FALL 2021

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ATA Magazine

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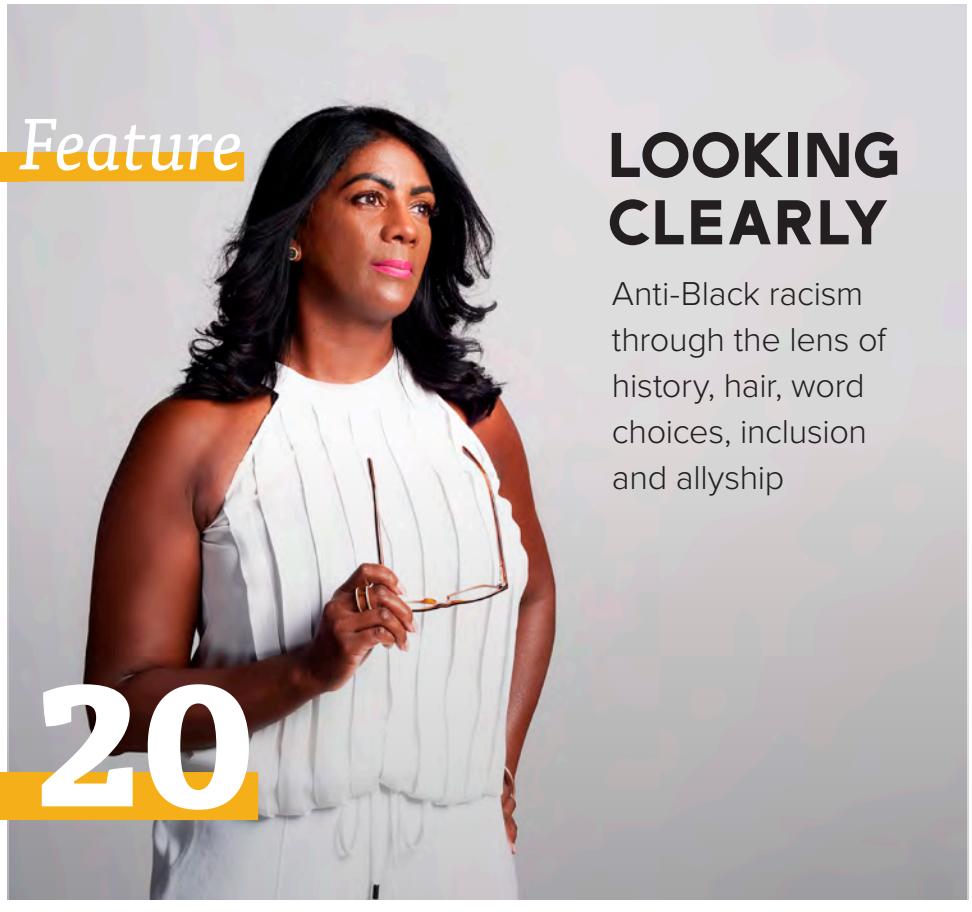

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ATA Magazine

FALL 2021

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Contributors

ANDREW PARKER and **GAIL-ANN WILSON**
Feature Guest Editors

Learn about all our feature contributors on page 44.

MATEUSZ NAPIERALSKI
p. 10

Mateusz Napieralski is a Polish illustrator and designer currently based in Canada. With a background in graphic and motion design, he enjoys playing with geometric shapes and creating playful and bold compositions full of bright colours. While completing his studies in graphic design, Mateusz was encouraged by his course leader to explore multiple areas of visual communication, which ultimately led him to discover and fall in love with illustration.

PAUL TWA
p. 12

Paul Twa is a graphic designer and illustrator based in Edmonton. He's a graduate of the University of Alberta's bachelor of design program, and his work has been recognized nationally by the Association of Registered Graphic Designers and Applied Arts. With a keen interest in history, Paul enjoys studying the visual culture of the past as a way to inform the work he is making today.

KATELYNN THEAL
p. 14

Katelynn Theal is the assistant director of comprehensive school health with Ever Active Schools. She has a master's degree in public health and is excited about the many hats she gets to wear in her role with Ever Active Schools. A portion of her time is dedicated to supporting and co-ordinating new and innovative learning opportunities and projects to support school health and wellness using a comprehensive school health framework.

CHRIS KOHLMAN
p. 16

Chris Kohlman is an inclusive learning teacher at Margaret Wooding School in Redcliff. Besides trying to find time to play the 400 board games in his collection, he spends time with his family, is the president of a local constituency association and is involved in the Medicine Hat Astronomy Club.

MARIETTE DOBROWOLSKI
p. 18

Mariette Dobrowolski is dedicated to advancing social justice issues, faith formation and inter-religious dialogue. She sits on the executive of the ATA's Religious and Moral Education Council and currently teaches in division three at St. Isidore Online School in Calgary.

RAHAT ZAIDI
p. 52

Dr. Rahat Zaidi is an associate professor and chair of language and literacy in the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary. She received the 2020 ATA Educational Research Award for her study "Optimizing Parent–Teacher Collaboration in Refugee Children's Learning."

JOANNE MURPHY
p. 69

In her 32nd year of teaching, Joanne Murphy teaches Grade 6 at High Prairie Elementary School. She taught online to the Grade 6 at-home learning students in her division last year and has returned to in-person teaching this year.

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

PHOTO BY RYAN PARKER

Joni Turville

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

Please welcome our guests

THE TRAGIC DEATH OF GEORGE FLOYD prompted people to demonstrate worldwide in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, including hundreds of marchers who gathered in downtown Edmonton in June, 2020. After this event, a number of teachers engaged in discussions with colleagues and shortly afterwards they formed the Black Teachers Association (BTA) of Alberta.

Meanwhile, the editorial team at the *ATA Magazine* was also moved by these events and wondered how we might best share the experiences of Black teachers in Alberta. We decided that it would be powerful to try something new, by engaging members of the Black community to be guest editors for this edition's feature.

We reached out to Andrew Parker, a founding BTA member and teacher with Edmonton Public Schools, and Gail-Ann Wilson, an Edmonton Public teacher who has since moved into the role of diversity education consultant with the board.

Together they spearheaded the creation of a wide variety of content built around the following focus statement that they crafted: Teachers need to understand what it feels like to be a Black teacher in Alberta.

I'm proud to say that we have learned a great deal throughout the process and that we have created an insightful feature.

In this feature section you will find first-person narratives, profiles, graphics and artwork from a range of contributors from the Black community. Our aim was to tell real stories while being informative and perhaps even a bit provocative. After all, challenging each other through respectful dialogue is part of what it means to be learners — and teachers.

My sincere thanks to Gail-Ann, Andrew, all our contributors and our entire editorial team for engaging in this feature with open hearts and minds as we work toward building a better understanding of the experiences of Black teachers in Alberta.

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

Veuillez accueillir nos invités

LA MORT TRAGIQUE DE GEORGE FLOYD a incité un grand nombre de personnes à manifester dans le monde entier en faveur du mouvement Black Lives Matter. D'ailleurs, des centaines de manifestants se sont rassemblés au centre-ville d'Edmonton en juin 2020. Cet évènement a déclenché de nombreuses discussions chez les enseignants et peu après, ils ont formé la Black Teachers Association (BTA) de l'Alberta.

Au même moment, l'équipe de rédaction du *ATA Magazine* également profondément touchée par ces évènements se demandait comment nous pourrions mieux partager les expériences des enseignants noirs en Alberta. De là, nous avons décidé qu'il serait courageux d'essayer quelque chose de nouveau en invitant des membres de la communauté noire à assumer le rôle de rédacteurs pour ce numéro spécial du magazine.

Nous avons alors contacté Andrew Parker, enseignant à Edmonton Public Schools et membre fondateur de la BTA, et Gail-Ann Wilson, enseignante à Edmonton Public Schools, devenue conseillère pédagogique en matière de diversité pour le conseil.

Ensemble, ils ont été à l'origine de la création de multiples contenus construits autour de l'énoncé suivant qu'ils ont eux-mêmes élaboré : Les enseignants doivent comprendre ce que c'est que d'être un enseignant noir en Alberta.

Je suis fière de dire que nous avons beaucoup appris tout au long du processus et que nous avons créé une édition au contenu perspicace.

Vous trouverez dans cette rubrique spéciale, un mélange de récits à la première personne, de portraits, de graphiques et d'illustrations de divers collaborateurs de la communauté noire. Notre objectif a été de raconter des histoires vécues tout en étant informatifs et peut-être même un peu provocateurs. Après tout, se remettre en question par un dialogue respectueux est en partie la définition d'un apprenant et d'un enseignant.

Je tiens à remercier sincèrement Gail-Ann, Andrew, tous nos collaborateurs et toute l'équipe de rédaction d'avoir participé à cette édition spéciale l'esprit et le cœur ouverts alors que nous nous efforçons de mieux comprendre les expériences des enseignants noirs en Alberta.

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.

Thank you

Thanks very much for the interesting winter edition.

I finally got around to reading the stories about Judith Mawoko and Victoria Wanihadie. Thank you to both women for sharing their stories. I can only imagine Judith's journey. Her students are so lucky to have such a dynamic, creative teacher. Students will also greatly benefit from the research and experiences of Victoria.

Thanks again for a lovely edition of the always interesting *ATA Magazine*.

–Brenda Nugent
Retired teacher

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 recent issues by visiting www.teachers.ab.ca > News and Info > ATA Magazine.

PHOTO BY RYAN PARKER

Jason Schilling

President, ATA
Président de l'ATA

Change requires embracing discomfort

IN THE SPRING OF 2020, MILLIONS OF PEOPLE stood together to speak out and to fight against the historical injustices of anti-Black racism that persist to this day. The message was profound and impacted every facet of our lives personally and professionally. The loudest lesson was that it is no longer acceptable to be silent. As Margaret Wheatley once wrote, we don't save others by being silent.

We teach our students that to be silent in the face of bullying is to endorse the bully, so we as a profession cannot be silent on racism and hatred. It is not enough to not be racist; we must actively speak out against racism, wherever and whenever we see it.

One way we start this change is by listening. We need to hear the stories of those affected by racism with open hearts and minds. We do this listening without interruption or providing advice. We just simply listen, then endeavour to make positive change no matter how uncomfortable it may make us feel.

As teachers, we are used to asking questions to challenge the critical thinking skills of our students. It is our professional and moral responsibility to ask ourselves difficult questions, and then to educate ourselves and to become aware of our own privilege and biases and the microaggressions that we hear or see every day.

I want to offer my sincere thanks to the guest editors — Andrew and Gail-Ann — of our feature on anti-Black racism, along with the many contributors to this section of the magazine. It has been a great privilege to listen to your stories and to learn from your experiences. Together, we break the silence of the past to create a more hopeful, respectful and diverse future.

Aspirer au changement, c'est sortir de sa zone de confort

AU PRINTEMPS 2020, DES MILLIONS DE PERSONNES se sont rassemblées pour lutter contre le racisme anti-Noirs et dénoncer les injustices historiques qui persistent encore aujourd'hui. Le message était profond et a eu un impact sur tous les aspects de notre vie personnelle et professionnelle. La leçon à retenir est qu'il n'est plus acceptable de se taire. Et comme l'a si bien écrit Margaret Wheatley, on ne sauve pas les autres en restant muet.

Nous enseignons à nos élèves que le mutisme face à l'intimidation revient à la cautionner, aussi au nom de notre profession, il est hors de question que nous gardions le silence quand il s'agit de lutter contre le racisme et la haine. Ne pas être raciste ne suffit pas; nous devons à tout instant dénoncer avec force le racisme.

Écouter avec attention est une façon d'amorcer ce changement. Nous devons entendre les témoignages des personnes touchées par le racisme le cœur et l'esprit ouverts. Nous le faisons toujours sans les interrompre ou les conseiller. Nous écoutons tout simplement ce qu'ils ont à dire, puis nous nous efforçons d'y apporter des changements positifs, même si cela nous met mal à l'aise.

En tant qu'enseignants, nous avons l'habitude de poser des questions pour tester la pensée critique de nos élèves. Et c'est à nous que revient la responsabilité professionnelle et morale de nous poser des questions difficiles, de nous éduquer et de prendre conscience de nos propres privilèges et préjugés ainsi que des microagressions que nous entendons ou voyons tous les jours.

Pour finir, je tiens à remercier sincèrement les rédacteurs invités — Andrew et Gail-Ann — pour leur participation à l'écriture de notre rubrique spéciale sur le racisme anti-Noirs, ainsi que les nombreux autres contributeurs à cette édition du magazine. Ce fut un grand privilège d'écouter vos témoignages et de tirer des leçons de vos expériences. Nul doute qu'ensemble, nous pouvons rompre le silence du passé et créer un avenir où l'espoir, le respect et la diversité l'emporteront.

ISTOCK ADAPTED

Advocacy in education never goes out of style.

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

Can you match the following excerpts with the year that they were originally published? 1921, 1930, 1959, 1985

1. PROFESSIONALIZING THE PROFESSION

This is an indication that some of the Association objectives are being considered, and it is also hoped that it will not be too long until at least two years' professional education is required for any form of teacher certification, and that four years will be the requirement for permanent certification.

Your guess: _____

2. CONCERNING CURRICULUM

The series of high school debates arranged by the Extension Department of the University of Alberta will no doubt serve to arouse public interest in the question of the school curriculum. Many non-teachers, and some teachers as well, indulge at times in much loose and ill-informed talk about the curriculum. Long have our students been railing at the deficiencies of the high school course: it has been a sort of windmill for adolescent minds to tilt at. But they find it none too easy to attack the curriculum in formal debate, for a serious discussion of the curriculum presupposes a scientific knowledge of the aims and principles of education, and requires the solution of several problems in psychology which are as yet only vaguely understood even by educationists themselves. In the meantime, it will be an excellent thing if the idea gains ground that not everybody is competent to meddle with the school curriculum.

Your guess: _____

3. DEBATING TEACHERS' PENSIONS

SINCEREST gratitude of the teachers of Alberta is not only due but forthcoming to those who so eloquently championed the cause of pensions for teachers in the Legislature itself, and, without in any way casting reflections on those members who voted against the resolution, for submitting pensions to a committee of the House on the ground that it was not the proper method of approach and progress, we thank those members on the Government side of the House who abstained from voting.

Your guess: _____

4. GENDERING TEACHING

School teams and community league teams are much more common for boys than for girls. Girls are encouraged to partake in supporting roles, such as being cheerleaders for boys' teams; but a cheerleading team of boys is rarely formed to support a girls' basketball game. With these kinds of subtle socializing agents in operation against the formation of a truly equal relationship between men and women, the feminization of teaching cannot be considered complete in any sense. Therefore, it seems obvious that the situation in the teaching profession for women will not and cannot change until there comes a complete reorganization of sex roles in society-at-large.

Your guess: _____

Answers: 1. "Annual Report of the General Secretary," April 1959. 2. "Notes and Comment," January 1921. 3. "Editorial: Sources of Inspiration Regarding Reform," April 1930. 4. "Women's Struggle for Acceptance," Hilda Mah, May/June 1985.

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ILLUSTRATION BY MATEUSZ NAPIERALSKI

From public good to private commodity

A look at the privatization of education in Canada

Lisa Everitt

Executive Staff Officer, ATA

NEOLIBERALISM IS A term often "used to refer to an economic system in which the 'free' market is extended to every part of our public and personal worlds. The transformation of the state from a provider of public welfare to a promoter of markets and competition helps to enable this shift" (Birch 2017, para 4). Neoliberalism is associated with a strong belief that individuals and societies are best served when governments are small and the free market takes over state responsibilities. Neoliberals also emphasize the role of the private sector in the delivery of public services because the private sector is thought to be more efficient, cost effective, innovative and responsive than the public sector.

CHALLENGES TO EDUCATION AS A PUBLIC GOOD

Public education in Canada has been impacted by this political and economic ideology as neoliberalism has been influential in political circles for many decades. As Stephen Crump observes, "the development of educational policy in the 1980s was dominated by an idealized perception of schools as able to operate like a marketplace, able to express practices of competition, choice diversity and market driven funding" (1992, 416). The injection of free-market principles into Canada's public education system moves the focus from the public good to private considerations. As Stephen Ball and Deborah Youdell point out, "privatisation tendencies are at the centre of the shift from education being seen as a public good that serves the whole community, to education being seen as a private good that serves the interest of the educated individual, the employer and the economy" (2008, 15–16).

The commodification of public education to reflect private interests rather than the common good has evolved over time

through purposeful strategies, many of which are outlined below.

THE PRIVATIZATION PLAYBOOK

In a public lecture at the University of Toronto in 2011, Noam Chomsky pointed out that there is a "playbook" for privatization of the public good. He noted that "the standard technique of privatization [is to] defund, make sure things don't work, [and when] people get angry, you hand it over to private capital" (2011). The privatization playbook is multipronged because in addition to destabilization through funding cuts fuelled by diminishing government revenues caused by corporate tax cuts, there are well-organized attempts to influence the public's narrative about public services.

The public's dissatisfaction with diminished public services is accelerated by think tanks that "adopt a tone of scientific inquiry and publish policy briefs and appear in the media" to reinforce the notion that public services, including public education, are failures that can only be remedied through privatization (Berliner and Glass 2014, 7). The concerted efforts of conservative think tanks have shaken trust in public institutions and services, paving the way for governments to privatize using regulatory changes as well as contracting out to private providers.

Ball and Youdell (2008) explain that there are two main ways to privatize public education. The first way is to import business strategies into public education, a technique called *endogenous* privatization. This is accomplished through competition between schools, high-stakes testing, competitive funding models and performance management of teachers and school leaders. The second technique is privatization of public education, or *exogenous* privatization. This form of privatization facilitates "the opening up of public education services to private sector participation on a for-profit basis and using the private sector to design, manage or deliver aspects of public education" (Ball and Youdell 2008, 10).

Beyond ideological considerations, what do corporate interests have to do with education? Simply put, public education represents an opportunity for corporations to make money. "Education services are now 'big business' and an increasing number of national and international firms are looking to make profits from selling services to schools and governments and from the delivery of state services on contract" (Ball and Youdell 2008, 104). However, without decades of denigration of public education and the teaching profession, privatizers would have a difficult time selling their wares to the state, so the promotion of free market principles in education remains important to corporations that wish to influence the public's opinion.

WHY SHOULD PUBLIC EDUCATION REMAIN PUBLIC?

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has held up public education in Canada, particularly in Alberta, as well as public education in such countries as Finland, Estonia and Singapore as having high marks for its success in providing high-quality educational opportunities to students (Schleicher 2018). This raises the question, why would privatization hold appeal for any policymaker in Alberta? Simply put, privatization promises inexpensive educational "solutions," promotes elitism and appeals to those who see education as a commodity.

The net result of privatization strategies, such as the introduction of charter schools run by "edu-businesses" and voucher systems in educational systems like Chile and the United States, has not led to discernable improvement and, in some cases, has led to greater societal fragmentation and lower educational outcomes. Finally, because privatization requires a focus on making a profit, logic dictates that the attention of businesses striving to sell their products will prioritize profit over students and community. This is not the case for public education because the profit motive is not a consideration—that alone ought to give us pause when policymakers insist on privatizing the public good.

TWO-PART SERIES

This is the first part of a two-part series examining the privatization of education in Canada. The second part, appearing in the Winter 2022 issue of the *ATA Magazine*, will explain the hastening shift toward the commodification of public education, with a specific focus on Nova Scotia.

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LAC CA

Mary Gadowsky

1936: Started 41-year career as a classroom teacher

1977: Fought mandatory retirement in court and won

Case set a precedent that is still cited today

ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL TWA

Mary Gadowsky: Standing up for the dignity of experience

Maggie Shane

Archivist, ATA

BY SEPTEMBER 1977, Mary Gadowsky had served 41 years in Alberta classrooms. Her employer, the School Committee of the County of Two Hills, was short on cash and wanted to reduce the teacher count at Myrnam School by one. According to court documents, the county believed the 62-year-old Gadowsky "had the necessary years of service for retirement" and that her doing so would "solve their problem very neatly." The campaign to nudge her into retirement was on.

The board presented a list of retirement options to Gadowsky, who made it clear that she was not prepared to retire, preferring to teach until age 65. In order to keep teaching, Gadowsky accepted a transfer from elementary to junior high. On July 2, 1977, the school presented Gadowsky with her course assignments for the upcoming school year: three courses in social studies, economics, geography, art, social problems and physical education.

Knowing it was impossible to prepare for so many new courses in eight weeks, Gadowsky recognized that the board's campaign had succeeded. She delivered her retirement letter on July 4, and soon felt that "because of her forced retirement she had lost status and was cut off from the community and that she was left with no goal in life."

