

Principal Jennifer Gorkoff of Jack James High School celebrates the unveiling of a Pride crosswalk with students Maxx, Percy and Damien on Aug. 25. It's the Calgary Board of Education's first permanent Pride crosswalk.

BRYAN WEISMILLER



FOCUS ON CURRICULUM

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Strong curriculum helps battle disinformation



EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

For many of us, the pandemic has allowed for some new and sometimes difficult realizations about people in our social circles.

Many of the issues we've faced have been complex and uncertain, and as a result many of the conversations have been divisive. Discovering that a cousin, an in-law or a long-time friend holds concerning viewpoints can be quite troubling. It is particularly troubling when you can clearly see that their problematic opinions are being informed by bad information and noncredible sources.

Much has been said about how the pandemic of COVID-19 is accompanied by a pandemic of disinformation.

I was recently sent a link to a website that purported to be from an alliance of independent doctors, scientists and other health-care experts. Yet there was no About Us page, and not a single one of these so-called experts had put their name to the information on it.

There were a ton of red flags that left me questioning the credibility of the information on that site. Yet it was a well-designed and professional-looking

site. It was clear to me that this site was intended to mislead and misinform, and it was doing a very good job of that.

Not unlike what I learned in my childhood about the North American house hippo.

The people who are reading, believing and passing along this disinformation are being duped. It is easy to be upset and angry at our loved ones who share these outrageous views, but I've come to realize that they are actually victims.

“ One of the most important things we can do as educators is to arm young people with the skills and competencies they need in order to critically process, analyze and evaluate the information they read and see. ”

This realization makes me think about our curriculum.

The Internet can be a wealth of information—but also a lode of disinformation. One of the most important things we can do as educators is to arm young people with the skills and competencies they need in order to critically process, analyze and evaluate the information they read and see.

A curriculum that focuses too much on memorizing long lists of disparate, decontextualized facts and knowledge is not what our students need.

To be clear, I am not arguing that we should stop teaching particular key concepts and foundational pieces of knowledge. Rather, we must enhance the development of those essential learnings by adding in higher-order competencies that empower students to think critically about all the information

website (<http://alberta-curriculum-analysis.ca>), Barbara Brown and Michele Jacobsen, from the University of Calgary, argue that “specific reference to digital literacies and digital competencies must be included in the literacy progressions in a modern curriculum, especially if Alberta children are to learn how to navigate, evaluate and create knowledge in this post-truth era in which disinformation, appeals to emotion and fake news proliferates.”

They point out numerous problems with the draft curriculum related to insufficient digital literacies. Their conclusion: “This draft curriculum takes us back decades in failing to adequately consider learning technologies, digital literacy and digital competencies for Alberta children.”

The issue of disinformation on the Internet does not start or end with COVID-19. But the trend of producing and believing bad information has been accelerated. Those who are willing to misuse and abuse others through disinformation have learned a lot about how easy and powerful it can be. The tactic will now infect other areas of society: community, economic and political spheres.

So, when it comes to digital literacy and critical thinking, we must make sure that we get it right and that we get it right now. ■

I welcome your comments. Contact me at jonathan.teghtmeyer@ata.ab.ca.

they receive. Application, analysis and synthesis are much more important and can only be realized when students have time to work with content instead of a Trivial Pursuit approach in which one bit of content is quickly memorized before moving on to the next.

Analysis of the draft K-6 curriculum suggests that this is lacking.

On the Alberta Curriculum Analysis

ATA policy supports vaccination



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive Secretary

Question: With school returning in the midst of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, what is the Association's position on vaccination?

Answer: Let me preface this answer by encouraging any readers who have not yet been fully vaccinated for COVID-19 to get both their shots as soon as they are able. Vaccination is effective in reducing the spread of the virus in the community, decreasing the potential that one will contract or transmit an infection, and, in the event that one is infected, preventing serious, life-altering or life-threatening symptoms. All credible medical experts, including infectious disease specialist Dr. Lynora Saxinger, who has generously provided independent medical advice to the Association since the earliest days of the pandemic, agree that vaccination is the best way to protect oneself, as well

as one's family, friends, students and the larger community.

