-way process. It’s complex and typically involves a combination of improvements and setbacks. Noble and her colleagues initially predicted one to four years for recovery, with setbacks along the way. Today Fort McMurray is still coming to terms with the loss from the fires. Its recovery has been further slowed by the province’s economic downturn, which hit the community especially hard.

“We’ve had a kind of layered trauma that means people are still struggling,” Noble says. ^{ATA}

“I learned that trauma has both direct and subtle effects on individuals, at times causing very overt responses and struggle, but for others, a more silent form of suffering can emerge over time, resulting in broken relationships, addictions, depression, anxiety and illness.”

— Natalie Doucette,
school counsellor,
Fort McMurray

GROWTH ON A GLOBAL SCALE

As an example of post-traumatic growth from Fort McMurray’s wildfire experience, last summer school counsellor Natalie Doucette delivered a trauma-informed practice course to school staff on the

Caribbean island of Dominica, which had been severely damaged by Hurricane Maria. Her visit was organized by the IT for Dominica Foundation, which partners with the ATA’s Project Overseas to send Alberta teachers to Dominica every summer.

Doucette hopes to return this summer and continue her work through a post-traumatic growth perspective.

“All of this experience we’ve gained in Fort McMurray can inform and support another community in need post-disaster,” she said. ^{ATA}

What are trauma-informed practices?

After the 2016 wildfire, school counsellors in Fort McMurray employed trauma-informed practices to help students and teacher colleagues.

This involved fostering a sense of safety among students and colleagues, and encouraging them to discuss their individual experiences with the fire.

Natalie Doucette and other counsellors recognized that school was a place to create routine for kids and make them feel safe, and that their needs would be high for up to five years after the event. Teachers were trained to look for signs of mental health struggles in children.

“Children aren’t going to sit in a chair and have a nice conversation about the impact a trauma has [had] on them. It’s the changes in behaviour we’ll notice,” Doucette said.

Other measures taken after the fire included bringing a mental health therapist into every school so kids could get counseling as needed without leaving school. Schools also hosted programs like yoga, cognitive behaviour training, psychological first aid and HeartMath, a science-based program to help reduce stress and anxiety.

For the first school year, traditional teaching took a back seat to dealing with trauma, based on evidence that shows distress from trauma impedes learning.

“We forgot about reading and writing. If you don’t have healthy children and healthy teachers, you’re not going to get any learning,” said Shannon Noble, assistant superintendent for Fort McMurray Public Schools.

Doucette added that teachers who’ve experienced trauma alongside their students can help these students when they acknowledge that their own recovery isn’t easy.

“Being open to days that are hard allows your students to learn that it’s ok to not be ok.” ^{ATA}

FIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES:

1 safety

2 choice

3 collaboration

4 trustworthiness

5 empowerment

Ensuring that the physical and emotional safety of an individual is addressed is the first step to providing trauma-informed care.

Reference

Buffalo Centre for Social Research. 2020. “What is Trauma-Informed Care?” Buffalo Centre for Social Research website. <http://socialwork.buffalo.edu/social-research/institutes-centers/institute-on-trauma-and-trauma-informed-care/what-is-trauma-informed-care.html> (accessed on March 19, 2020).

POSITIVE OUTLOOK

“People can have positive outcomes after trauma. They don’t lose their trauma, but they grow into learning to live with it, accept it and move forward to embrace new pathways, which they never would have, had they not had that trauma.”

— Mary Frances Fitzgerald, long-time counsellor and current education consultant for diversity and mental health with Edmonton Public Schools





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Teachers' pandemic experiences inform ATA advocacy

Phil McRae

Associate Co-ordinator of Research, ATA



As we travel the road ahead we must focus on school safety, student learning needs and well-being for all.”

—*Alberta Teachers Responding to Coronavirus (COVID-19): Pandemic Research Study*

THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC CONTINUES TO de-centre society in many ways and force public education systems around the world to respond to the ongoing public health crisis. As the virus first swept across the globe in early 2020, Alberta's teaching profession responded with incredible agility by instituting emergency teaching to create stability and continuity for students and the public education system.

With the ensuing cancellation of face-to-face kindergarten to grade 12 classes in Alberta's education system, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) decided to document and research the impacts of the pandemic on the profession and public schools.

Between April 27, 2020, and May 15, 2020, the ATA gathered, through random and open surveys, the voices of more than 8,100 Alberta teachers and school leaders (7,200 teachers and 900 school leaders). This same instrument was later expanded nationwide to become the largest survey of Canadian teachers ever undertaken by the Canadian Teachers' Federation. As a follow-up to this study, in early June 2020 the Association focused on the experiences of Alberta school leaders and their specific concerns about a return to public school buildings.

The research encompassed five key areas regarding teachers' and school leaders' experiences and perspectives during the pandemic:

1. Well-being
2. Equity
3. Technology use and online instruction
4. Pedagogical practices and the profession of teaching
5. Return to public school buildings

The teachers' voices captured in this research helped to inform the teaching profession's advocacy position on a return to Alberta's public school buildings. It assisted the Association in supporting members during the first wave of



TOP 3 CONCERNS FOR TEACHERS

- school safety
- student needs for school re-entry
- well-being for all

COVID-19 and continues to be used to forecast the longitudinal implications of the changes to the school system.


The many questions and issues raised will continue to be used to conceptualize more sustained strategic shifts in policy and practice that emerge (or become necessary) as Albertans transition to future waves of the pandemic and the complexities of the 2020/21 school year.