But Gadowsky rallied her spirits and decided to fight. In August 1977 she complained to the Human Rights Commission alleging that the pressure she was under to retire due to her age was in contravention of the *Individual's Rights Protection Act*.

The ensuing investigation took two years.

In 1980, the matter came before the Court of Queen's Bench, which concluded that declining enrolment and funding cuts did not justify the county's violating Gadowsky's human rights.

"There is no question in my mind," wrote Justice Allan Cawsey, "that Mrs. Gadowsky's age was either the main reason or incidental to it, and that the actions of the County offended the dignity and equality of Mrs. Gadowsky and these actions were discrimination against Mrs. Gadowsky because of her age."

On Sept. 17, 1980, the court awarded Gadowsky costs and a total compensation of $72,518.38 in lost salary.

Gadowsky's courage and demand for self-determination set an important precedent throughout Canada. The case has been cited often in the ensuing decades, most recently in a 2020 Alberta Human Rights Commission case (*Connolly v SNC-Lavalin Operations*).

Gadowsky died in 2014 at the age of 99.

Reference

Gadowsky v. School Committee of the County of Two Hills, 1980 CanLII 1107 (AB QB).

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

ISTOCK ADAPTED

Beyond personal well-being

How a system supports staff resilience

Katelynn Theal

Assistant Director, Comprehensive School Health, Ever Active Schools

EVERYONE HAS A ROLE IN creating a healthy workplace that supports teacher and staff resilience. Personal well-being mindsets and behaviours (gratitude, mindfulness, optimism, etc.) are an important foundation for resilience; however, systemic practices and norms create conditions through which all staff can feel valued, prioritized and well.

"Being in touch with what we do well underpins the readiness to change. [...] To enable us to hear criticism nondefensively and to act creatively on it, we need to feel secure."

— David Cooperrider from Seligman 2012, p. 73

USE THESE **CONVERSATION STARTERS** IN STAFF TEAMS TO REFLECT ON YOUR SYSTEM SUPPORTS FOR STAFF WELL-BEING.

	CONVERSATION STARTER	☑	WHAT THIS MIGHT LOOK LIKE...
1	Our school is actively involved in facilitating a culture shift toward creating a healthy workplace.[1]	Y / N	• Supporting the adoption of long-term whole-school initiatives • Supporting health champions with planning time • Leading staff in setting values and reflecting on how these values come alive through policies, procedures and meetings, and in school hallways
2	Our school customizes activities to build on our strengths.[1]	Y / N	• Consulting the school community early and often to support planning and development of activities and initiatives
3	We prioritize our well-being.[1]	Y / N	• Including well-being in school plans and goals, and meeting agendas • Providing resources in the form of time and money to allocate to well-being
4	Our school has dedicated champions for getting initiatives and activities that support well-being up and running.[1]	Y / N	• Consulting by school champions with colleagues and the broader school community to determine assets and needs • Working with leadership to plan activities based on needs • Bringing a culture of well-being to life
5	We engage in professional development to support well-being.[1]	Y / N	• Providing learning opportunities to support staff in building and developing practices to support their health • Including practices such as gratitude, mindfulness, and more • Providing time to reflect, journal and for self-directed learning • Dedicating learning opportunities to systems-level well-being such as policy and procedural changes (i.e., dedicated lunch breaks, a comfortable lunch space, quiet email times, school wellness plans)
6	Our meetings provide intentional opportunities to celebrate and aren't solely to plan for and discuss challenges.[2]	Y / N	• Reflecting on what's going well at the beginnings of meetings • Creating a "good things gallery" where team members share "one good thing" from their day, week or month • Acknowledging wins, big and small, and celebrating them
7	We recognize and celebrate each other.[2]	Y / N	• Recognizing and creating opportunities to share kudos with one another • Discovering and recognizing team strengths using an assessment such as Gallup Strengths Assessment or VIA Character Strengths Survey
8	Our staff have opportunities to spend time together and connect.[2]	Y / N	• Dedicating time to informal chats before formal meetings commence • Creating opportunities such as potlucks celebrating special occasions, mentorship opportunities, book clubs, walking and wheeling groups, etc. • Creating opportunities to connect that are inclusive and welcoming

RECOMMENDED RESOURCE

Developing Growth Mindsets: Principles and Practices for Maximizing Students' Potential

Donna Wilson and Marcus Conyers

The BrainSMART program presented in this book consists of seven principles for developing growth mindsets.

Available through the ATA library.

Notes

[1] Storey, K.E., Montemurro, G., Flynn, J., Schwartz, M., Wright E., Osler, J., Veugelers P. and Roberts, E. 2017. "Essential Conditions for the Implementation of Comprehensive School Health." Health Matters, 3 no. 5. Alberta School Boards Association website, www.katestorey.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/asba-health-matters-newsletter-vol.-3-no.-5.pdf (accessed Sept. 23, 2021).

The SIRCLE Lab has developed a checklist based on this research, which is available at www.katestorey.com/our-projects/essential-conditions-for-comprehensive-school-health.

[2] Seligman, M. E. 2012. *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being.* New York: Atria Books.

More than amusement

There's a game for every teaching situation

Chris Kohlman

Inclusive Learning Teacher,
Margaret Wooding School,
Redcliff

ISTOCK

> "It is highly satisfying to see students find a game they excel at and to watch their self-esteem grow as they play."

I LOVE BOARD GAMES and have been using them in my teaching for a number of years. Many of the students I work with have struggles in the classroom, so I like to incorporate many games as part of my teaching strategies. It is highly satisfying to see students find a game they excel at and to watch their self-esteem grow as they play. Students are very engaged when it comes to games, and if teachers can successfully gamify learning, it can be a useful tool in motivating even the most challenging students.

From social skills to managing frustration

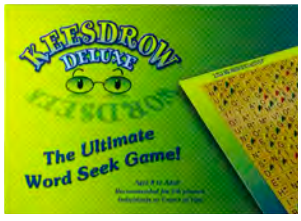
As an inclusive learning teacher, I work with many students with diverse learning needs. One of the classes I teach is social skills, where we bring together students who struggle in this area. In this class, after we have worked on a daily skill, we sit down in groups and play a board game together.

Playing together serves a number of purposes. It serves as a behavioural motivator, as the students want to have time at the end of class to play a game. During game play, we are able to work on different skills, such as turn-taking, sportsmanship, small talk and handling frustration.

When I play with students, I talk out my turn, modelling my thought processes and why I may be taking a certain action. As time goes on, I will often hear my students doing the same thing as they develop their strategic thinking. Some students struggle with handling frustration, and at times, I will deliberately take actions that create an opportunity to work on self-calming skills and if this is a "big deal" or "little deal." It's nice to see other students at this point, some of whom also struggle with frustration, supporting that student and telling them "It's OK. It's just a game. It is a little deal."

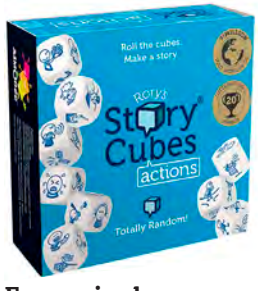
With a little imagination, you can adapt games for most abilities and situations.

Recommended classroom accessible games



Word building: *Keesdrow*

This is basically word seek and the students simply have to be able to recognize simple words to be able to play.



Expressive language development:
Rory's Story Cubes

Dexterity (works on executive functioning at the same time): *Top That!*

Honourable mention:
Dr. Eureka

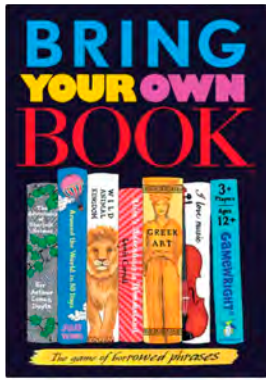
Fine motor development:
Rhino Hero

Visual spatial abilities:
Ubongo, Ubongo 3D

Honourable mention:
Blokus

Math operations:
Secret Code 13+4

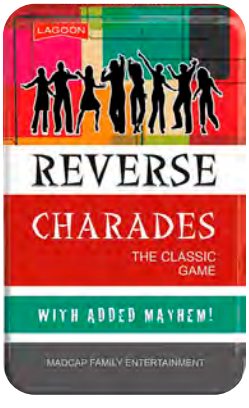
Honourable mention:
Can't Stop!, Can't Stop! Express, Sumoku



Large group literacy:
Bring Your Own Book

Small group showdown:
Braintopia

Small group "just for fun": *Loopin' Louie*



Large group "just for fun": *Reverse Charades*

Reverse Charades has a group acting at once. It helps with students who may be hesitant performing in front of the class.

For more information

The website www.boardgamegeek.com is a fantastic resource for virtually every game on the market. Two of its forums are very helpful to teachers: "Gaming with Children" and "Games in the Classroom."

The *Games In Schools and Libraries Podcast* is another great resource as well.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCE

Build Your Own Chain Reaction Machines: How to Make Crazy Contraptions Using Everyday Stuff

Paul Long

Great ideas to get students building machines that solve everyday problems out of inexpensive/free materials.

Available through the ATA library.

Did you know ...

The Educational Technology Council (ETC) of the Alberta Teachers' Association supports teachers in using technology to enhance teaching and learning.

The ETC provides its membership with

- service and support through professional development opportunities;
- effective communication through an informative newsletter, listserv and dynamic website; and
- an authoritative voice on behalf of the teaching profession through the advocacy of sound educational policies relating to information and communication technology infusion and emerging technologies.

For more information, visit www.teachers.ab.ca.

ISTOCK ADAPTED

On common ground

Honouring religious diversity

Mariette Dobrowolski
Secretary, ATA Religious and Moral Educational Council

> "And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same."
>
> — Nelson Mandela

ALBERTA'S TEACHERS, AS WELL AS STUDENTS and their families, reflect the province's religious diversity. Our beliefs, whether informal or formalized and attached to an organized religious tradition, influence how we understand and are understood. They shape our *identity*, influence our *relationships* and define our *ideals*. In our school communities, we have a unique opportunity to create compassionate common ground where respect, openness, humility and self-awareness support turning toward one another as we engage with students, families and professional colleagues alike.

BELIEFS SHAPE THE SPACE

Our beliefs shape the space, helping us and those in our school to not only *be* safe and cared for but to *feel* safe and cared about too. Teachers play a key role in creating common ground in school communities—as we *let our own light shine, we give others permission to do the same*. In fostering safe spaces and exchanges, honouring the inherent dignity and value of all, we encourage others to share their authentic selves.

So, how can we as professionals create safe and caring spaces in which all can authentically and respectfully share themselves, exploring where they come from and what they believe in?

EVERY MOMENT IS A MOMENT TO MODEL

Self-awareness

- Reflect on your personal and shared story, your beliefs, your biases and your desire to be respected for who *you* are.
- Consider journalling—What beliefs could you share about yourself, the world and your place within it, and your religious experience? What enables you to share? What limits you?

Openness, respect and humility*

- Actively engage in conversations with students, colleagues and others who hold similar and dissimilar beliefs, respectfully and deliberately including those who have diverse points of view.
- Listen to diverse perspectives with openness and curiosity, and be authentic in sharing your own perspective.
- Consider inviting faith leaders and elders to discuss spirituality and ways of knowing. Prepare meaningful questions to support the conversation.

Cultural sensitivity

- Continue your learning about world religions, especially those that are represented in your local community.
- Identify points of intersection and divergence between your own individual and collective beliefs and those of others, making connections with purpose and intentionality
- Consider exploring up-to-date, authoritative resources. Check out the ATA's LibGuides on diverse religious observances.

As Alberta teachers, we are part of a rich profession that respects and values religious diversity, not only in the content we convey, but also in the common ground we create.

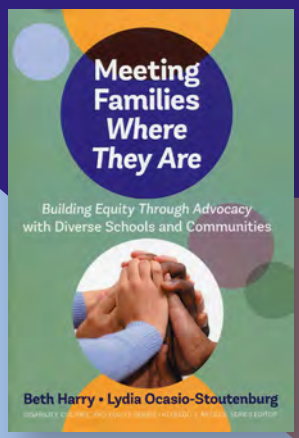
**It is important to be mindful of board and school policies when discussing religion or inviting faith leaders or elders into your classroom. Also, s 58.1(1) of the Education Act must be adhered to when subject matter primarily and explicitly deals with religion.*

Gather together

THE ATA'S RELIGIOUS and Moral Education Council (RMEC) is committed to serving teachers through the values of faith, dignity, respect and collaboration and recognizes the diversity that exists in the province. Through resources, a news journal and annual conference, the council fulfils its mandate to improve knowledge, understanding and practice in the field of religious and moral education in the province.

For networking and resources, consider joining a specialist council. Check out RMEC and other councils on the ATA website under My ATA > Professional Development > Specialist Councils.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCE



Meeting Families *Where They Are*

Beth Harry and
Lydia Ocasio-Stoutenburg

This book focuses on developing teacher understanding of the advocacy role that parents take on for their children and why they have to assume that role.

Add to your toolbox

The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion Toolkits

https://ccdi.ca/toolkits/

Available on the ATA website under My ATA > Professional Development > Diversity, Equity & Human Rights > Resources:

- The ATA's *Respectful Schools Online Toolkit*
- *A Guide for Teachers New to Hutterian Colony Schools*
- *A Guide for Teachers New to Working with Low German-Speaking Mennonite Students and Communities*

Racism can only survive through silence

The strength, courage and resilience of Black teachers

Gail-Ann Wilson

Feature Guest Editor
Diversity Education Consultant, Edmonton Public Schools

I HAVE NO IDEA WHY I'VE BEEN CALLED to the office to attend this morning meeting. My last interaction with these parents was months ago, when we exchanged emails about their child's grades. This will be the first time we've ever met face to face.

The school is quiet as I enter. Absent of students, the furnace is all I hear running through the halls. I want to arrive early so I can welcome the family.

Through the office door I see the parents already waiting. The mother spots me and looks at her watch. As I approach she leans into her husband's ear and whispers. He turns his head sharply to look at me.

I hesitate before politely wishing them "good morning." I'm trying to correct whatever offence it seems I've caused. The father mumbles a half-hearted hello. His wife looks down at the designer handbag in her lap. She draws it closer to her body as I pass by.

I look the other way and draw a deep calming breath. The smell of the morning coffee is mixing with the tension that's brewing.

We all move to a room with a long narrow table. My chair is directly across from the couple. Avoiding their gaze, I notice the striking resemblance they share with their child. Each of them is tall with a fair complexion and blond hair. His tailored sport coat and collared white shirt highlight his grey sideburns. Her manicured nails match the blouse she has styled with a dark coloured suit. Each of them wears a stoic look.

The silence amplifies while we wait for the administrator to arrive. They cover their mouths as they whisper to each other. Shifting in my chair, I try to settle my discomfort by looking down at the screensaver on my phone. It reads: "Don't take anything personally." I wring my hands.

The administrator enters and kindly welcomes everyone. The door closes slowly. The latch echoes as it seals the room. The corner of the mother's mouth curls in a smile. The father gestures at the administrator with a nod. I am the only person of colour in the room. The parents reach out and offer a handshake, but only to the administrator.

The father wrinkles his brows and flicks his chin toward me saying, "We asked for an executive meeting."

He questions why I am seated at the table. The administrator calmly replies that I'm there to speak to their concerns. The mother crosses her hands while emphasizing that it would be better to dismiss me now and deal with me later.

The administrator refuses to have me leave. The father retaliates by stating that I'm not suited to teach his child. He asserts that our "values" don't match and that his family is not "comfortable" with me.

PHOTOS BY STEFAN LEGACY

> “Being a Black female teacher in Alberta has led to many racially abusive experiences that have made me want to stop teaching.”

The administrator disagrees, unfazed by his escalation.

The father’s frown grows fierce. His wife covers her mouth and makes incendiary remarks. He rises from his seat as his voice rises. The temperature in the room rises. His ranting is incoherent to me. I’m focused on the finger he points at me as he stabs at the air between us. The father squares his shoulders and leans in towards me.

“I do not want that Black woman teaching my child,” he snaps.

I freeze. I can’t draw the air to breathe. My eyes focus on the door. The unsettling reality is that he is blocking me from it.

Afraid to move, I become submissive. I’m intimidated by his chilling stare. I’m shivering, realizing that my racialized body is on display like a trophy kill.

I’m aware of the stillness in the room. I hear my pulse rapidly beating in my ears. My fingers are digging into the sides of my legs determined to hold me down. Tears of rage fill my eyes but I push them back. I numb my emotions. I quiet my anger enough to choose how to fight. I sit silently as the meeting continues.

The parents exaggerate their opinions of my inferiority as a teacher. I am forced to rely on my inner strength to minimize the impact. In my estimation, defending myself in this setting would put my professional reputation at risk. It is the stereotype designated to Black female teachers — that we are angry, aggressive and impatient.

I am seething with self-criticism for refusing to defend myself. I choose to forfeit my self-worth because preservation of my reputation now becomes my ultimate priority. My confidence is sabotaged as I downplay and question my own actions. I genuinely mistrust my judgment as a human being. I believe that I have no choice but to straddle a line of compliance and remain in this meeting or fall prey to their prejudiced beliefs of all Black people.

The bell disrupts the meeting. The parents push their chairs back and abruptly leave. I find myself staring past the door they flung open. It dawns on me that I’ll have to teach their child as soon as I return to class.

The administrator offers a tissue while delicately asking if I’m “OK.” My emotions are raw and visceral. I have no choice but to say that I’m OK. I’m too fragile for consoling words or sympathy. I look down at my phone and mouth the words: “Don’t take anything personally.” I draw a deep breath before deleting the message.

Being a Black female teacher in Alberta has led to many racially abusive experiences that have made me want to stop teaching. Racism, especially at school, feels like an assault that leaves me humiliated and afraid.

Over my 20-year career, I’ve felt isolated and frustrated because racist behaviour directed at me has been ongoing. When I’ve reported racial aggression, I was often doubted; speaking up was not enough proof that racism was occurring. Instead, my experiences were seen as exaggerations or defensiveness and even a complaint on the basis of being the only Black woman on staff.

I feared the death of my career if I took any further action. I live in a constant state of anxiety and racial fatigue as a Black teacher. I am exhausted by downplaying the racism that exists in schools, especially when I’m the target of racially motivated hatred and hostility by students, parents and colleagues. ATA

The builders

A history of Black teachers in Alberta

Dr. Jennifer Kelly

Professor Emeritus, Social Justice and International Studies in Education, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta

WE TEND TO THINK OF BLACK TEACHERS AS NONEXISTENT in early 20th century Alberta, but there were actually a number of Black teachers from that era. Many taught initially in schools and communities established by Black pioneers and later in all-white or mixed school settings. Those who began teaching during the early 1900s lay a path for others who arrived in the 1960s as professionals to fill a shortage primarily in northern communities and more recently from a variety of Black Francophone and Anglophone countries.

Early years

Education was valued within cities and the four rural Black pioneer communities formed in the early 1900s in Alberta: Junkins, Pine Creek/Amber Valley, Campsie and Keystone. After churches, schools were next in line for creating a sense of community for the new Albertans. In Amber Valley, the largest of the communities, a Black teacher named George Cromwell was assisted at times by his wife Alice. Teaching from 1919 to the early 1950s, they were the longest serving teachers at Toles School District and were a significant educational force within the area. Ontario educated, they also farmed and were able to thus supplement their income when payment from the school board was delayed.

In the 1930s and 40s, other Black teachers associated with pioneer communities joined Mr. Cromwell at Toles School for short periods before moving on to teach in other communities. With predominantly Black teachers and students, Toles School provided a welcome opportunity for young Black teachers to work without encountering racism from colleagues, students or parents (although there were other tensions) and some were able to share knowledge of Black experiences with their students.

"I am picking out all the great of the race to show to the colored people here and wherever I have taught. Of course,… I doubt that I would bring this out in an all-white school, unless they asked me to," said Alice Cromwell in an interview with researcher Charles Irby.

Alice Cromwell also remembered teaching in all-white schools near Amber Valley and how, in one instance, a parent removed his child from her class once he realized that she was "coloured."

"That was nothing but prejudice, absolute," she said.

Black teachers have contributed significantly to educating young Albertans, becoming role models and inspiration for students, being active in ATA locals and setting up community organizations.

Photo of Toles School near Amber Valley, Alberta, circa 1940s

ATHABASCA ARCHIVES

Ruby Edwards conducting a class at Grassland School, Amber Valley, Alberta, 1959

GLENBOW ARCHIVES

Attending normal school for teacher education was often expensive and involved working additional jobs. Black teacher Gwen Hooks, whom I interviewed for a project, reported that her teacher education experiences in the early 1940s were generally positive, but she did remember one particular incident of racism when the professor used a racial slur that caused her to walk out of the class. When she had to report to the school principal, she assumed she would be in trouble, but instead he said that the professor shouldn't have used that expression and that he would apologize to her and she could go back to class.