The Association's position with respect to vaccination was set out by the Annual Representative Assembly over several years and forms part of our policy as set out in the *Members' Handbook*:

2.2.11.10 The Government of Alberta should require all K-12 students, without exception, who attend schools that receive public funds to be vaccinated. [2018]

2.2.11.11 The Government of Alberta should provide on-site, voluntary influenza vaccinations at no cost to all teachers, school staff and students. [2018]

2.2.11.12 The Government of Alberta should require all staff, except those presenting valid medical exemptions, who work in publicly funded K-12 schools and district sites that receive public funds to be vaccinated. [2019, 2020]

24.2.6.7 The Government of Alberta should require school authorities to help the Alberta Health Services

Board implement vaccination programs and other mandated population health initiatives by

1. distributing information about the initiatives to students, staff, parents and the school community;
2. providing health care personnel with access to students and staff; and
3. allowing their facilities to be used for delivering the initiatives, provided that the provincial government covers all associated costs. [2009]

While these policies do not specifically address the COVID-19 pandemic, taken together they establish a strong disposition in favour of mandating vaccinations for teachers and students.

The Association has not been aggressively promoting mandatory vaccination in the calls we have made to government to ensure a safe return to school. Our policy is aspirational, and, at least at this point, we believe that implementation needs to be done in a fashion that encourages participation rather than alienating teachers, staff

and students (as well as the responsible parents of students).

Furthermore, in the absence of clear leadership by the Government of Alberta, we are attempting to convince school boards, employers and municipalities to implement a broader range of policies to contain the spread of the pandemic, including mandatory masking, surveillance testing, intensive cleaning and enhanced HVAC measures, as well as supporting voluntary vaccination programs delivered in schools. This broader approach is particularly necessary and important in elementary grades, where children do not yet have the opportunity to obtain an approved vaccine.

Please note that the situation continues to be fluid. As the pandemic, legislation and employer policies evolve, the Association will continue to monitor and communicate to members. Oh, and if I haven't been clear, get your vaccination. ■

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



YOUR VIEWS

ON TWITTER

On the speech by Hayley Wickenheiser (@wick_22) to Summer Conference (#ATASumCon)

Genevieve Payeur @Payeurteach
Listening to @wick_22 with my sports kids and we all got this takeaway – do your role well (become the expert in your position) and your whole team will benefit.

Carmen Glossop @carmenglossop
What an amazing way to end #ATASumCon. Listening to Hayley Wickenheiser speak is always so inspiring. Thank you @wick_22 for all that you do, how you give back and for your supporting words. Grow your Joy Bubble!

Suzanne Aessie @SuzanneAessie
What an absolute privilege to hear @wick_22 during the #ATASumCon. She is so inspiring and encouraging and I love her personal journey! Fantastic words of wisdom at the end of a fantastic conference.

Danielle Girard @MrsDGirard
“Pressure is a privilege.” Thank you @wick_22 at #ATASumCon! You are a Canadian icon and true role model!

Allison McCaffrey @allimc456
What a great way to end two amazing days of learning. Thanks @wick_22 for being such an advocate for teachers.

Janel Winslow Sherwin @Jane_WinsSher
There is something deeply emotional about having someone you’ve respected

and admired for years (a personal hero) recognizing and honouring the work you do, recognizing your work and what you’ve gone through the past year and a half.

Melanie Golding @golding_melanie
Listening to @wick_22 speak and advocate for teachers and students during COVID makes my teacher heart full and happy.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thanks for all you do

Re: ATA News article “It’s not bullying; it’s courage” (June 15, 2021)

I just read Lindsay’s article mentioned above. Please pass on to Lindsay what a fantastic article that was and thanks for sharing it. People have no idea what teachers do and how much they care. I retired last year, and when I see the passion and energy and caring of the teachers of today, I am in awe.

Please thank them for sharing. (It’s not like they didn’t have something else they could be doing.) Wow!

Lynne Erickson
Retired

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

FOR THE RECORD

“This year may be the breaking point for many.”

– Mary Lynn Maher, teacher commenting on Facebook on the ATA’s ongoing study of compassion fatigue.



Let’s focus on recovery and the joy of learning

VIEWPOINTS



Jason Schilling
ATA President

The last school year was challenging and disruptive for everyone working and learning in schools. As schools were dealing with the roller-coaster of isolations and quarantines, I kept hearing about learning loss and how it was a major concern for education stakeholders. Though I firmly agree that this last year was troublesome, I am concerned that the phrase “learning loss” can be used in a negative light.

The cynic in me can see *learning loss* being used as a way to blame teachers or schools for perceived shortfalls (as though the effects of the pandemic and lack of planning by the government were in their control).