FUTURE ALBERTA PANDEMIC RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Alberta teachers continue to demonstrate, in a profound way, the ability to innovate across our schools as we respond to COVID-19. As we continue to navigate the challenges of a pandemic, the structures and traditions that serve ATA members well must not inhibit the Association from thinking and acting creatively in an uncertain future. In fact, agility and resilience have always been cornerstones of the Association's commitment to learn from and then shape the educational environment in the best interests of public education.

Association researchers will partner with leading education scholars and health care researchers in Alberta and at Harvard Medical School to continue to monitor the impact of the public health crisis and track the well-being and mental health of teachers, students and other members of the school community.

The Association will analyze how the pandemic has accelerated and amplified inequity, poverty, isolation and vulnerabilities in schools across Alberta. These are all issues that were raised during telephone townhalls with thousands of teachers and parents, who were deeply concerned with the Government of Alberta's re-entry plans for public schools.

The Association will continue to follow and monitor COVID-19 developments across Alberta and raise the voices of the teaching profession in support of students and the interests of public education. If you have specific areas of research that you believe should be pursued during the pandemic, forward them for consideration to research@ata.ab.ca. 

Teaching in a pandemic—lessons learned

The infographics below illustrate the data from this research study of the first wave of the pandemic. The findings are highly representative of the teaching profession in Alberta with a confidence interval of plus or minus 1.5 per cent (19 times out of 20) on all questions.

WELL-BEING: HOW ARE OUR TEACHERS HOLDING UP?



- 70% of teachers are feeling exhausted.
- 63% are feeling isolated.
- 35% are taking on some of the trauma their students are feeling.

EQUITY: WHAT DO STUDENTS NEED TO BE SUCCESSFUL?



- 62% of teachers said access to extra help above and beyond classroom support is a top concern.
- 64% said technology (access and digital literacy) is an issue.

TECHNOLOGY: HOW ARE WE CONNECTING?



- Email, video calls or virtual meetups and telephone calls are the top three ways teachers are connecting.
- Students are most often accessing online instruction at home with laptops (35%) and mobile devices (32%).

EMERGENCY REMOTE TEACHING: GETTING THROUGH THIS TOGETHER!



- 57% of teachers find that they are much more collaborative with colleagues and school leadership.
- 91% have a positive working relationship with parents/guardians.



- ▶ The initial research report is available digitally on the ATA website under News and Info > Issues > COVID-19 > Alberta Teachers Responding to Coronavirus (COVID-19): Pandemic Research Survey Study.

Populism explained

The People vs The Elite is a classic political war game

Trevor Harrison

Professor of Sociology, University of Lethbridge
Director, Parkland Institute

WHAT IS POPULISM? It's a question well worth asking, given the wide array of current political leaders.

While attaching labels to political leaders is easy, answering the question is more difficult. In simple terms, populism is a style of politics that appeals to a mass audience—"The People"—in opposition to "The Elite," who are viewed as a threat. This perceived threat may be economic, political, cultural or all three.

It would be wrong to suggest that all populist movements are equivalent. Canada's own Social Credit and Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (the CCF) were the products of populist movements. Yet whether democratic or authoritarian and totalitarian, all forms of populism share some common characteristics.

At first glance, populism seems merely a variation on a conflict between "us" and "them." But the notion of The People suggests membership in a sacred community, the defense of which is also a sacred duty. Conversely, members of The Elite are by definition outside the community; they are not of The People.

While the purported Elite are sometimes geographically outside, this is not always the case. Outsiders often live quite close at hand to The People. German Jews are the classic example. They were not recent immigrants to Germany when the Nazi persecution began; in most instances, they had lived in German towns and cities for centuries. But Jews also faced long-standing prejudice and suspicion. They were perpetual outsiders.

It is worth noting also that many groups targeted in populist discourse are far from elite members of society. The ongoing persecution in Europe of the

Romani and demonization of Latino migrants to the U.S. provide two examples.

The real problem in defining populism, however, lies in the two opposing categories themselves. Who exactly are The People? In classical left-wing politics, they are the workers, the proletariat, those who have only their labour to sell; a group that, in strict terms, constitutes the vast majority of citizens in all modern capitalist states.


By contrast, The People in right-wing populist rhetoric are less easily defined. Often, membership in the group is based on race, ethnicity or religion. Historically in western Canada, regional identity has been the ticket to populist membership. The West (vaguely defined) as a place perpetually under attack from The East (equally ill-defined) is a long-standing populist trope. "Standing up" for The West is a sign that one is truly of and for The People.

Similarly, The Elite, as identified by populists, take on different names depending on time and place. Again, Jews have been a convenient proxy in western culture. The populist parties that emerged in the United States in the late 19th century and in Canada in the 1920s and 1930s often focused on bankers and railroad magnates, though once again Jews and immigrants, and sometimes Catholics, were included. A trusted hallmark of all populist movements is that, given time, no one is excluded from the ranks of those viewed as The People's enemies. In Nazi Germany, unionists, socialists, communists, homosexuals and various national communities joined Jews on the *verboten* list. In present day Alberta, populist rhetoric tends to single

out liberals and socialists, the federal government, Quebec, public sector workers, teachers, environmentalists and intellectuals as those threatening The People. Who populism decides to eat is a moveable feast.

In short, the constitutive elements of both The People and The Elite are vague and changeable. Likewise, the nature of the threat posed is often unclear. This is especially the case where the threat is not purely economic, though economic stress is often a factor in populist outbursts. But economic stresses frequently merge with political and cultural threats; ones bearing on The People's way of life and even identity—an existential crisis.