Later in her career, she experienced discrimination when she applied for a transfer to another school and "some of the trustees on the school board" voted against her employment. (This outcome was the result of an earlier community drama performance including "Black-face" actors and racial slurs that led to heightened racial tensions.)

Teachers from the Caribbean—1960s

With the coming of qualified and practising Caribbean teachers to Alberta in the 1960s, the Black teaching force became more diversified in terms of origins—no longer just descendants of early pioneers. Teachers from the Caribbean and other commonwealth countries were invited to Alberta to fill what was a severe shortage of teachers.

These teachers possessed skills and expertise that were regarded as meritorious and in line with the 1962 *Regulations of the Canadian Immigration Act*, which marked a significant shift away from an overt racist emphasis on immigrants' race, colour and national origin, in favour of basing immigrant selection on their education, training and skills.

The following account highlights the experiences of teachers who arrived with certificates and taught in schools, mainly outside the cities.

There are no detailed records of how many teachers came specifically to Alberta in the 1960s, but based on my conversations with teacher Etty Cameron, we estimate that there were up to 70 Caribbean teachers. Many learned about job opportunities through advertisements in local island newspapers, while others had friends already in Alberta who encouraged them to migrate.

Several of the men and women came with their families while others were single. Some teachers were fortunate in having prearranged accommodation in the community or on the school site. For others, trying to rent long-term accommodation in a city was not straightforward. One teacher reported that, to avoid direct discrimination, she informed the landlord ahead of meeting that they were Black.

The teacher shortage that lead to this influx of Caribbean teachers was most pronounced within the newly emerging Northland School Division. In the article, "The School in the Forest," J. W. Chalmers suggested, the "schools had only recently been elevated from the humble status of mission schools. Half a dozen others had existed for 20 years or so as Métis Colony schools. Some were located in tiny settlements, a few in ancient fur trading centres."

While some of the newly arrived teachers were familiar with rural communities in the Caribbean, several still experienced culture shock at life in isolated northern Alberta communities.

"In [Town A], the strangest thing was that the children came to school on a horse-drawn carriage (they never had school buses)," one teacher reported.

Often, Black teachers were the first persons of African descent seen in these remote areas. Although many of the interviewees stated that the people they encountered were nice and friendly, for others the nature of racist incidents resulted in a reluctance to discuss the issue.

"I don't want to elaborate on that. It took a lot out of me and my family too," one teacher said.

Teachers sometimes used the idea of being professional to rationalize their unwillingness to make a fuss and report racism.

"As you build relationships and learn, you kind of transcend that and say, okay I'm smart, so therefore let's deal with it from an intelligent person's point of view, and don't let it be something to get you down," said another teacher.

Some Black teachers developed strategies to deal with such negativity.

"I refused to accept any abuse on the phone from anybody," said one teacher.

Within the school system, Black teachers sometimes experienced racism through white parents initially regarding them as not competent in terms of subject knowledge or requesting that their child be removed from class. Cameron said that other parents saw it as an advantage to have their child in the class of a Caribbean teacher, as they were they were well trained in classroom management, maintained discipline and used their spare time to devise creative ways to motivate student learning.

"Caribbean teachers were highly sought after," Cameron said. "At the end of the school year, requests poured in from parents to have their children placed in a Caribbean teacher's class."

Some teachers also noted lack of support from administrators when handling complaints from parents and an underlying belief that Black teachers couldn't be regarded as Canadians. One Edmonton administrator reportedly asked, while laughing, "Why should I hire you when I have all my Canadian boys here to hire?"

As today, evaluation of credentials and certificates was a significant factor for these teachers, as many were evaluated at lower levels and lower pay with less weighting given to teacher education in the Caribbean. The low evaluation of their credentials meant that some Caribbean teachers had to upgrade high school subjects before they could enrol in university summer courses to gain degrees, increase their salaries and become redesignated as professionals. Teachers who had university degrees in addition to their Caribbean certification were treated more favorably in the evaluation.

Isolation in remote areas was an issue, so some of the young teachers made visits to larger communities such as Edmonton or Leduc to keep in touch with fellow Caribbean folks. In Edmonton, the University of Alberta provided a place where Caribbean students and community members socialized. Other teachers adopted community-based extracurricular activities such as skating and curling. A few Caribbean teachers reached out to Black teachers from the early pioneer community who were teaching nearby in the Amber Valley or Breton area. This meeting of the two historically different communities marked the tentative beginnings of the formation of a broader Black community within the province.

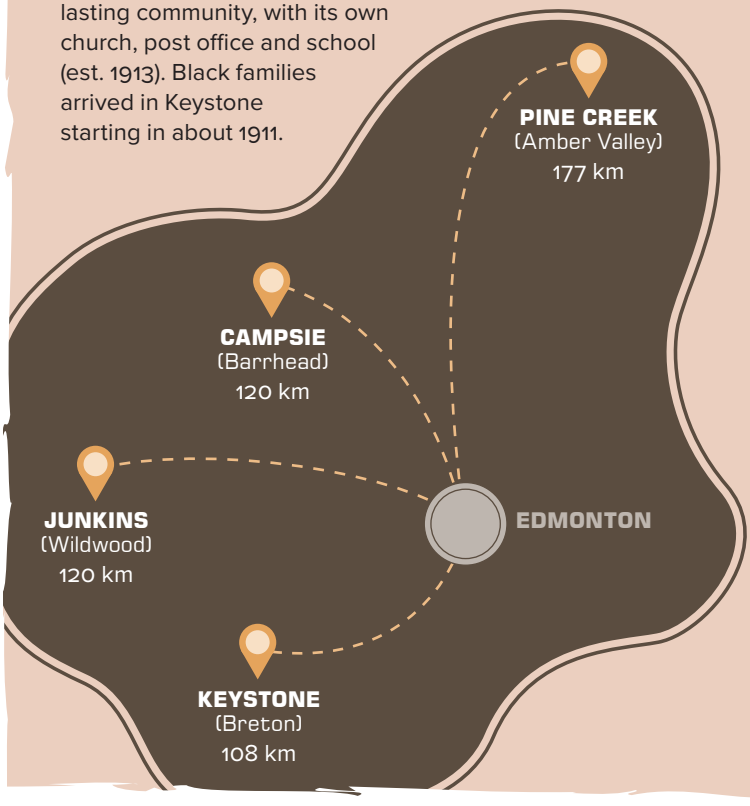
By the early 1970s, opportunities changed and certified teachers from the Caribbean could no longer teach on arrival; they needed additional education before they could enter classrooms. The door was closing.

Concluding, although small in numbers, and despite racialized incidents at work, Black teachers have contributed significantly to educating young Albertans, becoming role models and inspiration for students, being active in ATA locals and setting up community organizations. Present-day Black students do not see many Black teachers in the workforce, and Black internationally educated teachers still face the problem of getting their credentials and expertise recognized in Alberta.

Early Black communities

In addition to those living in the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, Black pioneers in the early 1900s organized themselves into four main rural communities: Junkins (now Wildwood), Pine Creek (now Amber Valley), Keystone (now Breton) and Campsie (now Barrhead).

Junkins was the oldest community, with pioneers arriving there in 1908. Amber Valley became the longest lasting community, with its own church, post office and school (est. 1913). Black families arrived in Keystone starting in about 1911.



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‘Are you *really* the principal?’

Edmonton’s first Black female principal reflects on the challenges and triumphs of leading in the face of discrimination

Rosalind Smith

Retired Principal, Edmonton Public Schools

FROM A YOUNG AGE I UNDERSTOOD what racism was and how it affected me, even though I didn’t have the language to identify what was happening to me. Attending school in the 1960s was a very unfulfilling experience for me. The daughter of Caribbean immigrants living in a French-speaking community, I was one of three Black students in my elementary school. My classmates referred to me, every day, as “la Negresse”. When my parents complained, my teachers claimed that they never heard this derogatory language used.

I loved to read, yet I never had a chance to read aloud at school, even though my parents spoke to the teacher on many occasions about it. In fact, when I think about it, I learned to read at home rather than at school. The teacher in the classroom never acknowledged my presence; it was like I was invisible. My spelling tests or artwork were never posted.

I remember these days vividly, and I am sure that’s why I wanted to become a principal. I wanted all students to know that they have an ability to learn, that they are valued, and to have positive experiences in their lives each day between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m.

My most indelible memory of high school was the one and only time I met with the guidance counselor. She looked me straight in the face and told me I could be a waitress when I completed high school.

University was grueling. There were less than a handful of Black students attending the faculty of education at McGill University. My marks were marginal, not because I did not comprehend the material, but rather because of unfair assessment practices. In several courses, no matter what I wrote, I received a low grade. In one course, after writing an essay, a high-achieving student and I exchanged names on the work we submitted to the professor. The other student received an A for my work. The assignment that I submitted (and that was actually completed by the high-achieving student) received a C. When I challenged the professor on my mark, he threatened to have me kicked out of the faculty. I couldn’t let that happen, as my parents had scrimped and saved to pay for university.

I was interviewed several times before landing a teaching position at a special needs high school. In previous interviews, I was

PHOTOS BY STEFAN LEGACY

continually told that I interviewed well but wasn't a good fit for the school. This special needs school had numerous Black pupils from the Caribbean who had been shepherded there by community schools because of limited reading and writing skills. The administration, though kind, left me to sink or swim on my own.

My journey to leadership was challenging. Over the years my applications to leadership school and entry leadership positions were rejected more times than I care to remember. Many district leaders received their first appointments in their late 20s or early 30s. I was in my mid-40s when I was part of a presentation to Alberta Education regarding programming for a challenging student who had very demanding parents. The superintendent of the day was very impressed with the presentation, and at the end of the meeting, he openly questioned his administrative team as to why I was not in leadership school. That night changed the trajectory of my career from teacher to teacher leader.

> "There were ongoing instances where I faced discrimination manifested as an open lack of respect for me as an educational leader."

Courage and skill

Four years later the news broke to the Black community and district staff that I had been appointed as a principal. Community leaders were astonished and pleased to have a "headmistress" in their midst. Some teachers, particularly those who did not know me or many Black people, often referred to me as "Aunt Jemima."

I quickly learned that being a Black leader in white institutions required great courage and skill. I grew to realize that it was not necessarily the message that would be challenged, but rather the messenger. I am a large woman with a compelling voice and a strong will, and my actions were often interpreted as pushy and aggressive. In actual fact, I was passionate and fervent about my work as a leader. I was always intentional about making my language invitational, and I was mindful of the image I projected.

Once when I brought watermelon to work, a teacher asked if it was a preference because my people were former slaves.

My car became a topic of discussion. Although it was perfectly conditioned, it was older and so my co-workers wondered aloud if I was imitating the main character from the TV sitcom *Sanford and Son*, who drove a beat-up car. (I have driven a Lexus ever since.)

I was demure in my attire and never came to school in casual dress. Being Black, I always felt a bit of self-doubt in decision making, so I created copious documentation each night about the situations and incidents that had taken place earlier that day.

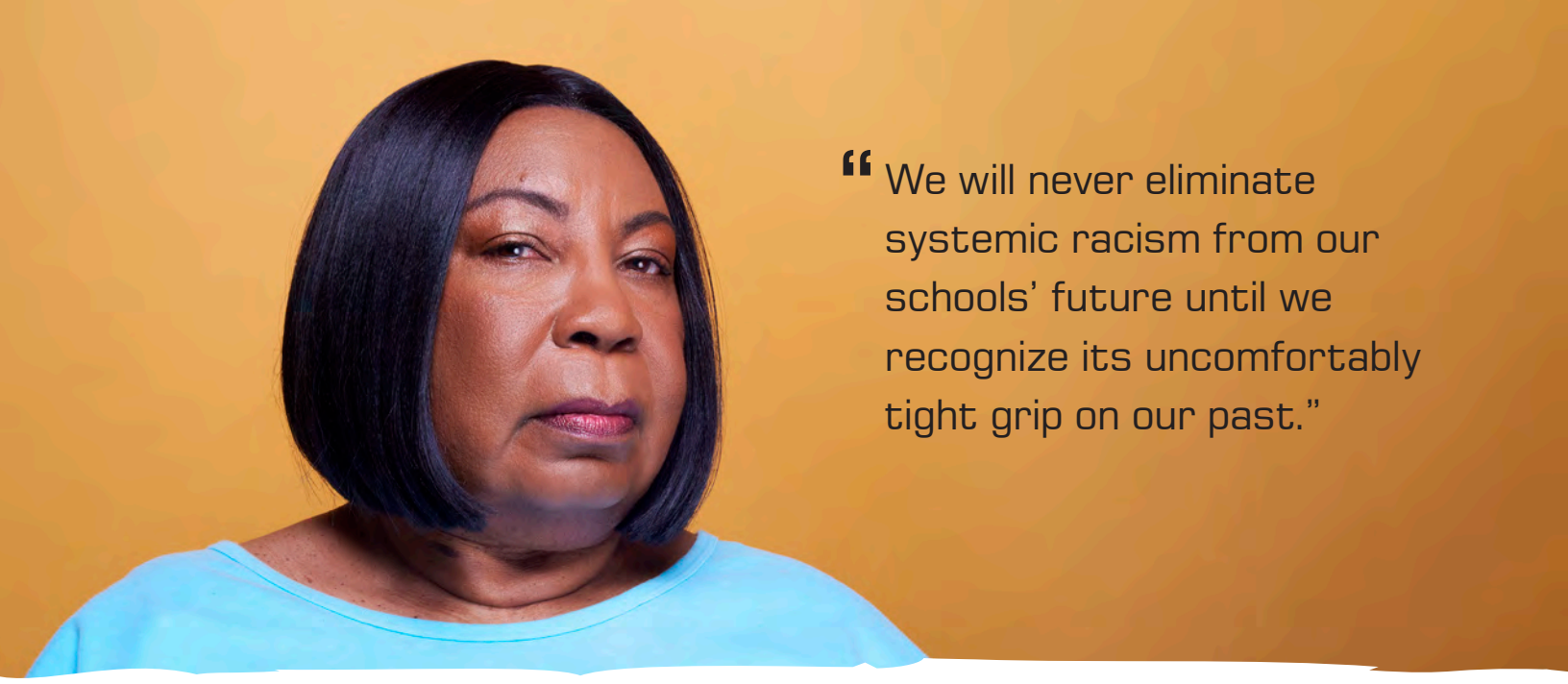
There were ongoing instances where I faced discrimination manifested as an open lack of respect for me as an educational leader. A sitting trustee once asserted to senior administration that I was not good enough for a particular school. The trustee subsequently went on to question my decision making in an open forum. Several parents whom I did not know felt so embarrassed for me that they reported him to the superintendent.

I vividly remember the numerous times I was faced with the question: "Are you really the principal?" One of these occurred when a parent came into the school holding the school newsletter with my picture on the front page. He refused to speak with me because he felt it was a printing error and that I really couldn't be the principal. In another instance, a fire inspector totally ignored me because he thought someone was pulling his leg in directing him to my office in order to have his questions answered. Many other times this question was posed by parents, students, community stakeholders, customs officers, provincial staff and even a school trustee.

Leadership challenges

Supervising teachers was emotionally draining. I felt like I was walking on eggshells. White teachers seemed to have a sense of entitlement and minimal experience as victims of racial discrimination. Parents, students and colleagues typically revered and respected them. With me, many teachers were consistently professional, but some pushed the boundaries, creating challenging situations around ethical and moral issues. For example, I spoke to a coach who was using racial slurs and derogatory language when "motivating" players during practice. He claimed my displeasure with his conduct was because I was too sensitive and said the students understood what he meant. When I relieved him from his coaching responsibilities, my name became mud with other school and district coaches.

I stand by that decision, knowing that in the current sports climate, my decisions around that teacher's conduct would be wholeheartedly supported.



> “We will never eliminate systemic racism from our schools’ future until we recognize its uncomfortably tight grip on our past.”

Speaking up for one’s race is often viewed as exclusionary. I was called racist for being too lenient when responding to discipline issues related to Black students. Sometimes, when teachers spoke about Black students, they forgot there was a Black educator in the room. One glare usually interrupted the conversation. Invariably the teacher came to me to apologize. I took that opportunity to model how to speak in a respectful manner about Black students.

My last several years of leadership were spent at district office in central services. I took on several projects related to diversity. It was then that I realized how many meeting opportunities senior administration offered to religious groups and alternative educators; however, there were also several gatekeepers who kept racialized community members from receiving the same opportunities.

Working the human resources angle to hire qualified teaching staff for the fledging diversity program was extremely frustrating. It was easy for department officials to hide behind policies and regulations to stifle support for marginalized children. I ended up having two of the best paid “lunchroom aides” to facilitate the work in diversity — it was the only way I could hire them.

Like many Black educators, I retired earlier than necessary. The constant adversity and discrimination wore me down. It was like a slow drip of water on my head. I am so pleased to see that policies and regulations are now being reviewed to address the needs of marginalized students. Good teachers continue to examine their practice in order to meet student needs. Anti-racism education is becoming an ongoing professional development discussion.

My true joy is knowing that more than a handful of teachers I mentored have become assistant principals, principals, consultants and university professors. These educators are influencing the work around racism, Indigenous studies, sexual orientation, gender, poverty and transitioning immigrant/refugee students into Canadian schools.

In this George Floyd moment, now is the time to speak difficult truths, to pry open the doors to address systemic racism in our schools. We will never eliminate systemic racism from our schools’ future until we recognize its uncomfortably tight grip on our past.

Rosalind Smith was Edmonton’s first Black female principal. She began her leadership career in 1996.

> “My true joy is knowing that more than a handful of teachers I mentored have become assistant principals, principals, consultants and university professors.”

ISTOCK ADAPTED

Nine practices that perpetuate racial inequality

Gail-Ann Wilson

Feature Guest Editor,
Diversity Education Consultant,
Edmonton Public Schools

Maxine Hackett

Foods Teacher,
Jasper Place High School,
Edmonton

Racism against Black people is based on an unjust social order that affects all Black people as a collective. Anti-Black actions perpetuating racism fall across a boundless spectrum.

THE FOLLOWING IS A LIST OF SPECTRUMS FROM THE **LEAST TO MOST OBSERVABLE/RECOGNIZABLE**.

1 Tropes

Embellishing or using clichéd descriptions that create imagery based on a Black racialized stereotype. Many tropes create a segregated mentality or a sense of Black people being the "other."

Examples

- Black students viewed as immigrants and refugees from a "third world country"
- Black families are poverty stricken, needy and struggling
- Black female teachers are aggressive and respond with anger
- Black males are excellent athletes, disinterested in academics, disruptors in the classroom
- Groups of Black students are excessively loud or belong to gangs

2 Tokenism

Deliberately recruiting and using members from the Black community to prevent criticisms of lack of racial diversity. This is a covert act of racism, as power is retained by the privileged group.

Examples

- Treating Black people as monoliths or representatives for an entire race
- Expecting Black teachers to lead racial diversity initiatives
- Identifying Black students to play on sports teams, perform rap music or sing in choirs
- Displaying generosity toward Black students as an act of charity
- Singling out Black students for being late or absent

3 Cultural appropriation

Copying elements of Black culture for trivial reasons. Not simply "borrowing" from Black or other racial cultures, but perpetuating negative stereotypes.

Examples

- Use of Black or Brown face
- Dressing in Halloween costumes portraying Black celebrities or historical figures
- "Blackfishing": wearing Black hairstyles like dreadlocks, cornrows, box braids or adopting Black features through tanning or body fillers
- Asking Black communities to tolerate and normalize appropriation as a compliment to their culture

4 Assimilation

Deconstructing Black identity by expecting or forcing Black people to adopt the values, behaviours, culture and social norms of the dominant group.

Examples

- Lack of understanding of the importance of maintaining Black culture
- Grouping all Black people as the same without acknowledging the unique cultures within the Black community
- Believing that Black students/teachers have an opinion on race while disregarding it as an experience
- Poor pronunciation of Black students' names or nicknaming a Black student for ease of pronunciation
- Disregarding and challenging cultural attire and headwear
- Assignments, classroom activities or teacher perspectives centered on the dominant race

5 Macroaggressions

Assaulting cultural identity through targeted indignities, shaming and dehumanizing behaviours based on reducing or marginalizing the Black individual.

Examples

- Unsolicited touching of body features (hair)
- Black jokes and other forms of racial humour
- Singling out individuals for belonging to the Black race
- Marginalized compliments (e.g., "You're pretty for a Black girl," "You are so articulate for a Black student," "You are a credit to your race."
- Disparaging comparisons to Black culture/people
- Denying the lived experiences of racism through "gaslighting" (e.g., "Did it really have to do with your race?" or "If you worked harder you would be successful.")
- Statements of denial (e.g., "When I look at you, I don't see colour," or "I am not racist, I have several Black friends.")
- Assuming that a Black person is a service worker

6 Implicit biases

Beliefs and attitudes that lack neutrality toward certain people or groups.