We need to resist the desire by some to introduce extra standardized testing or other short-term fixes as a means to fill the gap. Our students and teachers are coming back to school after a year and a half of giving up many of the parts of school that brought them joy and happiness. Instead of focusing on how to “fix” this problem, I suggest that we need to engage our students and ourselves in the joy of learning again. We need to reframe *learning loss* as a *learning recovery* and expand that recovery to address mental health and well-being.

As an avid user of social media, I have also seen a multitude of people posting suggestions for the best ways for teachers to fix the learning loss. The click-bait links lead to pedagogical methods that are shallow and short-term based – or even worse, expensive commercial solutions that allow people to profit off parent’s fears. Recovery from the pandemic

will take months of mindful engagement with our students. Government and school boards should provide extra support for teachers by giving them the space and time to work with students. This starts by addressing class size for our schools with the largest classes. By reducing these class sizes, we can ensure that teachers have more one-on-one time with students. Government also needs to ensure that educational supports, funding and services are in place to support students and teachers. It is essential that our most vulnerable students have supports in place to assist them with their learning recovery.

“Instead of focusing on how to “fix” this problem, I suggest that we need to engage our students and ourselves in the joy of learning again.”

I trust my colleagues’ professionalism and judgment to engage with their students in a way that addresses their learning needs without placing added unnecessary pressure on them to be “fixed.” Having taught in the classroom for more than 20 years, I know first-hand the care and thought teachers put into their plans. My colleagues have always been and will continue to be student centric. I do not foresee that being any different this school year.

In mid-August, the ATA released its document *Priority Expectations of Alberta Teachers for the Return to School During the COVID-19 Pandemic*. This document focuses not only on the safety aspects that are still needed in schools, as we are still in a pandemic, but also on the learning, mental health and well-being of our students.

Teachers are professionals and experts who engage in a variety of formative and summative assessments throughout the school year. Therefore, the ATA is calling on the government to not implement mandatory provincial achievement tests and diploma exams. Most students did not engage in the traditional year-end assessments last school year. Therefore, any data collected from these exams would not be worthwhile. Plus, we have seen in the past that the results of standardized tests are often used to rank schools and further cast judgment on public education—two more things that schools, teachers and students do not need as they work to recover from last year.

The ATA is also once again calling on the government to not implement its new draft curriculum, for a variety of reasons that could fill up another column. This draft is unacceptable, and now is not the time. Instead, the minister should use this time to re-engage the profession, university professors, parents, and Indigenous and francophone groups in an open and transparent process that creates a modern, diverse and respectful curriculum.

Rather than a return to normal, we have a chance to reimagine a better future for our students. The pandemic amplified many inequities in our society – poverty, funding issues, access to supports, racism, hate. What was normal before needs to be addressed moving forward, not returned to. A great first step in this recovery is to allow our teachers to engage with their students in a way that reignites the joy of learning. ■

Teachers prepare to pilot new curriculum

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

The Fort Vermilion School Division will be the epicentre of piloting Alberta's controversial new K-6 curriculum and teachers there have been busy preparing.

The northern division is the only jurisdiction in the province to mandate that its teachers will be involved in piloting new curriculum. The division has chosen to proceed with three of the six subjects for which new draft curriculum has been developed: language arts, math and wellness.

These subjects align with the division's top three priorities and the board felt that teachers could make positive change by piloting the curriculum in those subjects, said superintendent Mike McMann.

"Piloting doesn't mean that we're just going to validate the curriculum and off it goes," McMann said. "It's our job to say, 'This works; this doesn't.' In the end it's going to be up to the expertise that the government has put together."

The division has chosen not to pilot the new social studies curriculum, which has drawn the most criticism. Concerns about the curriculum's lack of Indigenous input and perspectives have been widespread and have been echoed by local Indigenous leaders, McMann said.

Division officials believe that the government will roll out the new curriculum as planned in the fall of 2022 and that piloting three of the six subjects now will give their teachers a leg up.



"If teachers are not going to get involved in terms of critically analyzing this from a teaching perspective, not just looking at it verbatim and not trying it, then we're going to get what we get," he said. "I think we can do better than that."

Since participation in the pilot has been mandated by the board, teachers have accepted that it's their reality and are prepared to do their best, said Myrna McLean, president of Fort Vermilion Local No. 77. However, teachers do have a variety of concerns. Topping the list is a lack of ready-made resources and the fact that a lot of students aren't at grade level due to COVID-related disruptions last year.