Populism's vagueness and changeability, combined with fears arising from a sense of threat, are a boon to political leaders, especially cynical ones, for it is such leaders who most give shape to the contours of populist discourse and light the fuse. If there is a genuine crisis, they fan its flames; if there is not, they create one. Populist leaders define who are The People and who are not, the cause and nature of the crisis—the "who" to be blamed—and its solutions. Populism is a political vehicle driven by leaders to mobilize The People toward what they portray as a moral quest: a fight for justice, a fight for a "fair deal," as articulated by the leader.

Against fear and anger, hope and love can also motivate populist movements. Barack Obama's election in 2008 provides one example, as does Tommy Douglas's career as, first, a Saskatchewan premier and, later, as an MP in Ottawa. But the poisonous chalice of fear and anger too often proves to be The People's choice, and once swallowed, proves difficult to slake. 

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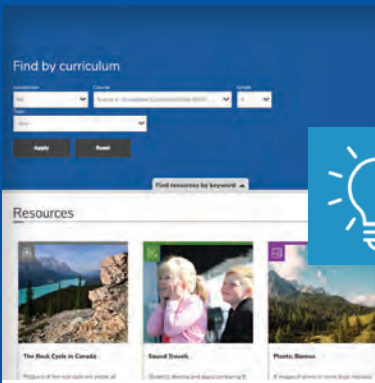
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Projects

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Professional Learning

Customize your learning! Choose from self-paced, webinars, in-person sessions, live broadcasts or invite a trainer into your classroom for a co-learning experience. Connect with educators across Canada and gain access to ready to use, curriculum-aligned resources incorporating global competencies to solve real world problems.

Events

Take your teaching and learning outside the classroom – attend a Let's Talk Science event! Students can interact with leading researchers, test their knowledge and design skills and participate in discussions about real world STEM issues.



Outreach

Trained volunteers visit your classroom virtually or in-person to inspire your students to think about their future while providing fun curriculum-aligned, hands-on STEM activities. Visits are customizable and flexible, with locations across Canada and thousands of volunteers, offered in English and French (location dependent).

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. **Forest School and Autism: A Practical Guide**

By adapting standard forest school activities for students with autism, teachers can help these students improve critical skills such as self-esteem and social skills, as well as sensory function.

2. **Puppetry in Theatre and Arts Education**

In this book, you will find ideas for getting students to make all kinds of puppets as well as strategies for incorporating puppets in both literature and science lesson plans.

3. **Bien ensemble pour mieux apprendre**

Après une introduction sur ce que signifie «enseigner dans la bienveillance», l'ouvrage aborde l'aménagement de l'espace et du temps, les affichages, la posture de l'enseignant, et suggère de bannir l'échec pour favoriser la réussite. Au fil des activités, il apporte des précisions théoriques et pratiques sur le développement psychoaffectif de l'enfant et la communication non violente (CNV).

4. **Soyez un retraité heureux**

Cet ouvrage vous livrera toutes les clés pour devenir un retraité heureux : apprendre à quitter le monde du travail; anticiper et se projeter dans sa nouvelle vie; accepter et vivre sereinement les changements... Par des explications simples, des témoignages et des exercices, l'auteur vous livre un ouvrage «clé en main» pour vous permettre d'écrire le scénario de votre nouvelle vie.

5. **Les sociétés matriarcales : Recherches sur les cultures autochtones à travers le monde**

Dans cet ouvrage pionnier, fondateur des recherches matriarcales modernes, l'auteure définit pour la première fois clairement et scientifiquement le concept de matriarcat, jusque-là décrié et opaque, qui lui permet de revisiter l'histoire culturelle de l'humanité.



Information provided by ATA librarian Sandra Anderson.

Your colleagues recommend

What do you read to help you decompress and why would you recommend it to a colleague?

Teachers suggested these reads via Facebook.

Michelle Holland

Usually I read thrillers, but I just read *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine* by Gail Honeyman as well as *Daddy-Long-Legs* by Jean Webster (this one was gifted by a parent!). They were both fantastic!

Nicole Richard

I honestly love to read young adult novels to decompress! They are engaging, I can recommend them to my students afterwards, and they help my brain to relax!

Erin Quinn

I read young adult fiction. It helps me recommend books to my students, but I also just really love it! There's more depth than you might think.

6. *The Hidden: A Compendium of Arctic Giants, Dwarves, Gnomes, Trolls, Faeries and Other Strange Beings from Inuit Oral History*

Teachers wanting to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into their ELA classes will love this collection of Inuit folklore. Wonderfully written and beautifully illustrated.

7. *The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace: Empowering Organizations by Encouraging People*

In this update to their popular 2011 edition, Gary Chapman and Paul White provide useful insights for appreciating staff as well as colleagues in the workplace.

8. *How to Be an Antiracist*

As a high school student, Ibram Kendi absorbed and internalized Western culture's racism without thinking he was racist. As a professor, he revisits his earlier thinking and shows that by consciously making choices to support antiracist policies, one can realign oneself and remake our culture.