Examples

- Accepting discriminatory beliefs and racial misinformation
- Unprovoked suspicion and targeted blame toward Black people
- Social avoidance or discomfort around Black people
- Seeking out others with like-minded racial beliefs
- Ambivalence toward racism as nothing more than a social construct

7 Power and privilege

Denying responsibility for the dominant race's repressive actions, beliefs or values. Feelings of guilt and shame related to discrimination against Black people are converted to benefit the dominant group.

Examples

- Feeling the need to "teach" people of other races the way to live or navigate life, as an act of saviourism
- Centering race conversations on your own personal feelings/experiences
- Benefitting from historical narratives and systemic processes that diminish Black people
- Inherently believing and trusting authority figures of the privileged race
- Subjectively determining what should be considered racist
- Believing that the wrongs of racism can be righted by being "colour blind" from now on

8 Fear of insurgency

Congregating or formal organization of Black people that provokes a biased fear of imminent racial hostility. Fear of insurgency is a response to being outnumbered by the racialized group.

Examples

- Treating groups of Black students with suspicion
- Subjecting Black students to higher levels of surveillance than other students
- Prohibiting Black students from gathering
- Filming interactions with Black people for one's protection
- Through community-based or school-policing models, favouring punitive action over relationship-based outcomes with Black people
- Viewing peaceful demonstrations, marches and rallies as unlawful resistance

9 Acts of oppression

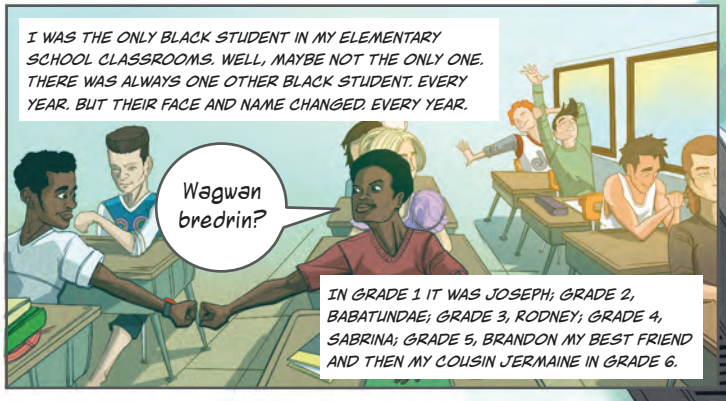
Applying cultural practices that reduce the power of Black people in favour of the dominant race by discriminating, disapproving, criticizing, and denying equity and human rights.

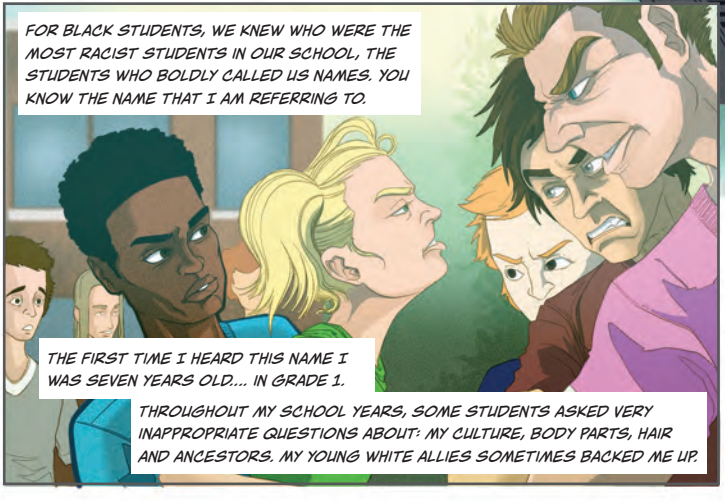
Examples

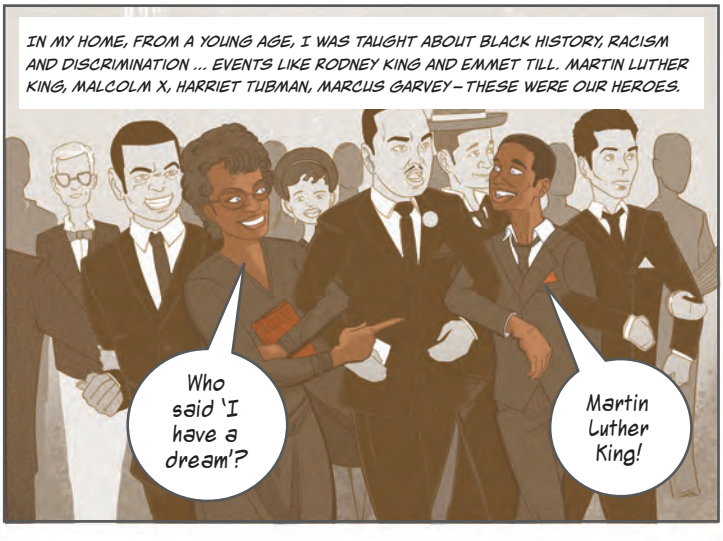
- Silencing advocates of anti-Black racism
- Language: use of the N-word, racial jokes
- Violence and threats through bullying/hazing or social media
- Harassing Black students based on discriminatory biases, such as believing that Black people are predisposed to misbehaviour, underachievement and promiscuity
- Misrepresenting Black people as threatening, violent, unlawful and felonious
- Rationalizing the use of deadly force against Black people.

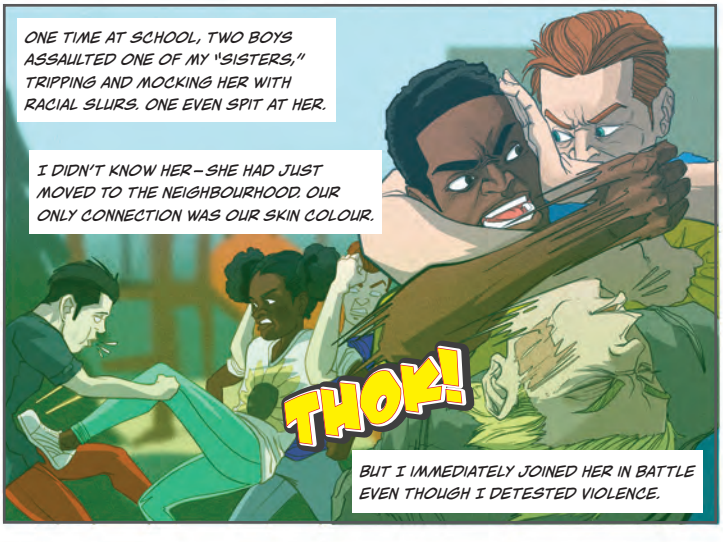
BECOMING MR. PARKER

Story: Andrew Parker | Illustration: Kyle Smith

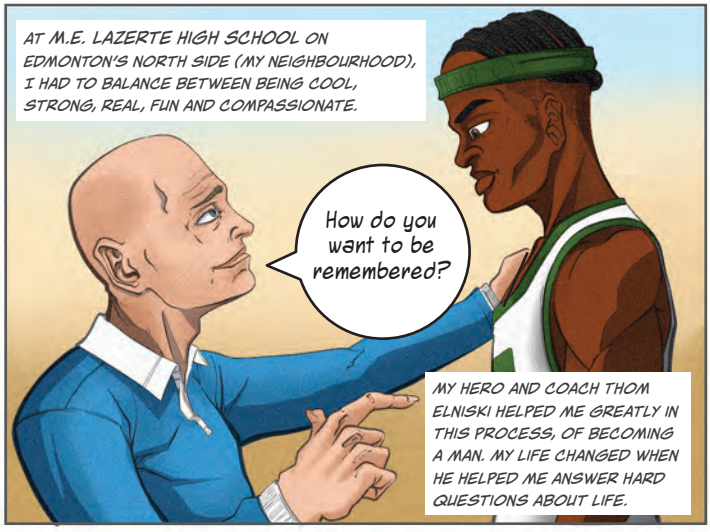


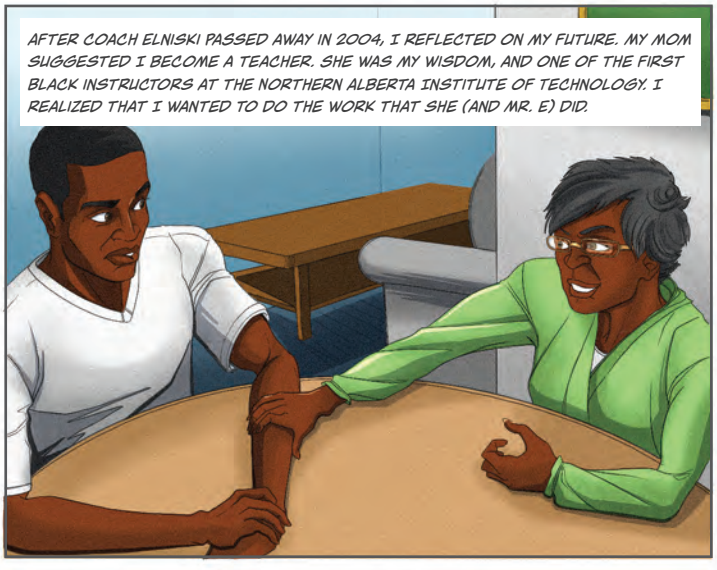


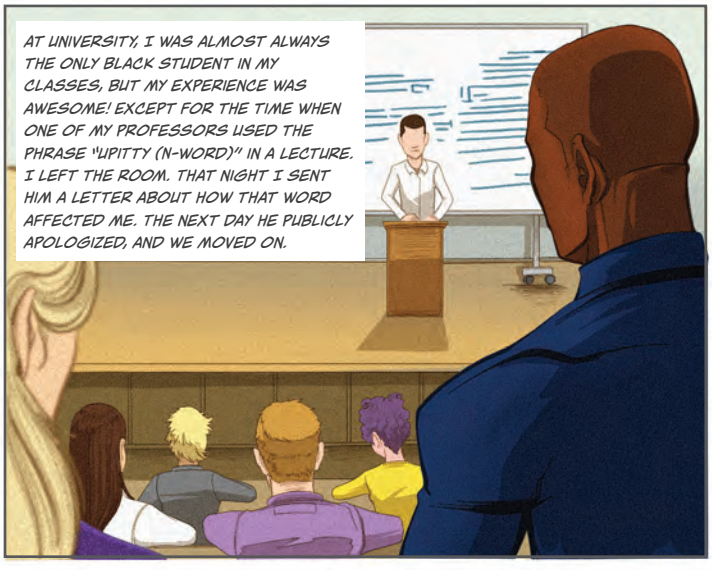


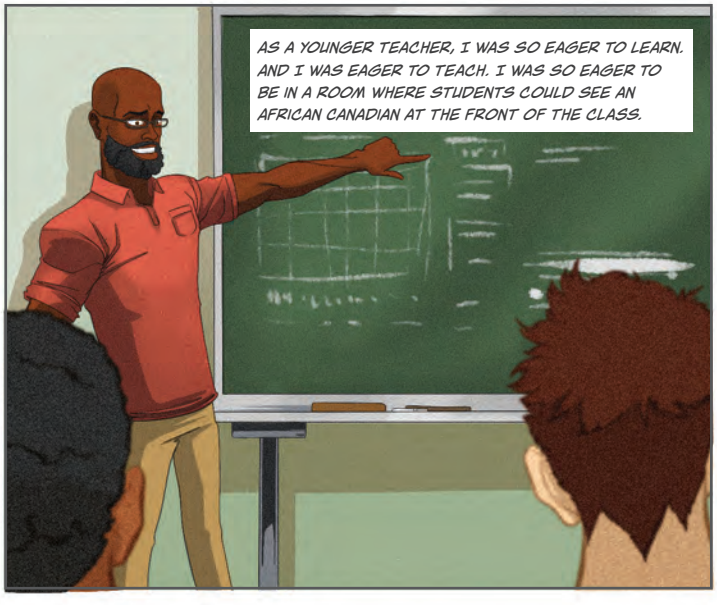



MRS. MILLINGTON
MS. SMITH
Black Queen majesty.
MY FIRST BLACK TEACHER WAS MRS. MILLINGTON IN JUNIOR HIGH. SHE WAS DARK SKINNED, EBONY ELEGANCE.
ROSALIND SMITH WAS MY FIRST AND ONLY BLACK PRINCIPAL. SHE TAUGHT ME THE IMPORTANCE OF RESPECTING THE CULTURE.
I MISBEHAVED ONCE, BUT ONE GOOD TALK MADE ME RESPECT ALL QUEENS IN THIS PROFESSION.


AT M.E. LAZERTE HIGH SCHOOL ON EDMONTON'S NORTH SIDE (MY NEIGHBOURHOOD), I HAD TO BALANCE BETWEEN BEING COOL, STRONG, REAL, FUN AND COMPASSIONATE.
How do you want to be remembered?
MY HERO AND COACH THOM ELNISKI HELPED ME GREATLY IN THIS PROCESS, OF BECOMING A MAN. MY LIFE CHANGED WHEN HE HELPED ME ANSWER HARD QUESTIONS ABOUT LIFE.

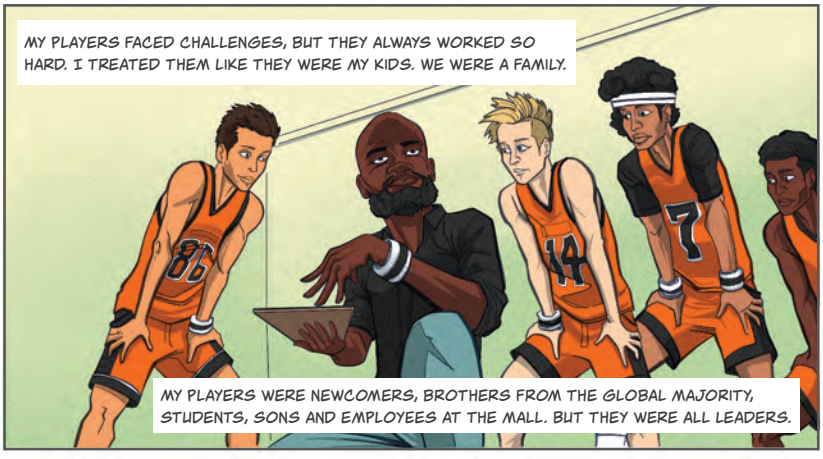

AFTER COACH ELNISKI PASSED AWAY IN 2004, I REFLECTED ON MY FUTURE. MY MOM SUGGESTED I BECOME A TEACHER. SHE WAS MY WISDOM, AND ONE OF THE FIRST BLACK INSTRUCTORS AT THE NORTHERN ALBERTA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY. I REALIZED THAT I WANTED TO DO THE WORK THAT SHE (AND MR. E) DID.


AT UNIVERSITY, I WAS ALMOST ALWAYS THE ONLY BLACK STUDENT IN MY CLASSES, BUT MY EXPERIENCE WAS AWESOME! EXCEPT FOR THE TIME WHEN ONE OF MY PROFESSORS USED THE PHRASE "UPITTY (N-WORD)" IN A LECTURE. I LEFT THE ROOM. THAT NIGHT I SENT HIM A LETTER ABOUT HOW THAT WORD AFFECTED ME. THE NEXT DAY HE PUBLICLY APOLOGIZED, AND WE MOVED ON.

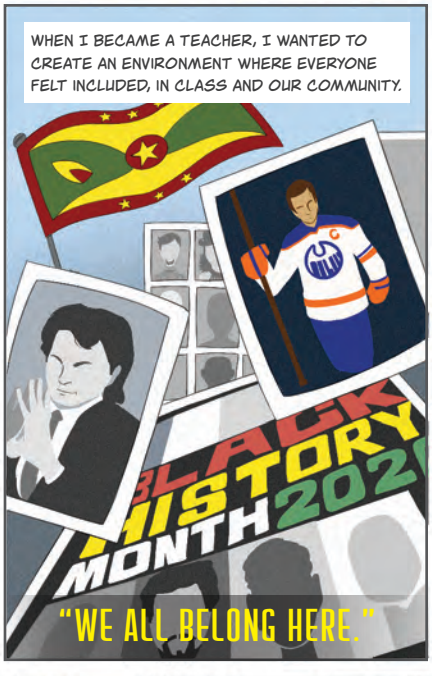

AS A YOUNGER TEACHER, I WAS SO EAGER TO LEARN. AND I WAS EAGER TO TEACH. I WAS SO EAGER TO BE IN A ROOM WHERE STUDENTS COULD SEE AN AFRICAN CANADIAN AT THE FRONT OF THE CLASS.

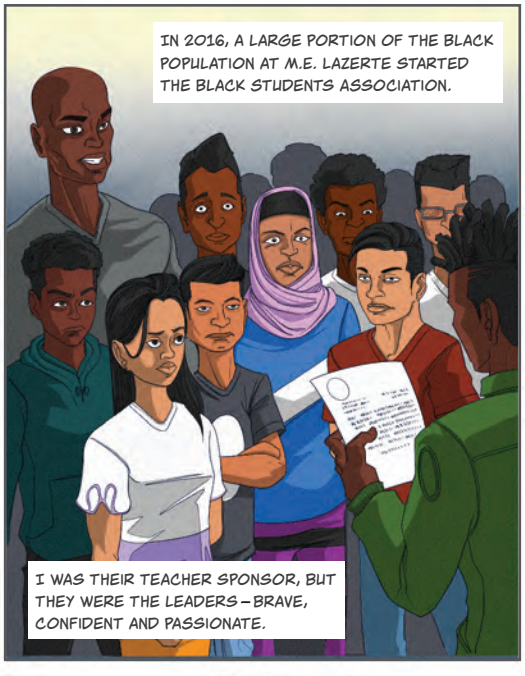

DURING MY STUDENT TEACHING, I WAS FORTUNATE TO COACH THE SENIOR AND JUNIOR MEN'S BASKETBALL TEAMS. I WAS THRILLED TO DO THIS WORK.
I WANTED TO INFLUENCE MY COMMUNITY THE WAY THAT COACH ELNISKI HAD INFLUENCED MY LIFE.

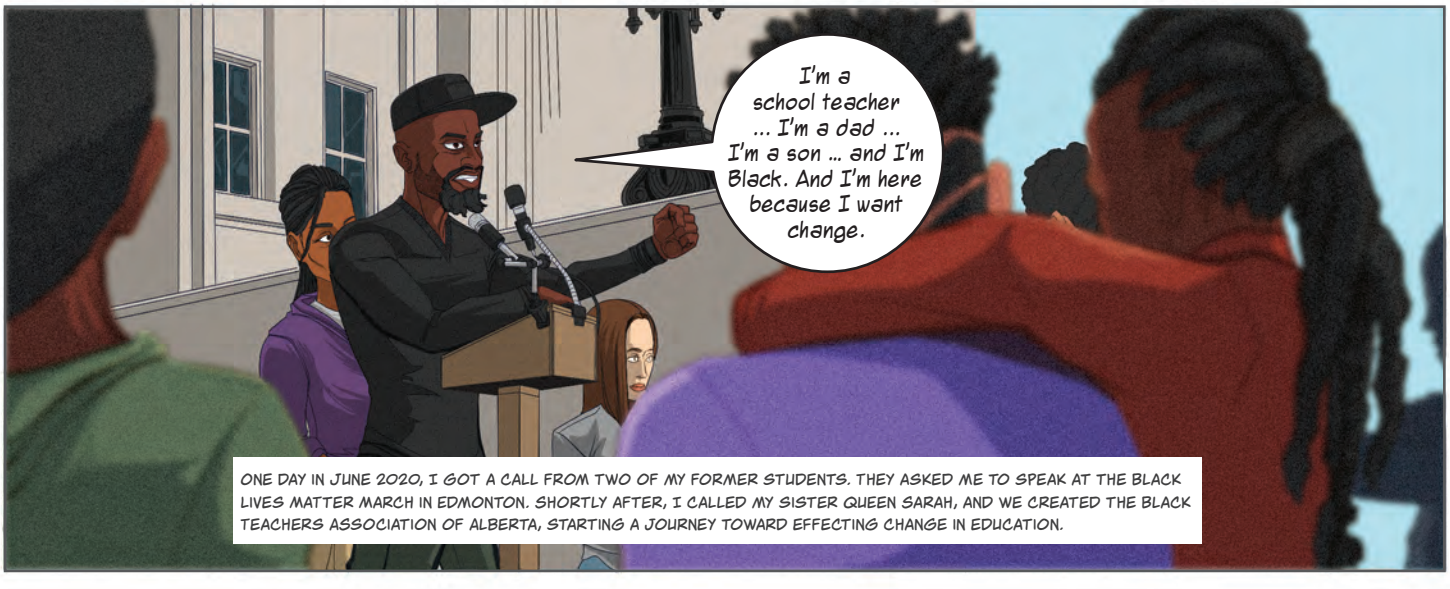

SADLY, ON THREE OCCASIONS, I HAD BLACK YOUTH TELL ME THAT COACHES FROM OTHER SCHOOLS HAD TOLD THEM NOT TO ATTEND M.E. LAZERTE.
I WONDERED IF THOSE COACHES KNEW HOW RACIST THEY SOUNDED. I DID.
You could end up like Parker and the other 'Northsiders.'