Another major concern is Alberta Education's truncated timeline – teachers will be teaching the new curriculum until the end of June, but the department will be seeking feedback and providing support only until February.

"We're going to be working hard,"

McLean said. "There are some serious challenges."

Fort Vermilion teachers participated in a 3.5-day inservice with Alberta Education officials in June. During that time teachers reviewed the curriculum thoroughly and sensed there was genuine interest in their feedback. That's the mindset that teachers are taking into the pilot.

"Parents in our communities are highly involved so teachers will be collaborating with them to give the curriculum a solid try and provide open, honest and frank feedback to Alberta Education," McLean said. "We expect them to listen to us. If they don't, this won't go very well."

Looking for volunteers

Elsewhere in the province, four other jurisdictions – Christ the Redeemer, Golden Hills, Westwind and Horizon – have left the door open for teachers to pilot the new curriculum if they choose.

In Horizon, only a handful of teachers

will be piloting parts of the new curriculum, said local president Walter Plumtree. Their mindset is, if the new curriculum is going to come down next year anyway, we might as well be prepared, he said.

However, the more widespread sentiment that he's sensing among Horizon teachers is a general disappointment that the new curriculum has been so shrouded in controversy rather than being a positive step forward that teachers can be excited about.

"They would like to unpack this thing like a present for their kids," Plumtree said. "It'd be nice if it didn't have this taint to it."

Provincial view

The Alberta Teachers' Association is continuing to call on the province to stop its rollout of the draft curriculum, which did not involve the ATA or any active teachers, so that a variety of groups can help create a curriculum that is more modern, diverse and respectful, said president Jason Schilling.

"You've heard the premier and the minister both say that they are moving forward with this. We will continue to advocate around the process and the content because this affects our students," he said.

"When you have hundreds of thousands of Albertans telling you, 'We do not want this, this document is failing our students' and you ignore that, it's unbelievable to me that the government would still be pushing forward with this." ■

Possible political interference in curriculum drafting

Duncan Kinney
Progress Alberta
Special to the ATA News

This article appears at www.theprogressreport.ca.

On the campaign trail, Jason Kenney promised to depoliticize Alberta's school curriculum, which he alleged was being injected with leftist ideology and "black armband history" by the then NDP government. But the paper trail shows that the UCP's controversial replacement curriculum has repeatedly been sent to the premier and his inner circle for approval—even before the education minister ever saw it.

This is confirmed by a freedom of information (FOIP) request. Early drafts of the K-6 social studies curriculum that were being worked on by controversial curriculum advisor Chris Champion between Sept. 9 and Oct. 2, 2020, were redacted by the government on the grounds that "the email attachments indicated on those pages went before Cabinet."

These curriculum drafts were described on Sept. 9 as a "work in progress and not complete," and an email of Oct. 2, 2020, described them as "working drafts." The UCP's new K-6 curriculum was released on March 29, 2021, to widespread criticism. Nearly 95 per cent of school boards are now refusing to pilot the draft curriculum this coming school year. However, all elementary schools will be required to use the new K-6 curriculum beginning in September 2022.

Cabinet's repeated reviews of the curriculum material represent direct political interference in the curriculum

development process. And that's not typical, argues Carla Peck, a professor of social studies education at the University of Alberta.

"In my experience, it is very unusual for early drafts of a curriculum to go before cabinet for conversation and/or approval. It's not something I've ever seen before, and I've been involved in curriculum development in several provinces," said Peck. Peck participated in the previous curriculum development process in Alberta, from 2016 to 2018, providing expert advice and feedback.

"It does raise questions for me about the political interference in the curriculum development process by this government. Which is highly ironic given the loud and boisterous complaints made by Premier Kenney and Adriana LaGrange and the rest of the UCP accusing the former government of being ideologically and politically motivated with their curriculum rewrites."

Wing Li, communications director with Support Our Students Alberta, a public education advocacy organization, said, "These findings confirm that Jason Kenney and the UCP have contaminated the curriculum development process with undue political influence. Education curricula development should be a non-partisan process, but instead, Kenney and his cabinet are meddling in secret with what students should be learning in schools."

Kenney had previously criticized the NDP for over-politicizing the curriculum.