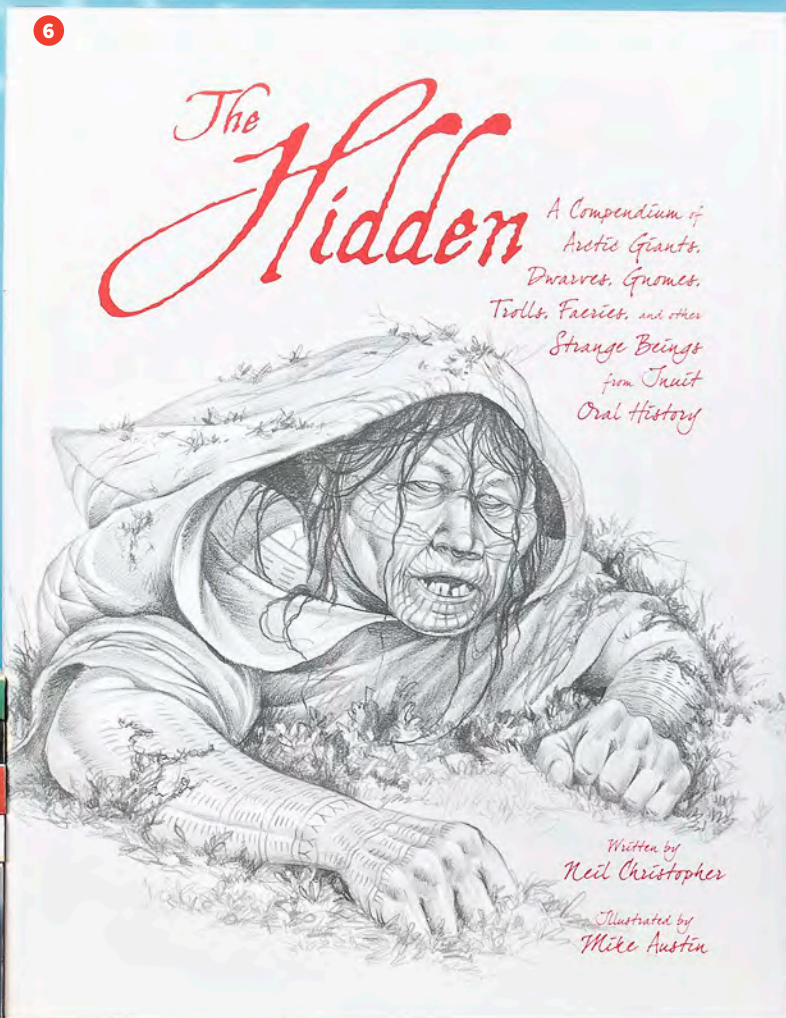


PHOTO BY YUET CHAN

Silpi Das-Collins

Young adult novels for how quick, engaging, honest and touching they often are. Who doesn't love a good coming-of-age story? Or Jane Austen—she really transports you to a different world, and her characters and dialogue are just so funny.

Carmen Fandino

Brain Pickings by Maria Popova. It is eclectic, current, thought-provoking and short. You always have interesting links to dig deeper if you wish. Sometimes she integrates audios so I can "plug in" during my walks.

Scott Carey

Not so much for decompression, but *The Disciplined Pursuit of Less* by Greg McKeown has been huge in helping me not get "compressed" in the first place. It lives on my desk/in my backpack to remind myself.

What books are “must reads” for high school students?

Indian Horse

I enjoy the spiritual messages in Paulo Coelho's writing, like *The Alchemist*. *Indian Horse* by Richard Wagamese is excellent.

Katrina McCracken

To Kill a Mockingbird

To Kill a Mockingbird, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Great Gatsby*, *Macbeth* (original and graphic novel).

Brianne Burritt

1984

The Merchant of Venice, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *1984*, *Jane Eyre*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Resistance* by Jennifer A. Nielsen, *Cry the Beloved Country*, *Crime & Punishment*. (I did not expect to love that book!)

Michelle Salomons

Jane Eyre

Pygmalion, *Jane Eyre*, *Sister Carrie* by Theodore Dreiser ... and as for Shakespeare, see it with the script in your lap! It is much easier to dissect when you can hear and see it with your own senses.

Laura Johnson

The Poet X

The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas, and a beautiful novel in poems, *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo. Incredible relatable story.

Chandra Fisher

Lord of the Flies

Lord of the Flies. It's a classic.

Kathryn McCutcheon-Christie

Wicked

Wicked by Gregory Maguire.

Liv Jacks

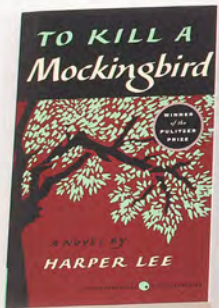
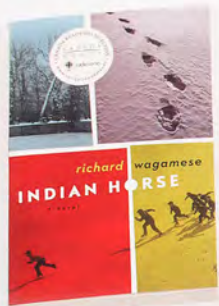


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MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS

To support school leaders and teachers, the Association provides locals and jurisdictions with advice on how to establish mentorship programs. The Association's primary role in this regard is to ensure that both mentors and beginning teachers receive adequate preparation and support.

The Alberta Teachers' Association can assist you in mentoring beginning teachers.

Our professional development staff officers are ready to assist in

- establishing a mentoring steering committee;
- developing a frame of reference, mentoring guidelines and programming;
- building a PD mentoring plan; and
- delivering workshops and information.

Access our resources:

- Financial support for the establishment of a mentoring steering committee
- Bilingual workshop resources
- ATA professional library
- Bilingual executive staff officers and PD facilitators

Want to learn more or book a workshop? Contact Monique Gravel at monique.gravel@ata.ab.ca; 1-800-232-7208.

Start building your customized mentoring program at any time over the year. Start-up funding is available!

Créer à n'importe quel moment de l'année votre programme de mentorat personnalisé. Des fonds pour en assurer sa mise en place sont disponibles!