MY PLAYERS FACED CHALLENGES, BUT THEY ALWAYS WORKED SO HARD. I TREATED THEM LIKE THEY WERE MY KIDS. WE WERE A FAMILY.
MY PLAYERS WERE NEWCOMERS, BROTHERS FROM THE GLOBAL MAJORITY, STUDENTS, SONS AND EMPLOYEES AT THE MALL. BUT THEY WERE ALL LEADERS.


MY FIRST SEVEN YEARS AS A TEACHER, I NEVER MISSED A PRACTICE, GAME OR CLASS EXCEPT FOR WHEN MY OWN CHILDREN WERE BORN. IT WAS BIGGER THAN TEACHING.
I GAVE EVERYTHING I COULD.


WHEN I BECAME A TEACHER, I WANTED TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE EVERYONE FELT INCLUDED, IN CLASS AND OUR COMMUNITY.
"WE ALL BELONG HERE."


IN 2016, A LARGE PORTION OF THE BLACK POPULATION AT M.E. LAZERTE STARTED THE BLACK STUDENTS ASSOCIATION.
I WAS THEIR TEACHER SPONSOR, BUT THEY WERE THE LEADERS – BRAVE, CONFIDENT AND PASSIONATE.


I'm a school teacher ... I'm a dad ... I'm a son ... and I'm Black. And I'm here because I want change.
ONE DAY IN JUNE 2020, I GOT A CALL FROM TWO OF MY FORMER STUDENTS. THEY ASKED ME TO SPEAK AT THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MARCH IN EDMONTON. SHORTLY AFTER, I CALLED MY SISTER QUEEN SARAH, AND WE CREATED THE BLACK TEACHERS ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA, STARTING A JOURNEY TOWARD EFFECTING CHANGE IN EDUCATION.

Where do I see myself?

Andrew Parker

Feature Guest Editor,
Social Studies, English Language Arts and Phys-ed Teacher, M.E. LaZerte High School, Edmonton

As a Black student, where do I see myself?

I see myself on the field and on the court, brothers who can jump high and sisters who can run swiftly; leading in these areas effortlessly. I see myself there; I like seeing myself there. But I'd like to see myself in other places too.

The textbooks barely show any of my heroes from my culture, but there is no shortage of European history or legends. When my history teacher places pictures of the greatest contributors to history in the classroom, none of their faces are Black, except for one or two people. Does that mean that only one or two people from my culture matter in history?

My English teacher talks of the greatest writers: Hemingway, Frost, Shakespeare, Kipling. When I suggest authors who are Black, sometimes they get supported. And this feels good. But other times, I cringe, when I hear my teacher use the N-word from texts selected for our class. I desire representation, but I don't always want to read about negative experiences related to my community in front of a largely white class … and a white teacher.

My school staff is largely white, except for the custodians. None of my coaches look like me. Same for my culinary arts teacher, my dance teacher and my physical education teacher. I really like them, and I admire them, but every year I hope to see at least one teacher who looks like me.

When I see someone from my culture in the hallways, I acknowledge them — a nod, a high five, a joke, a brief conversation. It feels good to see them, even if it's just briefly. When I see someone else who looks like me in class, I feel joy, confidence, and I feel supported, even if we never speak. I know that they are there, and they know I am here. We see each other, and we see ourselves.

If I get in trouble and I have to go to the office, no one on the admin team at my school looks like me. They all went to university, they all probably started out as teachers, they are all probably friends outside of our school — but none of them look like me. Does this mean that I will be treated differently?

As a Black person, where do I see myself?

Every police officer I've ever encountered in my life has been white. As youths, we're taught that the officers are here to protect us, but as a Black male, as soon as I transition past puberty, am I the person that these officers are protecting others from, even though I feel like I'm the one who needs the most protection?

In pop culture, I see myself as a rapper, singer, comedian and dancer — all things that I enjoy. But how often do they show us as scientists, astronauts, mathematicians, doctors, professors of education, and drama and calculus teachers?

I see myself as Trayvon Martin walking home from basketball practice, my hoodie on, and my music playing loudly, followed by shadowy figures who think I am not in the right neighbourhood — even though this IS my neighbourhood.

As a Black teacher, where do I see myself?

I see myself at work as the only Black teacher on my staff, asking very important questions, knowing how badly the youth desire change. The youth wonder if I can be the one who will fight for them. This is where I see myself. Where do you see yourself?

PHOTO BY STEFAN LEGACY

MY INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

Andrew Parker

Feature Guest Editor,
Social Studies, English Language Arts and Phys-ed Teacher, M.E. LaZerte High School, Edmonton

My class and its decor aim to show my students multiple paths by multiple people so that they can believe that they can do multiple things.

MY CLASSROOM REPRESENTS ME IN MANY WAYS, but it also represents what I hope my students would hope to see in my classes: themselves.

When I was growing up, all of the pictures of historians or authors in my classes didn't look like me, yet their faces were on the walls of my classes. Every time I looked in the rooms, I always wondered, "Is there a place for me? Or someone like me?" Maybe one day.

That one day came in 2014 when I graduated from the University of Alberta with an after degree in education. And I greatly wanted to change my room to what I always wanted to see, but being on a temporary contract, you have to pick your battles, especially if you can't really pick your own home room.

When I finally got settled into my own home room, I hung a poster of my favourite poet. His name wasn't Shakespeare; his name was Tupac Shakur. His poster hangs just outside my main window, his hands in a gesture of prayer. I'm a big fan of Marvel movies, so I put up posters of comic books and my favourite Marvel movie: *The Black Panther*. I placed that poster on my front door.

ILLUSTRATION BY KYLE SMITH

But what really stands out in my room are the collages of faces. One wall represents Asian communities. Another, First Nation, Métis and Inuit brothers and sisters. Another wall, heroes from the Pride community. Another wall is committed to Arab Muslim communities. Finally, the left corner of my back wall is a tribute to Black history and Canadian icons, not just politicians, rulers or monarchs, but good people who truly represent our nation and its core values. I structured the photos to resemble a crowded train station. Everyone is different, everyone is important, everyone is present.

Also, as a tribute to my love of sports, I put up various pictures of athletes from all communities, including paralympians, female athletes, Muslim athletes and athletes who were also champions of social justice.

A colleague once said to me that too many visuals in a room is a distraction, and I agree it can be, but what if these pictures weren't distractions, but motivational tools? Imagine if, every time you walked into a class, you saw yourself or someone who looked like you. Subconsciously, it could mean that you could also be on a wall one day—as a politician, athlete, artist, musician, educator, Nobel peace prize winner, activist or leader?

Displaying authentic representations of diversity makes students feel included, supported, loved, appreciated, but most of all welcomed into your classroom.

You can be Sacheen Littlefeather or Ashley Callingbull. You can be George Takei or Chow Yun-Fat. You can be Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. or Mahatma Gandhi. You can be RuPaul or Harvey Milk. You can be Rosa Parks or Viola Desmond. You can be Mahershala Ali or Muhammad Ali. You can be anything. The faces in the room confirm and affirm this. Every time you come to class.

When we aren't represented, it's hard to carve a path. It's not impossible, but it's hard. My class and its decor aim to show my students multiple paths by multiple people so that they can believe that they can do multiple things. In our schools, and in their lives.

Words matter

Your key to making wise and informed choices

Gail-Ann Wilson

Feature Guest Editor,
Diversity Education Consultant,
Edmonton Public Schools

RACIST LANGUAGE IS COMMON, complicated and, in some cases, highly contextual. Words that may have been politically correct in the past can evolve to be viewed as microaggressions, epithets or slurs. While our society expects people to be conscious of offensive words and to speak with inclusivity, there's no doubt that racial language is a minefield, regardless of a person's skin colour.

Adding to the complexity is the reality that there is fluidity to how people wish to see themselves. Describing a person's race based on their physical attributes is not the same as describing ethnicity based on origins, so determining what's safe to say is dependent on how people wish to be identified. The best way to address this puzzling question is to just ask the person. Since that's not always possible, here are some guidelines.

ISTOCK ADAPTED

SAFE TO SAY

AFRO CANADIAN AND AFRICAN CANADIAN reflect identities with pride in their African descent. Preference toward using the Afro or African prefix reflects belonging to the African diaspora regardless of where one has migrated. But the name is impractical for people who are not Black yet originate from African countries. The prefix "African" falsely insinuates that African identity is assumed to homogeneously belong to the Black race. The African prefix is also misleading as Africa is not a country, colour or racial category.

BLACK is accepted as a term that organizes the community as a broad ethnicity. It gained popularity and preference over the label "coloured" during the early 1970s with the rise of the Black Power movement. It is spelled with a capital B because it is an ethnic group name and designated as a proper noun. It is not a colour adjective to describe Black people.

CARIBBEAN CANADIANS have origins from the more than 7,000 Atlantic islands. It is acceptable when this is an accurate reflection of those being referenced.

USE WITH CAUTION

BIPOC is used as an acronym for Black, Indigenous and People of Colour. While this acronym is convenient, it's preferable to distinguish each community by using their proper name, e.g. Black, Indigenous, Lantinx, etc. Identifying people by name or nation is best, e.g. Nigerian, Trinidadian, Cree etc.

BIRACIAL/MIXED RACE
Biracial is used when Black people identify with another ethnicity. Some prefer **mutiracial**, **multiethnic** and **mixed race** to include their diverse identities. **Mixed** is not always accepted, as it neutralizes identity. Do not use **mulatto** as it's rooted in disparaging Spanish language origins.

COMMUNITIES/PEOPLE OF COLOUR are acceptable terms to corral all people who would identify as nonwhite, but it is passive. It lacks effort to properly recognize people by their preferred ethnic identity. It also creates a hybrid of all other ethnicities, which defaults to making people feel like outsiders.

AVOID

APE/MONKEY
Words associated with apes and other animals discriminate against Black people as they are extremely dehumanizing and demeaning.

AUNT JEMIMA is but one example of a brand that is offensive because it reflects oppressive and subservient stereotypes.

BOY is a pejorative word that discriminates against Black men as inferior.

COLOURED is both unsettling and complicated. It minimizes the qualities of Black people. The term was self-assigned by Black people to separate themselves from the N-word that slave owners used. It was replaced by "Black" and evolved to the prefix "African" as the community sought less disparaging titles. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) formed as a civil rights group in 1909, and it has remained acceptable to use the term coloured in this context.

CODED WORDS refers to everyday language with racial undertones. Examples are **blacklist** (to be unwelcome or banned), **hood** and **ghetto** (impoverished or low quality), **white knight** (a saviour of others), and colour descriptors such as **chocolate** or **cocoa skin**, which exoticize ethnic features.

EXOTIC is a racially camouflaged term to characterize Black people, especially women, as uncommon. It draws specific attention to physical features that are considered rare and unique in Western culture. Unwanted attention toward textured hair and dark features demeans one's identity by reducing them to being alien or mysterious. It reinforces that being white is the acceptable default culture.

NEGRO should be considered an antiquated term to identify Black people in the English language. In the 20th century, the term evolved from the indignity of the N-word that slave masters used. Negro replaced the term coloured and was preferred by Americans when spelled with a capital "N". In the 1960s it fell out of favour and was replaced by the term Black. When used today, Negro is an expression of a colour bias that upholds racial hegemony and stereotypes. This includes being viewed as chattel or property, or as a threat.

Words that may have been politically correct in the past can evolve to be viewed as microaggressions, epithets or slurs.

THE N-WORD is the paramount of racial slurs. It is not a name, direct object or casual reference to a race. These six letters represent a total disregard for human life due to the barbaric and murderous conditions that Black people suffered from the cradle to the grave for centuries. The N-word continues to be associated with a belief that Black people are intrinsically inferior to others and that this inferiority continues to be inherited. In an anti-racism world, the N-word is only of value to Black people. **The N-word or any variations of it should not be said, sung or written by people outside of the Black community.**

VISIBLE MINORITY is an outdated term of Canadian origins. First used in 1975, it separates noncaucasions from white people socially and in federal legislation. It is racially divisive because it emphasizes that collectively people of colour *belong* in spaces that are not white. This term also applies to mixed race people. Indigenous people in Canada are not considered visible minorities.

Additional resources:

www.rsdb.org/full
www.racialequitytools.org/glossary
www.diversitystyleguide.com/
www.aclrc.com/glossary (Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre)
www.crrf-fcrr.ca/en/resources/glossary-a-terms-en-gb-1

HAIR
It's complicated

Sarah Adomako-Ansah

Educator in Residence,
Canadian Museum of Human
Rights, Winnipeg

Hair. The relationship I have with mine is … complicated. Beginning in elementary school, I would look at my friends, whose hair was different shades of blonde, brunette and red; wavy or straight; streaked or crimped. I felt pangs of jealousy.

I had … box braids (a protective style often done by Black women without heat). I didn't want box braids. I wanted to be Beyoncé (honestly, I still do). I hated having to sit for so long for the neat rows and plaits to be completed. It hurt. Why didn't my hair lay flat? Out of braids, my hair was an afro, which I despised. Why did I need an afro pick? Why couldn't I use a round brush or straight comb?

How is Black hair different?

The makeup of Black hair is incredibly different from that of the hair of other cultures. Also referred to as kinky or Afro-textured, each strand of this hair type grows in a helix shape. For this reason, it is dense. Despite its density, it varies in oils, due to the tightness of the curls. For Black people, knowing the specific characteristics of their hair helps them determine how to maintain, style and care for it.

Respect

Being able to appreciate another person's genetic makeup is fundamental to human decency and understanding others, but asking me to touch my hair is not a compliment. Quite the contrary; it makes me feel othered. It makes me feel different. It puts me in a separate category from my friends and colleagues.

My hair texture should not be a concern. I often wonder, when someone asks to touch my hair, if that question is posed to a woman of any other colour. It hurts to think that my validity is centered around whether someone can touch my hair. My validity should be based on my work ethic, my spirit and the way I treat others, not follicles that grow out of my head.

Identity

In precolonial societies, hair signified where people lived, the tribe that their family was from and the wealth that their family obtained. In recent times, hair has become a part of Black people's personal signature. Black men take the time to style with different cuts and waves, while women take the time to curl, moisturize, decorate and colour their hair. It has become a statement piece.

One thing I want to note: people are not defined by their hair. I have spoken to Black women who have had to make myriad changes to their hair to be accepted by their peers, in-laws and colleagues. Teachers in my network have completely chopped their hair, taken on uncomfortable styles or turned to wigs. In order to fit in, identity is thrown aside and it becomes lost.

Discrimination against Black hair

Over the last few centuries, the social roles of Black hair have shifted. Hair is often looked at through the Eurocentric lens that beauty and worth are determined by how straight or light hair is. The idea that Black hair is not easy to maintain, "savage" and "ghetto" are stereotypes from slavery, suggesting that Black people and Black hair are inferior. Unfortunately, many of those stereotypes and feelings have trickled into the present day.

"Black women's beauty was depicted as a negative, and we can see that from the time of enslavement in North America forward," said Tracy Owens Patton, a professor of communication and African-American diaspora studies at the University of Wyoming, who has spent time tracing how Eurocentric beauty standards have shaped the psychology of Black women today. As a result, Black women have spent much time trying out Eurocentric styles and maintenance techniques that simply do not work on Afro-textured hair. This causes damage, breakage and shrinkage of the curl patterns that are characteristic of Black hair.

Self love

Presently, I am a 31-year-old Black woman. I spent nearly 20 of those 31 years fighting with my hair and stressing over its struggles. In hating my hair, I failed to see its beauty. Gradually, by surrounding myself with people who have shown me how to care for Black hair, following social media accounts that promote it, and learning more about my hair and its history, I have come to love the texture of my hair. I love the inventive styles created to protect it. I love the bounce it has and the shape it takes. It's soft and textured. I love the depth in its colour and shine. As I begin to embrace my hair, I recognize the privilege that I now have.

The students in my classroom, from our first day of instruction, learn about both representation and identity. It is my firm belief that students should know where they come from and have a sense of pride and belonging in their cultural community. One of the joys of my job is that I am able to teach and influence my students to love themselves exactly as they are. The students in my class know that they will always be celebrated. Their hair makes no difference to me in the grand scheme of who they are as a student. My hope is that people in all industries will think this way, eventually.

Black hair is not an enemy; it has so much depth and beauty. My hair is a reflection of my ancestry, my soul and my melanin.

PHOTO BY STEFAN LEGACY

ALLIED TEACHER'S CHECKLIST

Gail-Ann Wilson

Feature Guest Editor,
Diversity Education Consultant,
Edmonton Public Schools

Maxine Hackett

Foods Teacher,
Jasper Place High School,
Edmonton

ANTI-RACIST TEACHERS GENUINELY WISH to be part of the solution in dismantling systemic racism. This work requires teachers to deeply evaluate their own biases and assumptions of race-based differences. A transition toward allyship will require a decentering of privileges that create a conscious or unconscious advantage over racialized people. Teachers who are authentic allies for diversity and inclusion can be very effective at interrupting the power imbalance associated with racism.

5 ways to be a good ally

1 ACTION
Build an infrastructure

EXPRESSION

- ✓ Establish the characteristics of an antiracist ally and seek out like-minded allies.
- ✓ Create antiracism or social justice groups to build community based on common interests to increase collective action.
- ✓ Create a Black community safe space for listening, not for providing unsolicited solutions or judgments.
- ✓ Network with antiracism educators, consultants and specialists to compile resources.

2 ACTION
Be personally and culturally conscious

EXPRESSION

- ✓ Assess your own bias before demanding changes to others or institutions.
- ✓ Be prepared to acknowledge your emotions, such as guilt, resistance, denial, judgment, discomfort and uncertainty.
- ✓ Consider whether you benefit from unearned advantages because you are not a person of colour.
- ✓ Address your resources:
  - Critically assess why you are considering resources that present the N-word.
  - Remove resources that contain racial bias (even subtle forms); unflattering imagery; race-related humour; exaggerations of character, physical traits and oppressive archetypes.
  - Present prominent representations of Black scientists, mathematicians, literary artists, historians, musicians, athletes and cultural icons.
- ✓ Establish credibility of a narrative:
  - Investigate resources to ensure the voice and perspective is that of a Black person.
  - Be conscious of sensationalized portrayals of Black people to exaggerate negative cultural experiences.
- ✓ Assess and dismantle unchallenged norms and biases in your classroom:
  - Be conscious of the stereotype that Black students are more disruptive in your classroom.
  - Don't assume that Black students are foreign born or newcomers.
  - Challenge beliefs that Black students perform lower academically or are less suited for STEM programs.
- ✓ Acknowledge individual and multigenerational trauma:
  - Recognize that Black people experience forms of trauma that you may not easily recognize.
  - Consider that Black people may be vulnerable to multigenerational trauma perpetuated by a 24-hour news cycle and media images of unjust killings, protests and incarcerations.

3 ACTION
Subscribe to lifelong listening and learning

EXPRESSION

- ✓ Listen with humility to others with lived experiences of racism.
  - Seek faculty and community members that you can ask meaningful questions to, to support your role as an ally.
- ✓ Learn:
  - Understand the history of Black people as it relates to your subject area to add dimension to what you teach.
  - Reject sensationalized stories, controversies and current events that reinforce negative stereotypes of Black people.
- ✓ Be responsible to educate yourself about racism:
  - Black people are not responsible to teach you about racism.
  - Challenge long-held beliefs with discourse and critical thought.

4 ACTION
Decenter your role as an antiracist teacher

EXPRESSION

- ✓ This is a racism renaissance; remember that you're playing catch up:
  - This situation is centuries old, yet many people are only now being enlightened about the history of racism.
  - Racism is not a contemporary issue; it has affected generations of people.
- ✓ Avoid portraying yourself as a saviour based on your antiracism actions.
- ✓ Honour narratives with humility:
  - Historic and contemporary stories should not be sensationalized.
  - Don't use racist stories to overgeneralize life lessons.
- ✓ Avoid setting an agenda for the racism to end:
  - Group initiatives shouldn't be based on a feel-good outcome; racism will still exist.
- ✓ Recognize that there are no rules about racism:
  - Occurrences of racism are dynamic and ubiquitous.