"You're not going to pull the wool over the eyes of Alberta, minister, we all know you're going to use the school curriculum as a tool for social

engineering. And we're not going to let you get away with it," said Kenney on Aug. 30, 2017.

Champion's influence

Chris Champion's "vision" for the K-6 social studies curriculum is also repeatedly referenced throughout the emails between him and civil servants.

"I am sharing with you the most recent working drafts of Culture, Philosophy and Religion K-6. The social studies team built this from your vision and previous feedback. They are looking forward to the additional feedback that you are working on to continue to strengthen these drafts," says an Oct. 2, 2020, email sent to Champion from an Alberta Education civil servant.

After it was found that Champion, editor of the *Dorchester Review*, has a long history of foul political statements, including denying that the Indian Residential Schools were a genocidal project, the UCP attempted to distance themselves from him. But it is clear from the correspondence obtained in our FOIP request that Champion's vision was foundational in the design of the new curriculum.

"These documents show, yet again, that the level of involvement of Champion is indeed much greater than the government lets on. In fact, in these emails, the bureaucrats seem to be completely set on trying to achieve Champion's 'vision' for social studies curriculum. He has clearly been involved extensively in drafting, editing and re-editing the K-6 social studies curriculum, and this is profoundly concerning for so many teachers and Albertans generally," said ATA president Jason Schilling.

Champion's advice was so sought out that the government extended his contract an extra week, into October 2020. This contradicts statements from the government, who had claimed publicly that Champion's work had ended in September.

The Alberta government paid Champion \$15,400 for 38 days of work providing advice on the K-6 social studies curriculum. Champion worked for Kenney as a staffer from 2007 to 2015 and was responsible for writing and overseeing the Harper government's controversial citizenship guide.

Despite this relationship, even the Government of Alberta denounced Champion's tweetstweets from the *Dorchester Review* account, emphasizing in a statement that Champion was not involved in the development of curriculum for Grades 7-12 and incorrectly stating that his contract expired in September 2020.

But the actual paper trail is directly at odds with both Kenney's claims that he was depoliticizing the process and the government's claims that Champion's input was minor. Instead, the emails demonstrate a focused political project, with Champion as a key player, stickhandled directly by Kenney and cabinet.

"There is no doubt now that the draft curriculum is a flawed, harmful document that has been tainted with an ulterior agenda. This curriculum if implemented will harm Alberta's children. The draft curriculum has been corrupted, and there is no question it needs to be trashed entirely," said Li.

The Government of Alberta and Chris Champion did not reply to inquiries. ■

Teachers excited and anxious as new school year begins

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

As students and teachers return to school to begin a new year, the Alberta Teachers' Association remains concerned about some gaps in the COVID-19 safety protocols put in place by the government.

The province announced its return-to-school plan on Aug. 13, one day after the ATA released its own nine-point plan for a safe return to school. The government plan includes an extension of testing and isolation protocols until at least Sept. 27—which the ATA advocated for.

The government and the ATA plans also align with regard to the implementation of daily screenings and in-school vaccination programs, but the ATA believes that tracing measures should also remain and that all of these conditions should continue until a significant majority of students have been fully vaccinated.

The ATA is also concerned about the use of a 10 per cent threshold of absenteeism for bringing in enhanced measures.

"Waiting until 200 students in a large city high school have become infected at the same time is a recipe for disaster that could be easily avoided with a lower threshold," said ATA president Jason Schilling.

The province stopped short of requiring masks in schools, prompting several school boards to adopt their own masking policies.

"It is disappointing that the government has abdicated so much of its leadership and responsibility on this file to school boards," Schilling said. "We know that this issue has become unnecessarily divisive and political—the minister has now left school board trustees to make the tough decisions and to take the heat."

Several of the ATA's other expectations also remain unaddressed, especially those with a stronger focus on the learning needs of students, such as making standardized tests optional and pausing the pilot testing of the new curriculum.

The shortcomings of the provincial plan have added to the anxiety that teachers feel entering the new school year, Schilling said, but teachers are excited to return to school and interact with their students.

"Ideally, we want to see a year that is not as disruptive as last year, but we need to also make sure that, as we return to school, we look at the health and safety of our students," he said. "We also need to spend some time focusing on really supporting students in their learning, their well-being and their mental health." ■



No job should involve hate messages

Teaching, to me, is a joy. It provides great opportunities and challenges. It is a career that I love, and I miss interacting with my students and colleagues. When I first started teaching, I didn't expect that I'd have to become an activist or that I would become the ATA president one day. But as you fight for the things you believe in, one thing leads to another.