Souligner l'importance des programmes et ressources de l'ATA

Favoriser l'apprentissage continu et le développement professionnel

PROGRAMMES DE MENTORAT

Afin de soutenir les leaders scolaires et les enseignants, l'Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) offre aux sections locales et aux autorités scolaires de précieux conseils pour faciliter la mise en place de programmes de mentorat. Le rôle principal de l'ATA à cet égard est de veiller à ce que les mentors et les enseignants débutants reçoivent une formation et un soutien adéquats.

L'ATA est prête à vous soutenir pour lancer un programme de mentorat destiné aux enseignants débutants.

Les cadres supérieurs du secteur perfectionnement professionnel (PP) sont prêts à vous aider à

- établir un comité directeur responsable du programme de mentorat,
- élaborer un cadre de référence, des lignes directrices, et la planification du programme,
- développer le programme de mentorat,
- offrir des ateliers et à fournir des informations.

Ressources disponibles :

- des fonds pour financer la création d'un comité directeur
- des ateliers offerts en anglais et en français
- des ressources à la bibliothèque de l'ATA
- des cadres supérieurs et des facilitateurs de PP bilingues

Pour réserver un atelier ou pour tout autre renseignement, veuillez contacter Monique Gravel à monique.gravel@ata.ab.ca ou au 1-800-232-7208.

Creative colleagues

This space normally lists creative works produced by Alberta teachers, but the cupboard is currently bare. So while we await further submissions, we present the following how-to column by teacher-writer Ray Suchow.

THE WRITE STUFF

How to nurture a writing habit while teaching


Good things happen in your classroom and, if you're like me, you like to turn these moments into stories for others to enjoy.

Over the last 20 years, I've embarked on an exciting journey of being a teacher-writer. This journey has had twists and turns, but thankfully many successes. (I've now passed 30 published articles in Canada and the U.S.)

As I've travelled this road of being a teacher-writer, I've devised the following list of strategies that have helped me consistently record and publish stories about many of the wonderful teaching moments I've enjoyed.

1. **Plant the seeds.** Rigorously record those precious classroom moments and story beginnings the very moment you think of them. Whether it's a quick email to yourself or a few sentences in your dedicated (and backed-up) writing folder, you'll thank yourself many times later on!
2. **Organize and set your goals.** I use reverse calendar planning to plan out my writing and coordinate it with my teaching, and I consider this to be my most useful organizing technique. On a calendar, first write down the end goal on its due date (i.e. article due). Then, work back one week at a time (i.e. article due in one week, article due in two weeks, etc.). Suddenly, you've broken a big task into several smaller ones. It works wonderfully to keep oneself on track.
3. **Tend your garden.** If you have multiple ideas in your writing folder, revisit them every few weeks—just like you'd tend a garden. You'll be surprised at how you will see them in new ways. Often, one or two will inspire you and you'll find yourself starting to write as soon as you've read it!
4. **Grow your writer self.** A wide variety of local and online courses are available that cover both general and genre-specific skills. They include local writing workshops, university extension courses and online

courses on MasterClass.com (with James Patterson, Margaret Atwood, etc). I've benefitted from these during my writing career; I consider it to be professional development for my soul. Many of the people I first met as classmates I now count as writing colleagues and friends.

5. **Build your network.** Networking today has never been easier, even with a teacher's workload. In addition to courses, there are always local, national and international writers' groups looking for new talent and groups on Meetup, LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. All you have to do is search! Happily, I've noticed a direct correlation between being in a writing group and the quantity and quality of my publications.
6. **Be realistic about your goals and needs.** Have short and long term plans, especially as they fit into your teaching schedule. This is where your calendar planning can assist, as well as considering the advice of your writing group and the knowledge received in your courses. For example, I've wanted to write a novel for years. However, after taking James Patterson's excellent MasterClass, which takes you through (in exacting detail) how he writes a best-selling novel, I properly realized that (for me at least) that kind of undertaking will be my first writing goal when I retire. So, while I'm still teaching, I've concentrated on publishing more articles and my first small books online.
7. **Know where to publish.** There are several places to publish educational materials, whether it's a special classroom moment or a more learned article. Examples include the *ATA News* (Moot Points), *Leaders & Learners Magazine* and *Catechist Magazine* (formerly *Creative Catechist*). As well, the yearly *Writer's Guide* (the source on where to publish anywhere in the world) is available online or in any bookstore.
8. **Create a social media presence.** How necessary is this, especially if you're just starting to publish? In my experience, especially with a teaching life underway, a LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook profile is sufficient to let others know you're a teacher-writer. When you begin to publish more, a WordPress or Instagram account is highly recommended. Thankfully, they're all relatively easy to set up and maintain. 

RAY SUCHOW

Christ The King High School, Leduc
rsuchow@gmail.com

- ▶ **Got an idea?** If you'd like to make a submission for publication in *Who's Out There*, email a summary and photos to managing editor Cory Hare at cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.





Technology guru shows students the way

Tim Kilburn overcomes disability to inspire generations of students

Kevin Thornton

Freelance contributor

TIM KILBURN HAS AN EXCELLENT memory. Phone numbers, passwords, locations of vital equipment, potential tripping hazards — they're all in his head.

Kilburn is blind, so his memory is his backstop in life. Plus, researching information takes time that he would rather use elsewhere. The result: students and some fellow teachers actually think he knows everything, and many describe him as a genius.

"Don't ever give me your credit card number," Kilburn jokes.

Kilburn, however, prefers to think of himself simply as a teacher, a calling he came to after high school.