5 ACTION
Be a responder not a reactor

EXPRESSION

- ✓ Respond by:
  - Sustaining your efforts over a long period of time. Don't wait for an act of discrimination to have to prove that you oppose racism.
  - Calling out racism when you see it.
  - Focusing on progress in the fight against racism and not redirecting attention to assign blame.
  - Modelling behaviour that is antiracist by demonstrating diversity, equity and inclusion in all areas of teaching and learning.
- ✓ Avoid reacting by:
  - Denying when racism is happening; macroaggressions, unconscious bias and gaslighting make it difficult for Black people to express when they are experiencing racism.
  - Internalizing the racist offense; no matter how disturbing the acts of racism are, this is not about you.
  - Saying racist acts were unintended, accidental or a joke.
  - Offering hugs and comfort words as a solution to Black people.
  - Competing with stories of your own experiences with racism.
  - Viewing cultural and ethnic festivals as solutions to racism. ATA

WHAT SHOULD A TEACHER OR SCHOOL LEADER DO IF THEY WITNESS RACISM OR EXPERIENCE IT THEMSELVES?

IF A TEACHER WITNESSES RACISM they need to call it out. Speak to the individual to see if they are aware of what they are doing and why, and help them understand why the action or comment is unacceptable.

If you experience racism yourself, tell the person to stop the behaviour and tell them why you will not accept that kind of behaviour directed at you. Calling out behaviour sends a message that it will not be tolerated.

If the behaviour continues after you've spoken with the individual, inform them of your intention to raise your concern with proper officials. ATA

Feature contributors

Our feature on anti-Black racism was made possible by the hard work and brave contributions of our two guest editors, Gail-Ann Wilson and Andrew Parker, as well as numerous other teachers and creative professionals who shared their stories and creative talents.

ANDREW PARKER
Feature Guest Editor

The last two years of my life have taught me the importance of family. Namisango (Kendra), Quincy and Zuri … David, Stephen and Mama (Dr. Claudia Parker). And of course my new family: the Black Teachers Association of Alberta (BTA).

Throughout my path toward social justice, my family taught me many things. My immediate family taught me humility, grace and patience. The family I was born into taught me about the importance of history, justice and reflection. And my new family, the BTA, taught me how to become a leader by steering me in the direction that our community needed during this current global civil rights movement.

This issue of the *ATA Magazine* is a glimpse into the life of my family … all of us, how we think, feel, learn, teach, hurt and heal. My heart and soul belong to my family. Thank you for giving me the courage to walk this path. And thank you for walking with me.

GAIL-ANN WILSON
Feature Guest Editor

I am honoured to be a contributor alongside my courageous Black colleagues to address what it feels like to be a Black teacher. Racism has defined many moments of my teaching career. I am often asked to talk about this so others can understand what a racial experience feels like. Some people need to be persuaded that racism exists through stories detailing what happened. I share these with caution. Shocking folks with the extreme examples of racism are what I call "campfire stories."

Such stories focus on what happened, which isn't an effective approach. As antiracist educators, we need to understand people before we can find solutions. If you truly seek to grow in your understanding of racism, I invite you to ask a Black person, "How were you treated?"

I'm grateful to the ATA for having candid conversations about racism with this feature's contributors. My love and gratitude to my greatest teachers and the village behind me: Ken and Marie, Rachel, Livi, Sophie and Derrell.

STEFAN LEGACY
Cover, pp. 20-22, 26-29, 35 and 40

Stefan Legacy is an Edmonton-based photographer who originally hails from the Caribbean island of Trinidad. Relocating to Canada in 2010, he found photography to be an art form that enables him to express himself through images that tell stories.

KYLE SMITH
pp. 32-34, 36-37

Born in the north and raised under the Caribbean sun, Kyle has been drawing since he was four years old. What started with attempts at recreating Sunday comics and cars, drawing has always been a part of his life.

Having worked predominantly in advertising for nearly two decades, Kyle started InkFable Media, a company focused on freelance illustrative design and digital illustration. You can find him at various comic convention artist alleys in North America, selling art prints while putting the finishing touches on his original comic *Children of Rebel Gods*. He's also the illustrator of an ongoing one-page comic called *Dating While Black*, which is published in a magazine representing Afrocentric culture in Canada.

JENNIFER KELLY
p. 23

Dr. Jennifer Kelly is a professor emeritus in the faculty of education at the University of Alberta.

Her scholarly work encompasses race, racialization and social formation of African-Canadian communities in Alberta. She is the author of books, book chapters, journal articles and a digital exhibition on Black Alberta. Her academic expertise also informed her role as researcher and co-producer of the play *West Indian Diary*, which highlighted the story of immigrants from the Caribbean who came to Alberta in the 1960s.

ROSALIND SMITH
p. 26

Rosalind (Ros) Smith is an educational consultant with more than 35 years of experience as a teacher, principal and central services leader. Known as a strategist practitioner, she helps teachers develop action plans to be responsive to the needs of high-needs students. Through mentoring the skills and practices of modern-day educational leaders, Ros has influenced the thinking around moral leadership, equity in schools and antiracism education. Ros has spoken at provincial, national and international education conferences.

SARAH ADOMAKO-ANSAH | p. 40

Sarah Adomako-Ansah received her bachelor of education from the University of Alberta in 2013; since then, she has taught grades 3 through 6 at St. Pius X Catholic Elementary School in Edmonton. This year, she is also educator in residence at the Canadian Museum of Human Rights, in Winnipeg—teaching remotely.

Sarah is passionate about diversity, leadership, representation and technology. She is the cofounder of the Black Teachers Association of Alberta and strives to amplify all voices in schools.

MAXINE HACKETT
pp. 30 and 42

Maxine Hackett has been a foods teacher at Edmonton's Jasper Place High School for the past eight years. Along with her colleague Angela Johny, she has started an antiracism committee at her school. The committee focuses on teaching staff how to integrate antiracist work into their lives and therefore their classrooms.

She is passionate about teaching her students the skill of cooking, how to give back to the community and how to get involved with social justice initiatives. She recently had her first baby and is enjoying maternity leave with her son and partner.

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Essential conditions

Curriculum implementation needs the professional wisdom of teachers

Phil McRae

Associate Coordinator, Research, ATA

> **"Teaching is usually performed in imperfect conditions, in the face of conflicting expectations and demands. Sustained system improvement can never be done to or for teachers; it can only be done by and with them."**
>
> ***—Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan***

TIME

With any new curriculum Alberta teachers need time to create new resources, plan (units, lessons), build new assessments, collaborate with colleagues, engage in professional development and learning on scheduled noninstructional or professional development days, and make ongoing connections with the new curriculum through collegial discussions.

THERE HAS BEEN A DESIRE in Alberta K–12 schools to move ahead with new programs of study for the past several years, especially given that curriculum redesign has been a start-and-stop process over the last four governments. Indeed, the new draft K–6 curriculum process that unfolded under the current United Conservative Party (UCP) government was the most ambitious and far-reaching in the recent history of education in our province. Unfortunately, the new draft K–6 curriculum that was released in the spring of 2021 has also been Alberta's most disastrous.

The curriculum is marked by design flaws and diminished support across the profession of teaching and by the public. Its piloting and implementation across Alberta K–12 schools are facing serious challenges. In a professional review of the curriculum in the spring of 2021, an overwhelming 91 per cent of Alberta teachers sampled stated that they were unhappy with the new draft K–6 curriculum, with three in four teachers stating that they were "very unhappy." A vast majority of the teachers (91 per cent) stated that they would be uncomfortable teaching the new K–6 curriculum, with 95 per cent of principals also being uncomfortable supporting the new curriculum in their schools and communities.

In a public opinion poll conducted by Environics in April 2021, fewer than one in five Albertans expressed support for the government's draft K–6 curriculum while only 17 per cent of the public agreed that the draft K–6 curriculum would "provide students with the knowledge and skills they will need for success."

While the writing of a new K–6 curriculum is one thing, its successful implementation in individual classrooms across the province is quite another, especially after it was launched into the world with such extreme challenges.

Implementation of curriculum is a complex undertaking. Careful consideration must be given to managing the process within diverse school and classroom contexts. In particular, capacity must be built across the education system and among classroom teachers to deliver the curriculum by ensuring

that comprehensive communication strategies, adequate time, appropriate teaching and learning resources, relevant professional development and focused in-service activities are in place. All of these must be available equitably in both rural and urban settings.

To better understand what Alberta teachers and school leaders desire from implementation of a new curriculum, the Alberta Teachers' Association conducted a large research study in 2018 to gather Alberta teachers' perceptions of the conditions they believe are essential for successful elementary curriculum implementation. The findings of this research study detailed the necessary resources, supports and implementation timelines for any new curriculum to be successful and provided a means by which to support evidenced-based and informed decision making across the public education system.

The key findings are outlined below in brief as the professional wisdom of elementary teachers.

Research findings: Essential Conditions for Curriculum Implementation

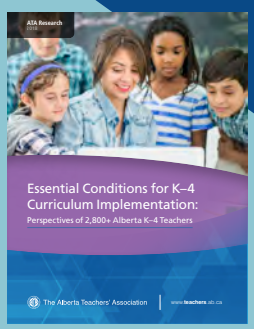
IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINES

Elementary teachers want a reasonable time frame for the implementation of any new curriculum. In fact, a vast majority from the 2018 research study believe that a rollout of new curriculum should occur over a one- to three-year period. The findings also show a clear relationship between perceptions of a reasonable time frame (one to three years) and teaching experience, with less experienced teachers more inclined to be optimistic about the quick adoption of any new curriculum. It is not just that the timelines are important, it is the further complexity of introducing a new curriculum across all elementary subject areas, and within multiple grade levels at one time. Just imagine being an elementary teacher who works across three grade levels with all new curriculum — beyond a daunting prospect for even the most experienced professional.

Top 10 types of desired PD related to curriculum development and implementation

1. Face to face workshop(s)
2. Collaborative unit and lesson planning
3. Collaborative resource selection or development
4. Series of ongoing workshops
5. Independent unit and lesson planning
6. Online module(s) or webinar(s)
7. Series of online modules or webinars
8. Independent resource selection or development
9. Independent study and reflection
10. Working on an action research project collaborative study and reflection

For the full list, see Figure 1 in *Essential Conditions for K–4 Curriculum Implementation* at www.teachers.ab.ca.



- The full research report can be found at teachers.ab.ca under Public Education > Education Research > Research Publications.

> *"I'm concerned that [a new curriculum] is a complete overhaul and we won't have the necessary time to prepare for it."*
>
> —Alberta elementary teacher

TIME

Time is identified as both a resource and a concern. As a resource, time is deemed necessary for teachers to review the new curriculum, create resources, plan, build new assessments, collaborate with colleagues, engage in professional development and learning on scheduled noninstructional or professional development days, and make ongoing connections with the new curriculum through collegial discussions. The potential for a dramatic increase in work intensification and the implementation timeline are key concerns, especially as we move into a recovery phase from this pandemic. Alberta elementary teachers state their concerns related to "time" as follows:

> *I'm concerned that [a new curriculum] is a complete overhaul and we won't have the necessary time to prepare for it.*
>
> *[I'm concerned that] teacher workload and personal hours working will increase dramatically.*
>
> *At this moment, the prospect of implementing all new curricula in a short period of time concerns me.*

RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

Several key themes emerged when elementary teachers commented on what resources and supports they would need to successfully implement a new elementary curriculum. Teachers have a strong desire for adequate resources and supports for implementation that are provided on scheduled noninstructional or professional development days and through face-to-face workshop(s), collaborative unit and lesson planning, and resource selection and development.

Specifically, elementary teachers are looking for exemplars; books; digital materials; assessment resources (including performance tasks, rubrics and marking guides); resources to support science, math, French language, social studies, and First Nations, Métis and Inuit knowledge; and hands-on video and printable resources.

Across convention districts and years of teaching experience, there are some slight variations in the order of these preferences. Overall, however, face-to-face workshops and collaborative unit and lesson planning are the two most preferred methods of professional support.

With the lived experiences of the pandemic, virtual workshops will likely supplement face-to-face implementation activities; however, teachers have a strong desire for real-time engagement with colleagues (working in the same grade and subject levels) to develop and select key resources that will support their professional practice in any new curriculum.

FRENCH LANGUAGE RESOURCES

French first-language teachers and those who teach French as a second language identify concerns with curriculum implementation similar to those of their English first-language counterparts. However, French first-language teachers voice greater concern with respect to the availability of French resources and lack of preparation for implementation.

FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT RESOURCES

There has been a growing and clearly defined need over the past several years for resources and supports related to First Nations, Métis and Inuit foundational knowledge, as well as resources that accurately reflect and demonstrate the strength and diversity of Indigenous peoples.

CURRICULUM LEAD TEACHERS

The 2018 research study showed that there is an interest in a designated individual(s) at the elementary school site who will take a lead role in the implementation of any new curriculum (that is, a "curriculum lead teacher").

In the past, Alberta schools have field tested dimensions of new programs of study with an individual or small group in advance of implementation. These individuals (or small groups within the school) then became a primary resource for the rest of the school staff and community of learners as the curriculum moved into mandatory implementation.

With no school divisions in Alberta piloting the full UCP draft K–6 curriculum, these site-based champions will not be developed as they have been in the past. This creates further challenges with the capacity building necessary to support any successful implementation of a new K–6 curriculum.

Moving forward, the entire education system will need to focus its energies on supporting teachers and school leaders with the following essential conditions, as they are closest to K–6 students on a daily basis. If any new curriculum implementation is to be successful, these essential conditions must be recognized.

Reference

Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). 2021. *Essential Conditions for K–4 Curriculum Implementation: Perspectives of 2800+ Alberta K–4 Teachers*. Edmonton, Alta: ATA, p 10. Also available at www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Research/COOR-101-23%20Curriculum%20Implementation%20Report.pdf (accessed June 22, 2021).

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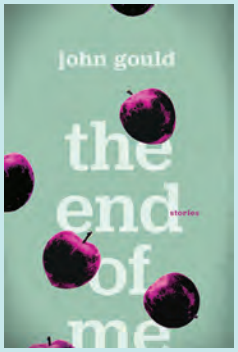

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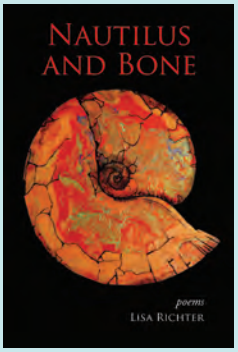

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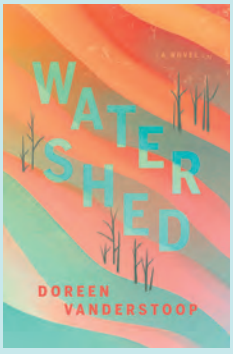

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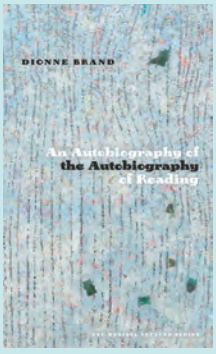

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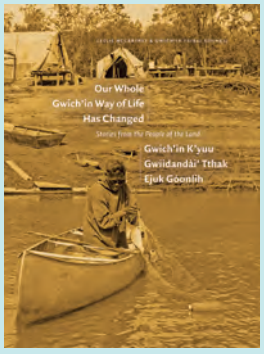

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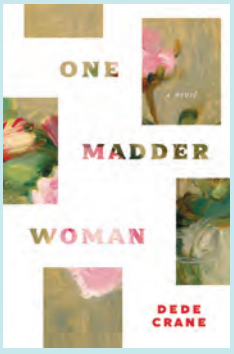

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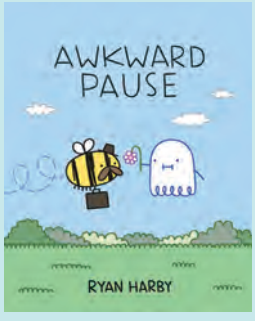

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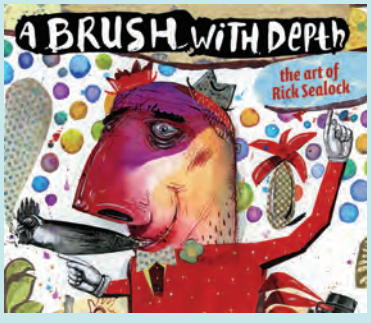

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Breaking down barriers

Refugees struggle to achieve effective parent-teacher collaboration

Rahat Zaidi

Associate Professor, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary

IN 2018, CANADA LAUNCHED the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Initiative, resulting in unprecedented numbers of Arabic-speaking learners entering Canadian classrooms with interrupted or limited prior educational experience. This study explored the barriers refugee parents typically feel in engaging with their children's school.

Focus group meetings uncovered several barriers and challenges to effective parental engagement. Overall, parents felt they did not really understand the role they were to play in the Canadian school system. Of particular note, they felt that Arabic-speaking students were often enrolled in special programs along with other Arabic-speaking students. In their opinion, this impinged on successful integration of their children into mainstream culture and plural cultural identity formation.

Parents' lack of English fluency was also seen as inhibiting their effective participation in home–school communication, supporting their children's academic progress and feeling comfortable in the school.

Furthermore, the concept of parental engagement in their child's school and volunteering was quite foreign to them. In addition, parents' immigration status contributed to their lack of participation. For example, not holding citizenship stymied their ability to undergo a police criminal record check, thereby preventing them from actively volunteering in the school.

The two most common situations where refugee parents were invited (and expected) to be in the school were the formal parent–teacher interview and meetings with the school administration if their child had been involved in a conflict. Parents' engagement here was also restricted by their lack of understanding of the school's culture, and again, language was a large barrier that eroded self-confidence.

The study noted that, as a result of the number of barriers, refugee students and their families often experienced isolation from the school and their community in general. Related to this was the fact that many refugee students and their families do not have reliable access to technology and the internet. Therefore, internet-based technologies such as translation apps, email, educational learning management systems and messaging apps did not always support communication.

Additional barriers to community-based and afterschool programs were lack of transportation, distance from home, later evening programs, busy family schedules and financial stressors. Furthermore, the sheer stress and pressure of the immigrant experience impacted some parents' abilities to engage with the school and support their children's learning.

CONCLUSION

In order to optimize parent–school engagement, the researchers suggest first and foremost that empowerment and building trust is a journey, not a race. Administration, teachers, system supports and families all need to work together to achieve favourable solutions, and it is critical that education systems reflect on how school policies and procedures can unintentionally alienate newcomers. A well-organized program within a school, with clear objectives and goals, and fostering a sustainable partnership between parents and the school are vital pieces that enable the success of newcomer refugee students.

The researchers suggest various strategies that can encourage optimal parent–teacher collaboration. Some examples include providing bi- or multilingual and bi- or multicultural in-school support staff, employing diverse modes of home–school communication, hosting parent–teacher events with interpreters available and developing flexibility in curriculum content approaches. The school also needs to encourage teachers to maximize opportunities to engage parents while recognizing they cannot legally volunteer. As well, school staff should explore ways to increase alternative, informal opportunities for parental engagement.

Additionally, implicit bias training for teachers can help them build a culture of empathy. Also important are supporting teachers with professional time and resources, expanding teaching capacity through professional development and trauma sensitivity training, using an in-school settlement program to welcome families and sharing resources to support best practice.

Everyone wants to be heard and *feel* heard. If all stakeholders work together, we can come to the realization that engagement is a dynamic process that is developed and not born.

For further information about this study, including details about its methodology, contact Dr. Rahat Zaidi at rahat.zaidi@ucalgary.ca.

Acknowledgments

Funded through Alberta Education's Research Partnerships Program, this research project was a collaboration between Christine Oliver from the Calgary Board of Education and Drs. Rahat Zaidi, Tom Strong and Regine King from the University of Calgary. The study received the 2020 ATA Educational Research Award.

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*All tuition reductions, grants, or scholarships are subject to specific eligibility requirements. Contact a Walden University enrollment specialist for details.

Many countries have their own accrediting bodies, and degree recognition differs from country to country. Prospective students who reside outside of the United States are advised to review accreditation requirements for their own country to confirm recognition of their Walden program of choice.

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. ***The Power of Student Agency: Looking Beyond Grit to Close the Opportunity Gap***

This is a collection of first-person narratives by successful people that illustrates the need for teachers to help students take advantage of opportunities in addition to building grit and resilience.

2. ***Beautiful Questions in the Classroom: Transforming Classrooms into Cultures of Curiosity and Inquiry***

The authors demonstrate how teachers can inspire joyful learning by developing beautiful questions for students and allowing students to develop more questions on their own.