We are living in extraordinary times. We have stressors and worries that we did not imagine we would be dealing with (or still dealing with at this point). This stress affects everyone—no one is immune to the effects of the pandemic and how it has altered our lives.

In August, the ATA released its priority expectations for the return to school. This was followed the next day by the education minister's release of the government's plan. This led

to a flurry of messages sent my way, which is fine. What is not fine was the messages of hate that I received.

Now, sadly, I have come to accept harsh messages as part of the president's role. However, it's going too far when I receive messages that say the world would be a better place without me in it and I should not delay my exit. No one deserves to be on the receiving end of messages like that, regardless of how others feel about an issue or a person. We must not let the issues that worry us drive wedges between us.

As disturbing and eye-opening as this last week has been, it has not changed my resolve or my commitment to the work I do as president. My students, my colleagues and a strong public education system will always remain the focus of my work, regardless of the hate that comes my way. ■



Central table bargaining to proceed this fall

ATA News Staff

Teachers will have their say on the ATA's opening bargaining position as negotiation preparation ramps up this fall.

The ATA's Central Table Bargaining Committee (CTBC) is preparing a draft initial proposal that will be put out to members in mid-September for feedback. An interactive telephone townhall and a large-scale webcast will be among the tools used to inform members about the draft proposal and solicit direction from teachers.

This activity will follow the anticipated conclusion of an arbitration case related to the bargaining lists and will mark the beginning stages of central table bargaining that's expected to begin in late September or early October.

Teachers have been working without a collective agreement since September 2020; negotiations have been slow to progress as a result of significant pandemic-related delays followed by an arbitration case to settle list bargaining.

This most recent delay occurred when CTBC and the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association (TEBA) could not agree on the final lists of items to be bargained centrally versus locally. A final decision from the arbitrator on the list is expected in late August, said Peter MacKay, chair of CTBC and district representative for northwest Alberta.

Following the arbitration decision, CTBC will ask teachers to review the draft proposal and provide feedback to their local teacher welfare committees.

"We sincerely thank all those who have completed the surveys, participated in discussion groups or responded to other inquiries, as this feedback is critical to the development



Peter MacKay,
Central Table
Bargaining
Committee chair

of our proposal," MacKay said.

"We bargain for teachers, we take our direction from teachers and we strongly encourage teachers to participate in the telephone townhall and give their feedback."

Teacher Welfare Committee chairs will form a Bargaining Advisory Committee (BAC) that will meet prior to the approval of the final opening position, which Provincial Executive Council will then approve before it is presented to TEBA in negotiations.

Although the pandemic has slowed the bargaining process, MacKay expects the process to move more quickly as the new school year advances. When asked how he thinks teachers are feeling about bargaining, MacKay summed it up in one word: anxiety.

"Unfortunately, pandemic-related stresses are still with us, so the commencement of central table bargaining may add to that anxiety," he said.

For insight into how bargaining could go, MacKay encourages teachers to look to other public sector unions that are currently engaged in negotiations.

"Looking at how things have gone for the rest of the public sector—especially the nurses—we expect a difficult round of negotiations," he said. "Teachers should take note of the nurses' experience and how their members have mobilized in response: their present may become our future. We'll likely need our teachers to step up and make themselves heard in the months to come." ■

BARGAINING BASICS

Three-phase bargaining model

Collective bargaining for teachers in Alberta has three phases. Phase one, list bargaining, is where the parties agree on which items will be discussed centrally and which items will be discussed at local bargaining tables. Phase two involves bargaining on those matters that have been assigned to the central table, and phase three is where the remaining items are bargained at each of the 61 local tables.

To follow the bargaining progress

View updates: www.teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Bargaining Updates

Subscribe to email updates: www.teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Members Only > Members' Update Signup

Anyone who wants more information about any of these items is encouraged to speak to their local Teacher Welfare Committee (TWC) representative.