"I went to university to get a degree with no real thought as to what I was going to do. I was doing well in mathematics when I wondered if teaching was for me."

Kilburn switched over to education and liked that there was an emphasis on well-educated teachers, and he liked the opportunities that teaching offered.

"I knew I would never be a fighter pilot or a truck driver, but apart from that, I wanted a career with no limits. Teaching has given that to me."

Kilburn has been with Fort McMurray Catholic schools for more than 30 years. He taught math and various versions of computing courses for 20 of those years before jumping at an exciting opportunity the school offered him to help create an in-house science

and technology centre in partnership with local industry and post-secondary institutions. Today his classroom involvement is limited to supporting CTS teachers and the Safestart safety training program.

Still, he considers himself a teacher.

"I'm not a blind teacher. I'm just a teacher who happens to be blind," he says.

Kilburn allows no pandering because his sensory world is different, but he is aware that he's viewed as an example due to his attitude, work ethic and knowledge. He is a computer whiz and he astonishes people with his keyboarding speed, seemingly limitless knowledge and ability to solve glitches.

"The students know and understand that I have a disability but that I do my best to not let these limitations stop me from achieving my goals," he says. "My desire is for the students to meet their own challenges, whether physical or intellectual, with the same hopefulness."

While he was a classroom teacher, rumours of Kilburn's "spidey sense" became legendary in the school. That's because of the ESP thing that he would do.

Every year in his classroom there was always a joker whose favourite trick was to sneak up and try to pet Kilburn's service dog. Always aware that this was happening, Kilburn would wait until the last possible moment before intervening.

"Don't try to pat the dog; he's working."

Sarah Wanner, now a fellow teacher, was a student in Kilburn's class in 2001.

"I remember there was one boy who always tried that trick. He never even came close. Tim always knew and always sent him back."


Kilburn's example is one of the reasons that Wanner became a teacher.

"He's always fixing everyone's problems at the school. He knows everything, gets on with everyone, has a wonderful sense of humour," she said. "To see what he could do in class was inspiring."

Former student Josh Moores remembers Kilburn's skills ("fastest keyboard typing I ever saw") and his empathy.

"Mr. Kilburn really connected with the students. He was so impressive, but also so caring," Moores said. "Just watching him in the classroom was a lesson in itself. It wasn't as if he was as good as anyone else. He was better."

For Kilburn, teaching is about reaching out to students and showing them the way.

"Building relationships is a key part of being a successful teacher," he says. "Treating the students with respect, having an appropriate sense of humour, being passionate and knowledgeable about your subject matter, being approachable both for students and staff alike, and modelling a love of learning." 

FATHER PATRICK MERCREDI SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CENTRE

In 2010, Tim Kilburn was offered a project that most teachers could only dream about. The idea was to build five high-tech lab spaces within Father Patrick Mercredi High School. Conceived as a partnership with local industry and post-secondary institutions, the spaces were dedicated to engineering, industrial technologies, health sciences, information technologies and multimedia. Kilburn's job was to make the dream a reality. He did.

As one of the two project leads (along with colleague Deborah Kitching), Kilburn's responsibilities included fundraising, program design, planning and implementing school renovations, acquiring specialized equipment, aligning the programs with the CTS curriculum and staff development.

The new facility opened in Sept. 2011 and enables students to experience hands-on, practical learning and subsequently make informed career decisions.

Kilburn's ongoing role is as a technology consultant.

"The equipment and technology is impressive," he says, "but it's the teachers that make the programs engaging and successful."



GETTING TECHNICAL WITH

Tim Kilburn

What can you tell us about your vision loss and how it has impacted your life?

As a child, I used the little vision I had the best that I could, which is totally normal in those who experience sight loss. As I grew older and my vision gradually worsened, I accepted and naturally adapted to the changes. It is just part of me and I need to work with what I have.

How has your vision affected your ability to learn and teach?

My low vision/blindness created challenges with respect to learning and acquiring certain skills. I believe that these experiences helped me to be a better teacher through the need to develop varied approaches to learning and incorporating these when working with students.

How did you become interested in technology?

In Grade 12 I took my first computer science course—programming in the Fortran language. I believe that this helped spark the fire, and I continued taking more computer science courses while getting my B.Ed.

- ▶ **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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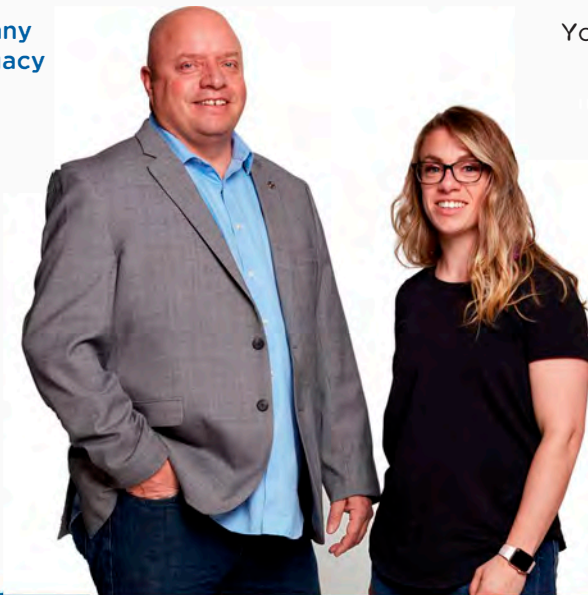
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Prince Charles School
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The power of connection

What has remote teaching taught you about yourself?