3. ***Decoding Autism and Leading the Way to Successful Inclusion***

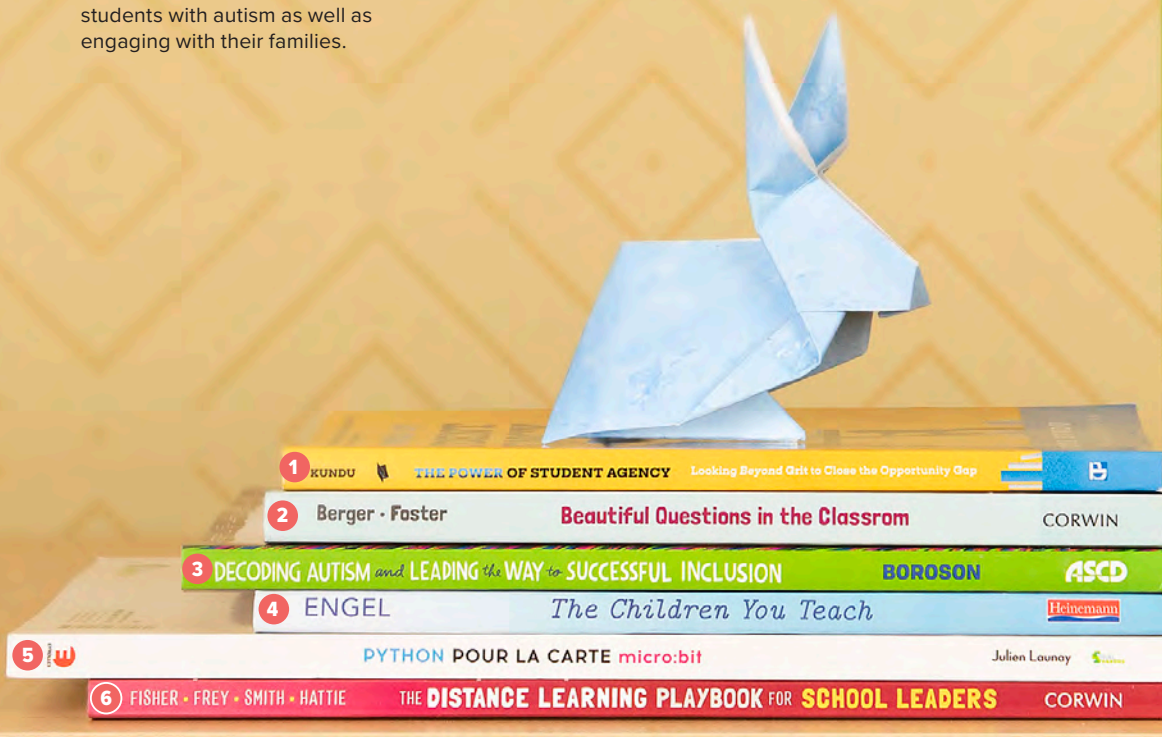
In this holistic examination of autism in the inclusive classroom, author Barbara Boroson shares practical and responsive strategies for understanding and supporting students with autism as well as engaging with their families.

4. ***The Children You Teach: Using a Developmental Framework in the Classroom***

Using real-life examples, author Susan Engel shows teachers how to look at student behaviour through a developmental lens to change what happens in the classroom.

5. ***Python pour la carte micro:bit SNT lycées, mathématiques, sciences***

Deux fois plus petite qu'une carte de crédit et coutant moins de 20 €, la carte micro:bit est un nano-ordinateur pour initier les collégiens au codage et au pilotage de systèmes numériques. Cet ouvrage se concentre sur la programmation de la carte micro:bit avec Python, le langage officiel pour l'enseignement de l'informatique au lycée.



Information provided by ATA librarian Sandra Anderson

Your colleagues recommend

Teachers suggested these reads via Facebook.

Andrew Finlay

I am reading *Building Thinking Classrooms in Mathematics* by Peter Liljedahl. It is changing the way I am thinking of engaging my students in some critical problem solving in math.

Theresa Davidson

I just finished *21 Things You May Not Know about the Indian Act* by Bob Joseph. This one helped to build my understanding of how I can better support reconciliation.

6. ***The Distance Learning Playbook for School Leaders: Leading for Engagement and Impact in Any Setting***

This is a guidebook for principals and vice-principals that spans all aspects of leadership and translates them into working in virtual environments.

7. ***SEL from a Distance: Tools and Processes for Anytime, Anywhere***

Focused on social and emotional learning (SEL), this well-organized book is full of practical tools that can be used virtually or in the in-person classroom.

8. ***Practical Pedagogy: 40 New Ways to Teach and Learn***

Covering new pedagogies such as trans-languaging, crossover learning, teachback, bricolage and rhizomatic learning, this book examines how pedagogies can be adopted in new ways for in-person and remote learning.

9. ***L'école de la Forêt : jeux et apprentissages dans les bois pour aventuriers en herbe***

Les auteurs de ce livre proposent plus de 30 activités et jeux, au fil des saisons, développant les qualités sociales, émotionnelles et cognitives des enfants de 3 à 11 ans, dans le respect de soi, de l'autre et de la nature.

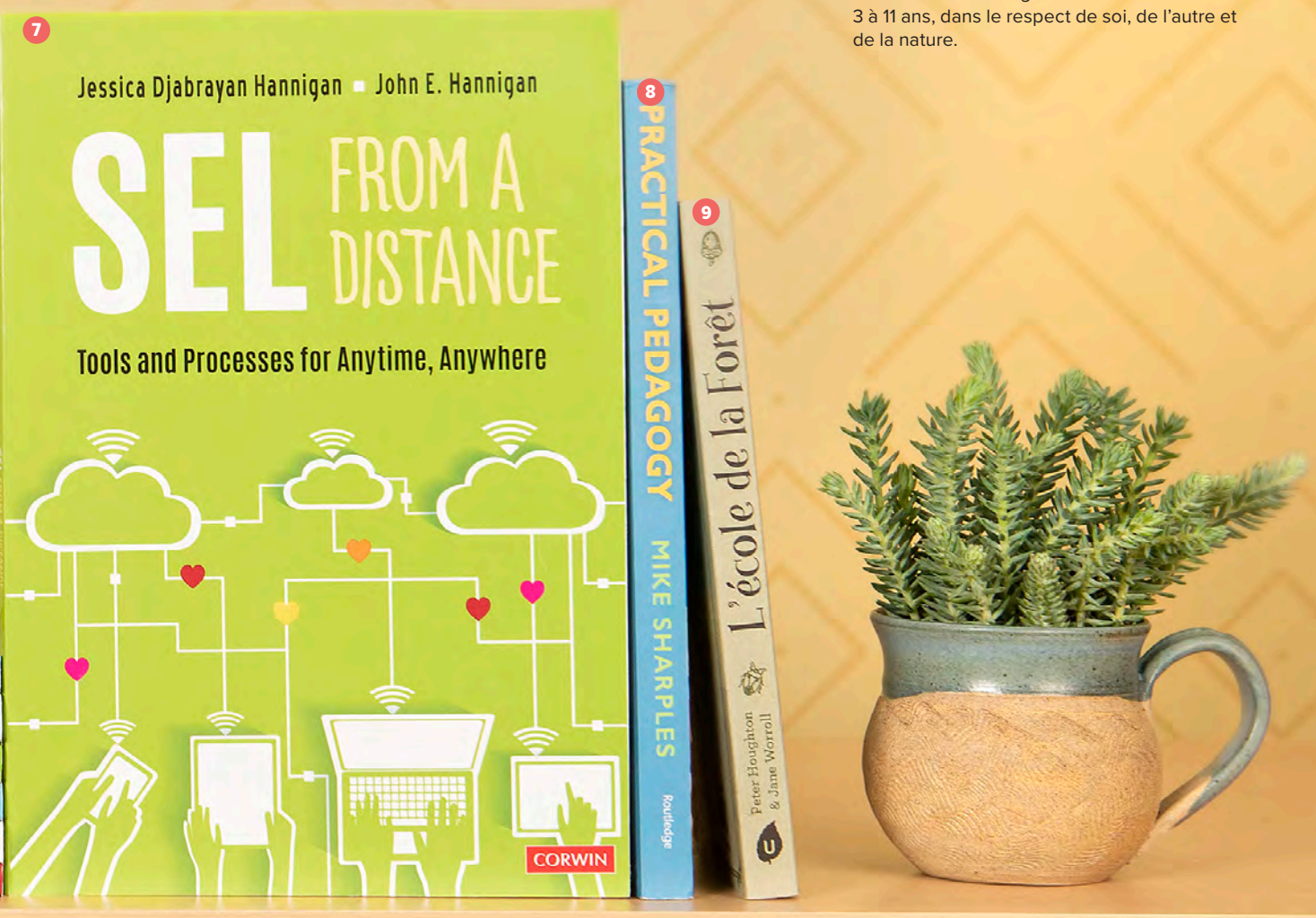


PHOTO BY YUET CHAN

Carolyn Pawelko

I just finished reading *Mankiller: A Chief and Her People* by Wilma Mankiller and Michael Wallis. What a great biography of the first duly elected female Principal Chief of the Cherokee People, the constant struggles she faced against racism, sexism, health issues, and still she worked tirelessly throughout her lifetime to make things better for her nation.

Scott Carey

Hustle and Float by Rahaf Hargoush. This book looks at our obsession with being overworked and how we are still tied to outdated metrics of productivity and success that were born in the industrial revolution that not only don't work, but can be counter-productive in a knowledge economy. The title is based on a river paddling analogy where sometimes you need to hustle on the river to avoid obstacles and keep afloat, but sometimes you just need to float and let the river do the work.

What graphic novels do you recommend for students?

A Girl Called Echo!

All three volumes of *A Girl Called Echo!* We are using this series as a novel study and entry point into Métis education in Grade 7.

Chelsea Strachan

Moonshot: The Indigenous Comics Collection

This is a three-volume collection of stories from Indigenous authors and artists from across North America. The short stories range in topics and the artwork is amazing! Published in Canada.

Cameron Campos

The Wizard of Oz

The Marvel version of *The Wizard of Oz* based on the original book. It has way more fairy-tale elements than the movie!

Dan Grassick

The Usagi Yojimbo series

The Usagi Yojimbo series is vast in scope, thoughtful and thought-provoking. The books are also exciting page-turners. It has a LOT to offer as an addition to a school's young adult graphic novel library: vendetta, nemesis, shame, love, friendship, betrayal and much more.

Peter MacKay

Cells at Work!

It presents the human body as a city, the various cells in the body as different types of anthropomorphic city workers and the different bacteria, viruses, etc. as invaders that the immune system cells have to battle. It uses anime/manga tropes to present a ton of fairly accurate scientific information in a pretty fun way, so it might be useful for some of the lessons on the immune system and body function.

Hristina Zhekova

Wonder Woman: Tempest Tossed

This graphic novel by Laurie Halse Anderson is lovely — all about encountering injustice in the world, finding your voice and using it to make a difference. My Grade 9s loved it.

Silpi Das-Collins

When Stars Are Scattered

This book would be appropriate for grades 4+. It outlines the life of brothers in a Kenyan refugee camp and the daily hardships they face. When one brother is granted an opportunity, he must make some difficult decisions. This book creates conversational space for our global refugee crisis. As an Alberta teacher who has the privilege of teaching our newcomers to Canada, I have been changed by similar stories of extraordinary resilience and strength.

Yvette Lowen

PHOTO BY YUET CHAN

Teacher recommendations gathered through Facebook

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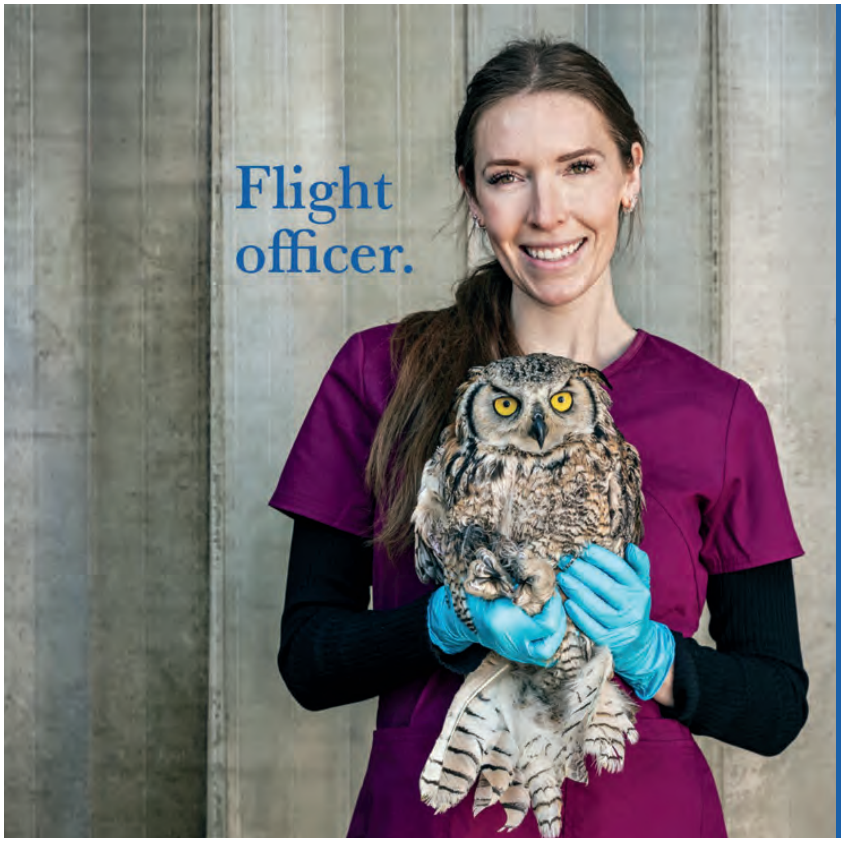

As wise as they appear, owls are not the brightest of birds. When they fly into trouble, Jade Murphy comes to the rescue with help from Edmonton Community Foundation. A lifelong lover of nature, Jade divides her time at WILDNorth between caring and commerce; ensuring the funding that protects Edmonton's wildlife.

Donations to ECF inspire hope, create opportunity and enhance the Edmonton lifestyle. We work with our donors to give, grow and transform. ecfoundation.org gives a hoot.

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Highlighting ATA programs and resources

Including inclusion in members' learning journey

NEW RESOURCE SERIES: *COMMON THREADS FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION*

The Association, in collaboration with its Council for Inclusive Education, has developed *Common Threads for Inclusive Education*, a new resource series to support the implementation of the Teaching Quality Standard (TQS) and the Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) specific to inclusive education. These resources support teachers on their learning journey to inclusive education competency by providing background information, teaching strategies and further resources on a variety of topics.

The first resource in the series, *Professional Growth Resources*, provides a broad understanding of inclusive education and points readers to many valuable resources to support professional learning. The other publications in the series address specific topics related to inclusive education:

- Learning disabilities
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Parent collaboration
- Understanding challenging behaviours
- High ability and gifted students
- Student assessment in an inclusive classroom
- Emotional and mental health

All of these resources serve as entry points to further learning.

Common Threads resources are available on the ATA website at My ATA > Professional Development > Inclusive Education > Building Professional Capacity.

Check the site regularly, as more resources for this new series continue to be developed and posted! Even better—all of the *Common Threads* resources will be available in French!

For further information, contact Melissa Purcell, executive staff officer, at melissa.purcell@ata.ab.ca or 1-800-232-7208, ext. 497.

ESTABLISHING INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS FACILITATOR GUIDE

Also available is the *Establishing Inclusive Learning Environments* facilitator guide, which supports principals and professional development leaders as they work collaboratively with school staff to develop professional competency for inclusive education as outlined in the TQS and LQS. The guide—and accompanying PowerPoint presentation—outlines professional learning activities that complement the *Common Threads for Inclusive Education* resources series.

Focused on extending members' learning related to inclusive education, this facilitator's guide includes 21 activities that connect to such topics as bullying prevention and supporting immigrant and refugee students.

The facilitator guide is available on the ATA website at My ATA > Professional Development > Inclusive Education > Collaborative Professional Learning Activities.

FOR MORE ON INCLUSION

ATA Library Guide

The ATA Library provides a guide to print materials in the library and web-based resources that support diversity and inclusion. Topics include inclusive education, gifted students, differentiated instruction, disabilities, learning disabilities, ADHD, autism spectrum disorder, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, dyslexia, dyspraxia, open access journals and universal design for learning.

Professional Development Workshops

The ATA offers workshops on such inclusive education topics as Creating Inclusive Learning Environments; Unseen Hurts: Promoting Positive Mental Health in Alberta Schools; Addressing Diverse Learning Needs in Classrooms; PRISM—Professionals Respecting Individual and Sexual Minorities; Indigenous Ways of Knowing; and Here Comes Everyone—Teaching in the Culturally Diverse Classroom (EN/FR).

Creating a Compassionate Classroom

Produced by the ATA, the Canadian Mental Health Association and Global Television to help build awareness of the "Healthy Minds. Bright Futures." program, *Creating a Compassionate Classroom* provides teachers with information on common mental health issues, tools to help identify students in need and resources to help teachers make referrals to mental health professionals.

Pleins feux sur les programmes et ressources de l'ATA

Notamment sur l'inclusion dans le parcours d'apprentissage des membres

NOUVELLE SÉRIE DE RESSOURCES : *FILS CONDUCTEURS EN ÉDUCATION INCLUSIVE*

En collaboration avec le conseil de spécialistes, *Council for Inclusive Education*, une nouvelle série de ressources, *Fils conducteurs en éducation inclusive*, a été élaborée afin de faciliter la mise en œuvre de la *Norme de qualité pour l'enseignement* (NQE) et de la *Norme de qualité pour le leadership scolaire* (NQLS) quant à l'éducation inclusive. Ces ressources fournissent aux enseignants des informations de base, des stratégies d'enseignement et une liste de ressources supplémentaires directement liées aux sujets abordés facilitant ainsi tout au long de leur parcours d'apprentissage le développement de la compétence en matière d'éducation inclusive.

La première ressource de la série, *Ressources destinées au perfectionnement professionnel*, permet de mieux comprendre l'éducation inclusive en général, et dirige les lecteurs vers un grand nombre de précieuses ressources propices à l'apprentissage professionnel. Quant aux autres numéros, ils abordent des thèmes directement liés à l'éducation inclusive :

- Troubles d'apprentissage
- Trouble du spectre de l'autisme
- Collaboration avec les parents
- Comprendre les comportements difficiles
- Élèves à haut potentiel et doués
- Évaluation des élèves dans une classe inclusive
- Santé émotionnelle et mentale

Chaque ressource est conçue pour être le point de départ de tout apprentissage ultérieur.

La série de ressources *Fils conducteurs* est disponible sur le site de l'ATA : About > Services en français > Ressources thématiques > Éducation inclusive.

Consultez le site régulièrement car de nouvelles ressources vont bientôt y être ajoutées.

Pour plus de renseignements, veuillez contacter Melissa Purcell, Executive Staff Officer, à melissa.purcell@ata.ab.ca ou au 1-800-232-7208, poste 497.

GUIDE DE L'ANIMATEUR : *ÉTABLIR DES ENVIRONNEMENTS D'APPRENTISSAGE INCLUSIFS*

Le guide de l'animateur, *Établir des environnements d'apprentissage inclusifs*, est aussi disponible mais uniquement en anglais. Il aide les directeurs d'école et les leadeurs en perfectionnement professionnel à travailler en collaboration avec le personnel scolaire pour développer des compétences professionnelles en matière d'éducation inclusive telles que décrites dans la NQE et la NQLS. Le guide et la présentation PowerPoint qui l'accompagne donnent un aperçu des activités d'apprentissage professionnel qui complètent à merveille la série de ressources *Fils conducteurs en éducation inclusive*.

Centré sur le développement des connaissances des membres en matière d'éducation inclusive, le guide de l'animateur comprend 21 activités liées à des sujets tels que la prévention de l'intimidation et le soutien aux élèves immigrants et réfugiés.

Vous le trouverez sur le site de l'ATA : My ATA > Professional Development > Inclusive Education > Collaborative Professional Learning Activities.

POUR EN SAVOIR PLUS SUR L'INCLUSION

Guides de la bibliothèque de l'ATA

La bibliothèque de l'ATA dispose d'un catalogue regroupant les documents imprimés de la bibliothèque et des ressources en ligne qui valorisent et encouragent la diversité et l'inclusion. L'éducation inclusive, les élèves doués, l'enseignement différencié, les déficiences, les troubles de l'apprentissage, le TDAH, le trouble du spectre autistique, le trouble du spectre de l'alcoolisation fœtale, la dyslexie, la dyspraxie, les revues en libre accès et la conception universelle de l'apprentissage figurent parmi les sujets recensés dans le catalogue.