SWITCHING FROM IN-PERSON TO REMOTE

teaching last March was no easy task. ATA president Jason Schilling likened it to “turning an ocean liner on a dime.” We know teachers are adaptable, resourceful and enjoy finding lessons in every part of life.



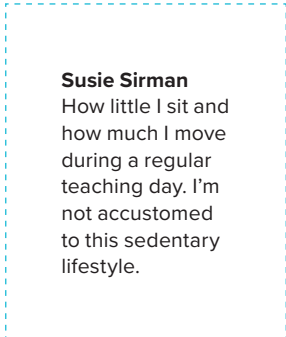
Sarah Delpont

That I can do a whole lot more with technology than I ever dreamed. I have become comfortable recording myself giving lessons, reading books, and leading online discussions and fun game times with my students.



Rosalba Politi

I have succeeded in teaching with an online platform. Something I thought I could never do.



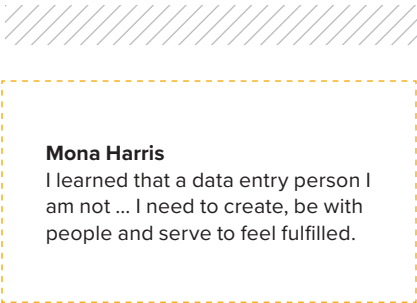
Susie Sirman

How little I sit and how much I move during a regular teaching day. I'm not accustomed to this sedentary lifestyle.



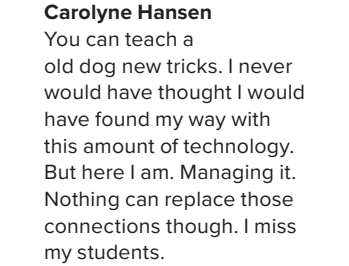
Jennifer Keay

I took so many parts of my role as an educator for granted. I never will again. I will never forget the power of connection and relationships.



Mona Harris

I learned that a data entry person I am not ... I need to create, be with people and serve to feel fulfilled.



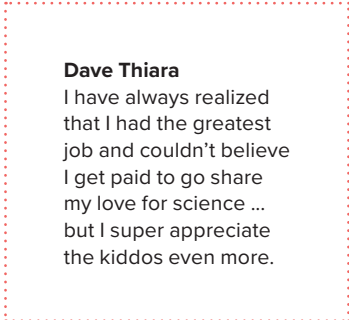
Carlyne Hansen

You can teach a old dog new tricks. I never would have thought I would have found my way with this amount of technology. But here I am. Managing it. Nothing can replace those connections though. I miss my students.



Kimberley Hall

That missing my students would have a much deeper impact on my own mental health than I ever anticipated. Connection is just as important for us as it is for them.



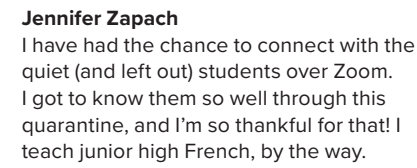
Dave Thiara

I have always realized that I had the greatest job and couldn't believe I get paid to go share my love for science ... but I super appreciate the kiddos even more.



Lynn Karasiuk James

I learned to never take for granted the opportunity to build a relationship again. It's a whole different world in Google Hangout. I miss my high school students so much.



Jennifer Zapach

I have had the chance to connect with the quiet (and left out) students over Zoom. I got to know them so well through this quarantine, and I'm so thankful for that! I teach junior high French, by the way.

► See more at facebook.com/ABteachers.



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The Alberta Teachers' Association

COMM-236 2020-10

Hey teachers, what's on your desk?

We asked this question on social media.

You told us about, among other things, planners, sticky notes ...and a goat!



CAROLYN MCKINNON MASSEL

My notebook, keyboard, some marking, gifts, **coffee cards** ... oh yeah, and a **goat!** (Farm kids have the best sense of humour.)

DANICA PEA

Ed psych textbook since I'm dealing with a lot of interesting students, **sticky notes**, sticky notes, sticky notes ... a **calendar** for quick reference ... **planner**, most recent **novel study** ... note organisers I need to give back to students ...

LAURIE DIRSA

Water bottles, paper towel, kinetic sand, **glasses** and remnants of the last week!!

BRITTANY MARIE

All the essentials — plan book, **curriculum checklist**, water, **lotion**, pens, computer, phone, coffee, **whiteboard cleaner**, and gems for the gem jar. Somehow my desk is always just my dumping ground for all the things I need at hand. As hard as I try to keep it tidied off ...

ROBERT KELLY

Everything! **Marking**, textbooks, **plans**, sticky notes on top of sticky notes, an **apple** that should have been eaten this week but now has to be thrown out, cycling gear, school clothing, **water bottle** and a cup of **coffee!**

Other items from your desks

- face mask
- hand sanitizer
- a polar bear sticky note holder
- feedback stickers
- first aid kit
- multicoloured pens and markers



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Nomination Day
ATA 2021
PEC
election

**NOMINATION DAY
JANUARY 21, 2021**

The Alberta Teachers' Association is calling for nominations to its Provincial Executive Council (PEC).

Offices up for election are

- ATA president,
- ATA vice-president (2 positions) and
- district representative (15 positions representing 11 geographic districts).

WANT TO RUN?

Check out the *Candidates' Handbook* on the ATA website.

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is coming.
Get ready to run.**

www.teachers.ab.ca



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The Alberta
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Please take a number!

Using student numbers helps teacher stay on track

Michelle Holdway

Grade 5, Isabel Campbell Public School,
Grande Prairie

I ALWAYS ASSIGN my elementary students a number based on the alphabetical order of their last names. Most love it! It's kind of like a sports number they can be excited about. Whenever they hand in anything, it includes their name and number. Their duotangs have their name and number on them and are in subject bins in number order.