Ateliers de perfectionnement professionnel

L'ATA offre des ateliers sur des sujets directement liés à l'éducation inclusive tels *Creating Inclusive Learning environments; Unseen Hurts: Promoting Positive Mental Health in Alberta Schools; Addressing Diverse Learning Needs in Classrooms;* PRISME—Trousse d'outils pour créer un espace protégé propice aux discussions sur les minorités sexuelles; *Indigenous Ways of Knowing;* et Ici, tout le monde est le bienvenu—Enseigner dans une classe interculturelle.

Empathie et bienveillance à l'école

Produit par l'ATA en collaboration avec l'Association canadienne pour la santé mentale et *Global Television* dans le but de faire connaitre le programme « Bonne santé mentale. Avenir brillant. » cet ouvrage de référence fournit aux enseignants des renseignements relatifs aux problèmes de santé mentale les plus courants, des outils pour identifier les élèves ayant besoin de soutien, ainsi que des ressources qui les aideront à orienter ces élèves vers des professionnels de la santé mentale.

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Creative colleagues

Teachers are actively creative when they aren't teaching. Some write books. Others produce podcasts, create art or make music. Here's a collection of works produced by colleagues who are "out there."

BOOKS

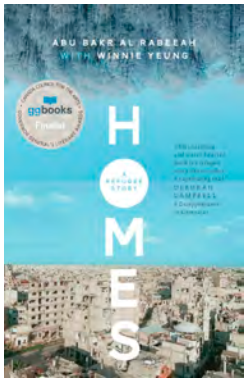
The Fly In The Pie

A charming children's story about a young fly who gets stuck in a "very berry lovely cherry yummy berry" pie. Will the spider get his fly pie?! Delightfully detailed and vibrant illustrations by Miguel Angel Gonzalez from Spain.

LESLIE DAVIES

Retired principal
(Calgary Catholic School District)
lesliedavies181@yahoo.ca

Self-published, 2018
Available by email to author



Homes: A Refugee Story

Edmonton teacher Winnie Yeung created this story based on interviews with a student, Abu Bakr al Rabeeah, a refugee from Syria. The result is a remarkable, eye-opening and moving true story of how one young boy lived through a war zone in Syria and ultimately found safety with his family in Edmonton. A finalist for CBC's Canada Reads and the Governor General's Literary Award.

WINNIE YEUNG

Highlands School, Edmonton

Freehand Books

▶ **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.

PODCAST/SOCIAL MEDIA

The Science Pawdcast

Red Deer science teacher Jason Zackowski hosts a podcast called *The Science Pawdcast* and uses Twitter to share educational videos starring his two dogs Bunsen Berner and Beaker, "the science dogs." (They have more than 82,000 Twitter followers.)

JASON ZACKOWSKI

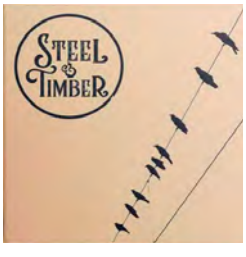
Lindsay Thurber High School, Red Deer

Twitter: @bunsenbernerbmd

uLead Podcast

The *uLead Podcast* is produced by the Council for School Leadership of the Alberta Teachers' Association. Recent episodes have included "The Importance of Play" with Dr. Pasi Sahlberg and "Digital Wellbeing" with Dr. Michael Rich. The podcast is available through a variety of platforms such as Spotify and Stitcher.

MUSIC



Steel & Timber

Featuring teacher Nathan Harris-Thompson on banjo and lead vocals, Calgary band Steel & Timber released a self-titled album in the spring of 2021. The album is the band's third, following *Everything you Own* in 2017 and *Home Brew* in 2015.

A YYC Music Award nominee, the band is a blend of country, roots and folk rock influenced by bands like the Black Keys, the Avett Brothers, Johnny Cash and Jack White. They are popular in Calgary's music venues, farmers markets and community events.

NATHAN HARRIS-THOMPSON

Rainbow Creek Elementary, Chestermere

https://www.facebook.com/SteelTimber

www.steel-and-timber.com

PHOTOS BY YUET CHAN

Like a rolling stone

Principal makes her mark by embracing change … and connection

Cory Hare

Managing Editor, *ATA Magazine*

FIRST, LET'S GET THE CLICHÉS out of the way.

A rolling stone gathers no moss. There's a certain something about people from Saskatchewan. Everything you need to know about teaching, you can learn by teaching kindergarten.

OK, maybe some of those aren't exactly clichés, but they're close, and there is definitely one thing they do have in common: they apply to Terri Lynn Guimond, principal of St. Peter the Apostle Catholic High School in Spruce Grove.

Born in Saskatoon, Guimond had seven other Saskatchewan home towns on her way to graduating high school in Rosetown. Such was life for the family of a bank manager.

And throughout her teaching career, Guimond has worn almost as many hats.

"I always joke, if I ever write a book it's going to be called *How a Kindergarten Teacher Becomes a Principal of a High School*," she says.

In her youth, moving around a lot enabled Guimond to develop the skill of forming relationships quickly.

"There were teachers that really helped me to be successful with all of those transitions," she says.

Her own venture into teaching was natural. Her grandmother was a teacher and Guimond herself felt called to the profession from an early age.

"I don't ever, ever, ever remember wanting to be anything else other than a teacher," she says.

Following her BEd degree at the University of Alberta, Guimond landed her first teaching assignment at Father Gerard Redmond Community Catholic School in Hinton. It was Grade 3.

She continued the rolling stone approach she grew up with, switching the next year to Grade 1 — a four-year stint. She then taught kindergarten in Stony Plain and Spruce Grove — six years. And on it went until she joined administration 14 years into her career.

"I've always been really open to any opportunity that's been presented to me and I've never limited myself," she says.

'A CERTAIN SPARKLE'

As a teacher, Guimond brought a special combination of creative ideas and positive energy that gave her "a certain sparkle," says her former teaching partner Sandy Richinski.

"I just remember the first time I met her in the hallways … and just thinking, wow, what a lovely person," Richinski recalls. "I think it's because we're both from Saskatchewan."

Richinski and Guimond went on to be kindergarten teaching partners for several years, co-planning lessons and always collaborating.

TERRI LYNN GUIMOND: ROLLING STONE

"Home town"	# of years
Saskatoon (born)	2
Nipiwin	0.5
Wynyard	3
Carrot River	3
North Battleford	1
Estevan	4
Tisdale	4
Rosetown (graduated)	1

Teaching assignment	# of years
Grade 3	1
Grade 1	4
Kindergarten	6
Grade 4	1
Inclusive education co-ordinator/learning assistance program teacher	2
Assistant principal	5
Principal	4

ON THE MOVE WITH

Terri Lynn Guimond

How many times have you moved houses since you began teaching?
Not nearly as many as I did growing up — only five.

When you retire, do you plan to stay put or keep moving?
I have made roots here in this wonderful community. I think we will stay put, but travel.

Do you have a saying or adage that you use regularly?
Choose kindness.

What has surprised you most about being an administrator?
The principal is by far the barometer of the school. If the principal sneezes the entire school gets a cold. I don't think I realized this until I became a principal. It is so true.

What is the biggest misconception that teachers have about administrators?
That the work is more difficult. I maintain that there is no way my job is more difficult than that of a classroom teacher — it is just different.

Some of the ideas that Guimond brought forward became entrenched traditions, such as marking the end of kindergarten, not with a graduation ceremony, but with a student-performed circus.

"She has an aura. There's something around her that just brightens everything up," Richinski says.

Guimond says that her tenure as a kindergarten teacher was very influential.

"My time teaching in kindergarten really made me realize what was important about teaching and learning," she says, crediting Richinski for helping her take her teaching to another level.

"She taught me so much about seeing students as individual little people. She taught me how to see them and bring out their gifts."

Deputy superintendent Dave Dempsey knows Guimond both as an administrator and as a parent, as two of his kids went through her class.

"They're well into their 20s and professionals now and they still remember her classroom as a really joyful place to be and a place where they could actually take risks … and where they were embraced for who they were," he says.

As an administrator, Guimond is humble but has a natural ability to draw people to her and is exceptionally strong in gathering consensus to move her school forward, Dempsey says.

"She always understands that she's starting with students and learning, and looking at where she wants students to be at the end of their career as students," Dempsey said. "That, probably more than any principal I've ever met, she brings in spades."

WHAT NEXT?

There's a sign in Guimond's office that reads "It always seems impossible until it is done." She got the sign in anticipation of a challenging 2020/21 school year, but it could also be a fitting motto for her own career, which has been marked by a variety of opportunities being suggested to her rather than her seeking them out.

Guimond is currently exploring PhD options and a research fellowship, but she's not sure what her future holds and doesn't see her current role as a means to advancing to something else.

"I'm focused on the work that I need to do here right now," she says, "and I don't want my staff to ever feel like they're a stepping stone for anything."

Fair enough. But there's clearly one more cliché to deal with here: When opportunity knocks, answer the door.

"Our profession has allowed me to have so many different careers within it," Guimond says. "When opportunities happen, that's when I think about it."

▶ **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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Welcome to the profession

Seasoned veterans dish out their best advice for first-year teachers

Annie Forney

Find time to laugh and really appreciate the moments that naturally happen when you get to spend your day with kids. Enjoy what you do.

Sheena McNiff-Wolfe

Recognize that you are part of a team — in the classroom with your students, with staff — some of whom will take you under their wings. Accept your collaborative role in this. Welcome the kindness and support and return it as well by contributing and sharing the workload, giving back and showing your appreciation! It will follow you throughout your career.

Melissa Pearson

There will always be more work than time. Prioritize those things that are urgent and important, plan what is important but not urgent, and don't worry too much about the rest of it. It doesn't have to be perfect — you'll be a much happier teacher if you aren't burnt out. You got this!

Hermina Brown

You are going to make mistakes. Own them, apologize (this includes to adults and students) and move on.

Conal Donovan

Access your colleagues for resources so you don't have to constantly reinvent the wheel, though think critically about resources before inserting them into your instruction and assessment practices. Only reinvent wheels where your passions, strengths and student needs lie, but don't spend seven nights a week until 11 p.m. for a year as many of us did.

Be honest with your admin about your struggles, as we have all been there, and no good administrator will hold that against you or see it as weakness. We are glad to have you!

Karen Draycott

1) Admin assistants, custodians and librarians are going to be your most treasured allies! Make sure to treat them like gold.

2) Build those positive connections with parents, so when you need to make those other phone calls you have already started a relationship.

Courtney Kuyltjes

Set boundaries. It sounds so easy, but when you really take the time to turn off your email notifications, to put down the lesson planning or grading, you are taking care of your well-being and it goes a long way. The hardest part though: not feeling guilty that you too are human and deserve to take time to step away from the job.

Miya Abe

More hours at school and at work do not equate to better teaching. Focus on teaching and relationships, not working yourself to the bone.

And to go along with that, set boundaries. It's easy to work in a silo, try to please everyone and do everything. Do what makes you happy, and remember you're not everything to everyone.

Richard Grafton

Fill your own cup. If you teach it, you have to still live it. For me, as a high school theatre teacher, I'm involved in the community theatre in our city. It's the best PD for me! Whatever you're teaching, make sure you're still learning it/living it.

Kae McFadzen

Visit classrooms, ask questions, set boundaries and keep student expectations high. It gets easier. I also wish I had kept a journal of the crazy teaching things that happened.

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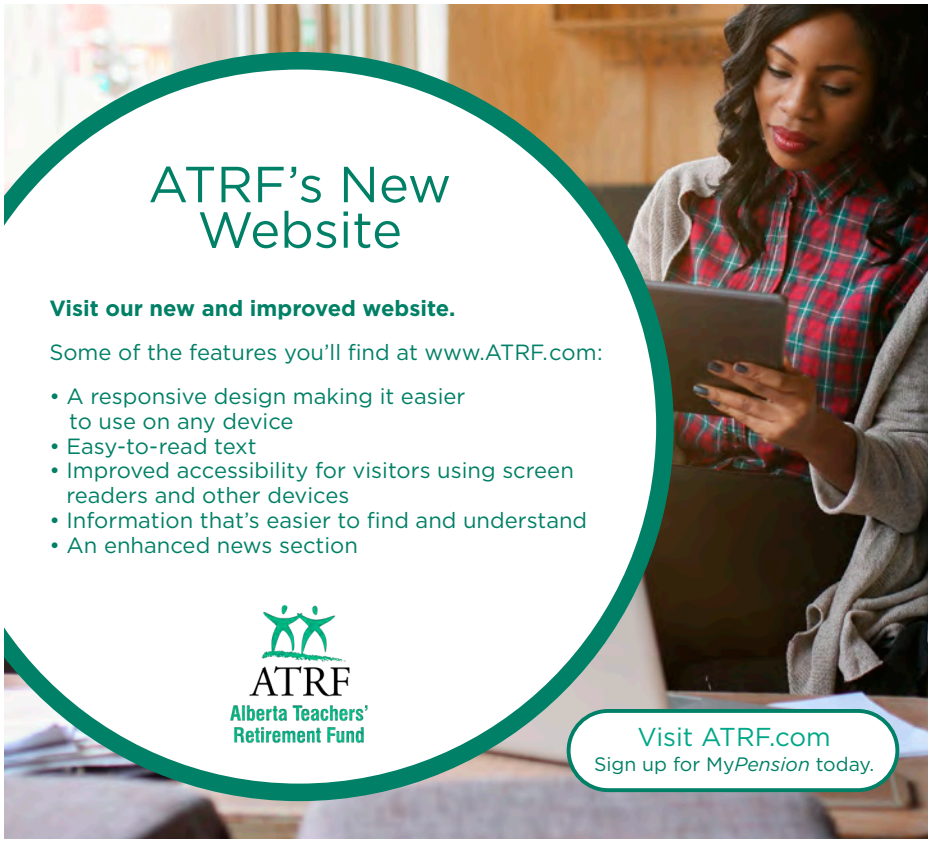

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Put that grin in the bin!

Smile Box generates stories and connection

Joanne Murphy

Grade 6, High Prairie Elementary School, High Prairie

I TEACH GRADE 6 ONLINE for my division this year.

When I was teaching in class, we had a "Smile Box" where kids could leave uplifting notes to others in the class. Then, every Friday, we would congregate to share the notes with each other. This also turned into some storytelling as the notes often had a story behind them.

Teaching online, I created a "Smile Box" class in my Google Classroom where the kids can make uplifting posts. We have had beautifully created slide presentations, videos, family pictures, drawings, songs … it has turned out to be a real connection maker online as well! The kids always tell me when they have posted a smile, looking forward to our sharing time.

My division allows kids to transfer in or out of online learning on a quarterly basis. The kids moving out have asked if I could keep them in our Smile Box classroom. I have. They still post wonderfully uplifting words. Sometimes it is simply a hello and I miss you! But whatever any of my kids leave in the posts, it puts a smile in everyone's hearts!

> **"The kids always tell me when they have posted a smile, looking forward to our sharing time."**

▶ **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.

Give me a C! Give me an A!

Cheerleader moment provides motivation and lasting memory

Joni Turville

ATA Associate Executive Secretary, (As told to Jen Janzen, Staff Writer, *ATA Magazine*)

ILLUSTRATION BY ERIN SOLANO

THE CHALLENGE
How to help a student focus and complete a doable task.

I WAS TEACHING IN A congregated classroom with students from grades 4, 5 and 6 who had a variety of learning needs. During one lesson a particular student was having a hard time focusing. I can't even recall what he was working on, but it was something that he could do, and he was just having a bit of trouble concentrating and getting it done.

I always encouraged the class to be cheerleaders for each other. I used to be a cheerleader in high school, and I actually kept a set of pom-poms in my desk. Every once in awhile, when kids were struggling, I'd pull out the pom-poms and we'd do a cheer.

On this particular day, when this student was struggling, I told him, "you have three sentences left. If you can get them done in the next 10 minutes, I'm going to move the desks and do a cartwheel right here in the middle of the classroom."

Of course, all the kids thought it would be hilarious to see their teacher do this, so he finished what he needed to do without further prompting.

> "I surveyed the faces of the students who were awaiting my next move and heard them cheering me on."

Though I was pretty sure my promise would be motivation enough for him to engage in the task, I hadn't thought through the rest of the scenario. I suddenly remembered I had a pair of platform shoes on and wasn't sure if I should take them off. It had also been a long while since I'd done a cartwheel and I thought about whether or not I'd actually be able to do it. And what if my principal walked in?

I surveyed the faces of the students who were awaiting my next move and heard them cheering me on. True to my word, I cleared all the desks out of the middle of the classroom, kicked off my shoes and executed a cartwheel … just one … without preamble or commentary.

I hadn't anticipated how hard this would make everyone laugh, including me. The most hilarious thing was, for years afterward, whenever I saw any of those former students, they always said "do you remember the time you did a cartwheel in the middle of the classroom?"

It just goes to show that a teacher can never underestimate the power of a good surprise.

▶ **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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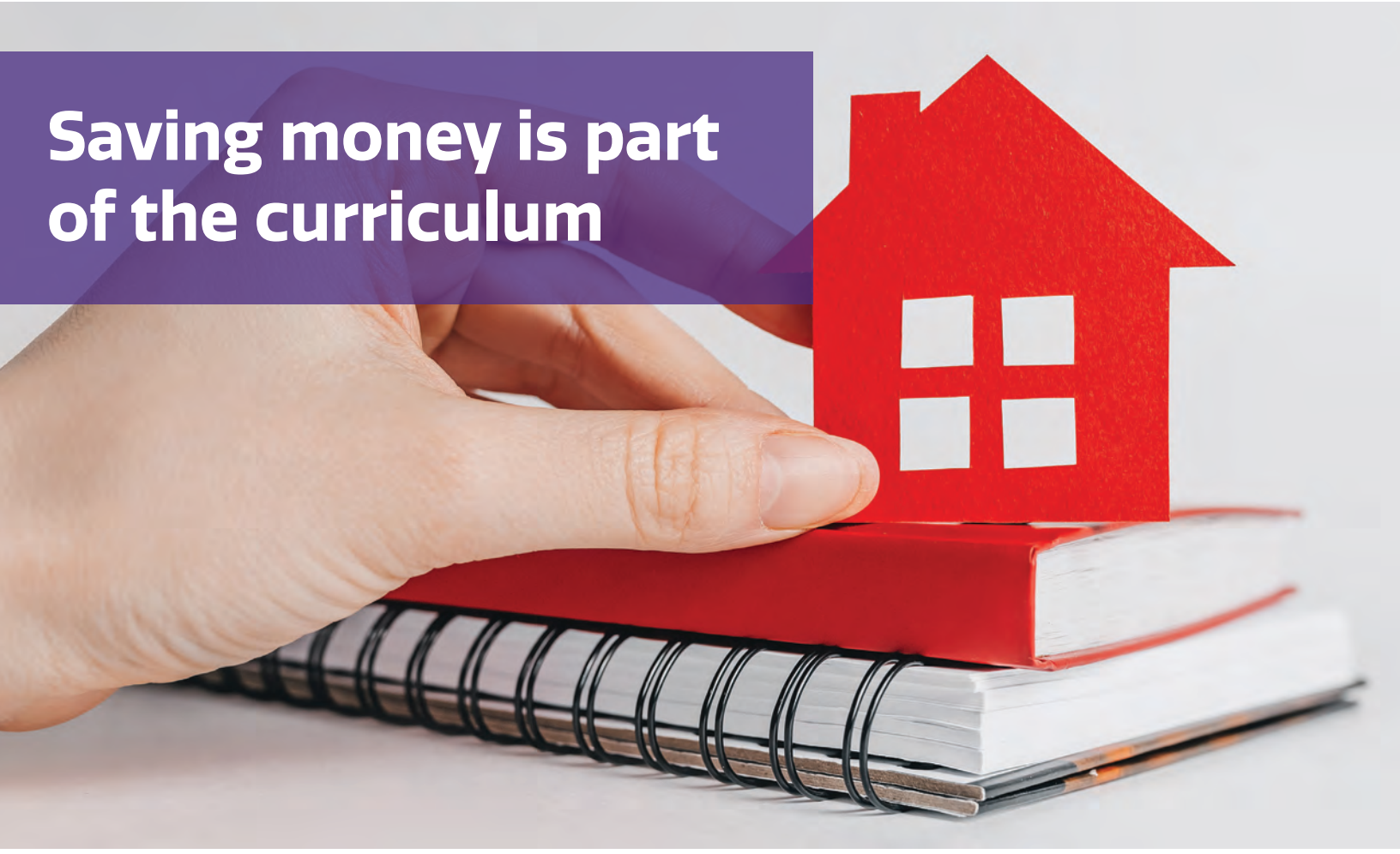

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