This also makes it a breeze to put assignments in alphabetical order to

complete a grade book. It also means I can reuse things from year to year such as numbered student bins, a laminated poster for sticky note exit slips, math manipulatives, task card sets, etc. It's also a huge help at parent-teacher interview time. If I know the student's number is 18, I can quickly go into any subject bin in the classroom and pull out duotang 18.

We also practise lining up in number order, which students get excited about, and this is a huge help at fire drill time. If a student comes later in the year, I default them to replacing a moved number or give them the highest number. ATA

“ I can reuse things from year to year such as numbered student bins, a laminated poster for sticky notes, etc. ”

- ▶ **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.

Lights, camera, action ... reaction

First-time video math lesson ends up a little backwards

Amanda Krishka-Chapple

Grade 4/5
Hythe Regional School, Hythe
(As told to Jen Janzen, staff writer,
ATA Magazine)



THE CHALLENGE

How to deliver a straightforward math lesson while using video for the first time.

IT WAS IN THE beginning weeks of the COVID-19 time that I decided I was going to make videos to teach math concepts online. While I was recording my first video of a multiplication lesson, I noticed that all the writing on the whiteboard appeared backwards on the computer screen.

“Oh wow, that’s confusing,” I thought. “I need to fix this!”

After some trial and error, I was able to write every single number backwards and, looking into the Chromebook, they appeared to be facing the right direction.

Satisfied, I uploaded my video onto Google Classroom. I didn’t watch it first, because I was confident I’d done everything perfectly the first time.

Not quite.

About two hours passed before a student let me know something was wrong.

“It can’t be that bad!” I thought.

It was that bad. As soon as I watched the video, I knew I needed to record a new one.

“It was that bad. As soon as I watched the video, I knew I needed to record a new one.”

If you are a tech person, you know what went wrong: I had recorded it in mirror view. Well, I did not know this was a thing.

Some people don’t like to broadcast their mistakes, but I couldn’t let this slip-up go by. I sent the video to all school staff. Many watched it multiple times. It brought a lot of laughter to everyone’s day and often led us to tears. My principal sent the video to all the administrators in the district and received similar reactions.

I would like to say that I learned how to become more tech-friendly after this experience, but that is not the case!

However, I did learn that you can’t take life too seriously, as it’s moments like these that bring joy and laughter to the classroom and make great memories. ^{ATA}

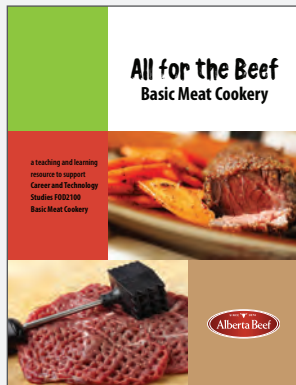
► **Got an idea?** Maybe you created a lesson that totally flopped or were on the receiving end of a lesson that was truly inspiring. Whatever your story, please summarize it in up to 300 words and email it to managing editor Cory Hare at cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

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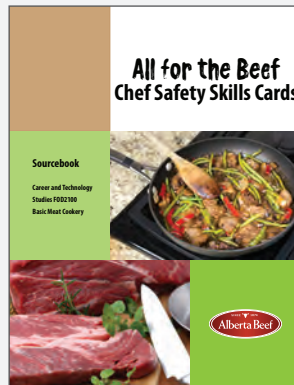
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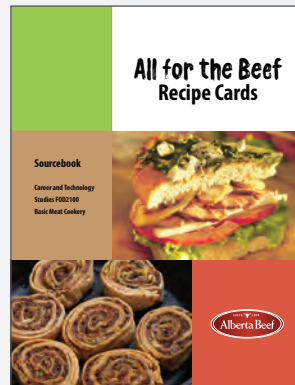
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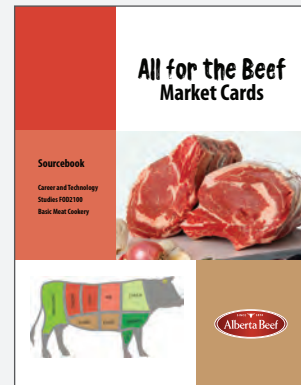
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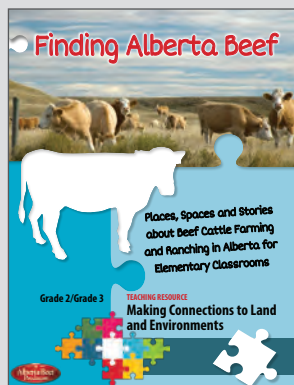


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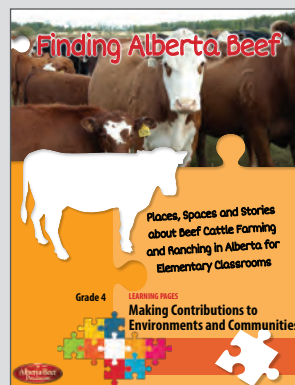
"Finding Alberta Beef" Teaching Resources & Student Learning Pages



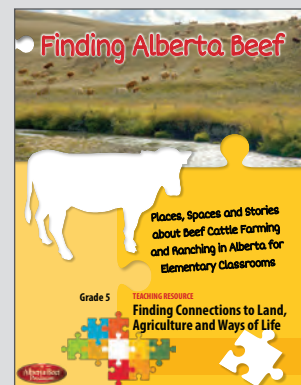
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