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

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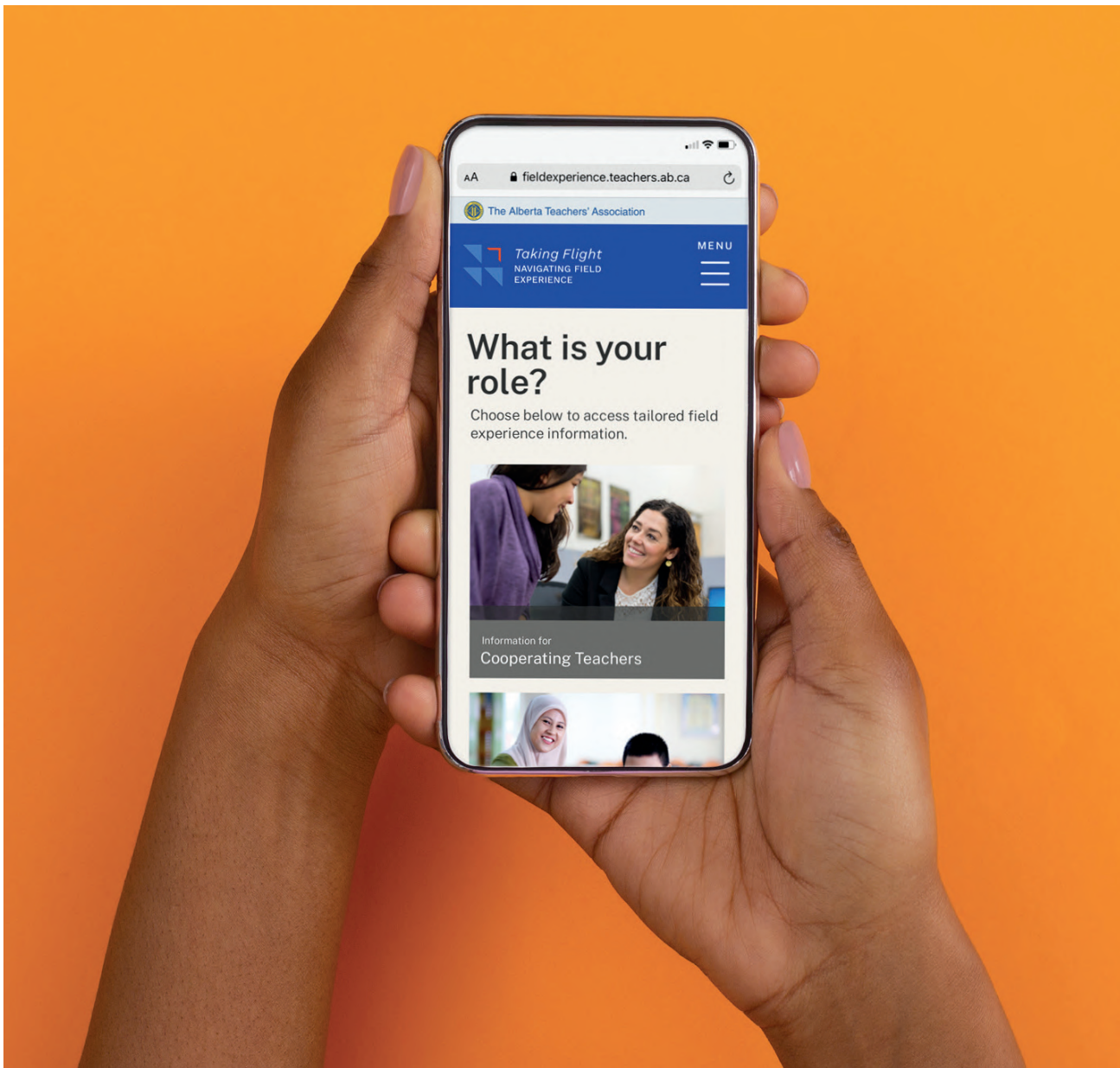


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ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

The ATA has created a new website to help teachers who are involved in field experience.

Student teachers to benefit from new web resource

Kim Clement
ATA News Staff

A new web resource is now available to help support members involved in field experience. *Taking Flight – Navigating Field Experience* launched in August after several months of collaboration among ATA staff officers and several graphic and website designers.

The web resource was designed with several goals particular to the role of the field experience participant. Student teachers will find a wealth of essential tools

and advice to help navigate the complexities of their field experience, while co-operating teachers will find in-depth advice on such things as observation and evaluation strategies. School leaders and faculty advisors will be provided with information to help perform their duties effectively and with confidence. “The original idea was to have a print copy, but as the project grew, a document wouldn’t provide the tool with enough versatility,” said Professional Development staff officer Monique Gravel, who led the rollout of the project.

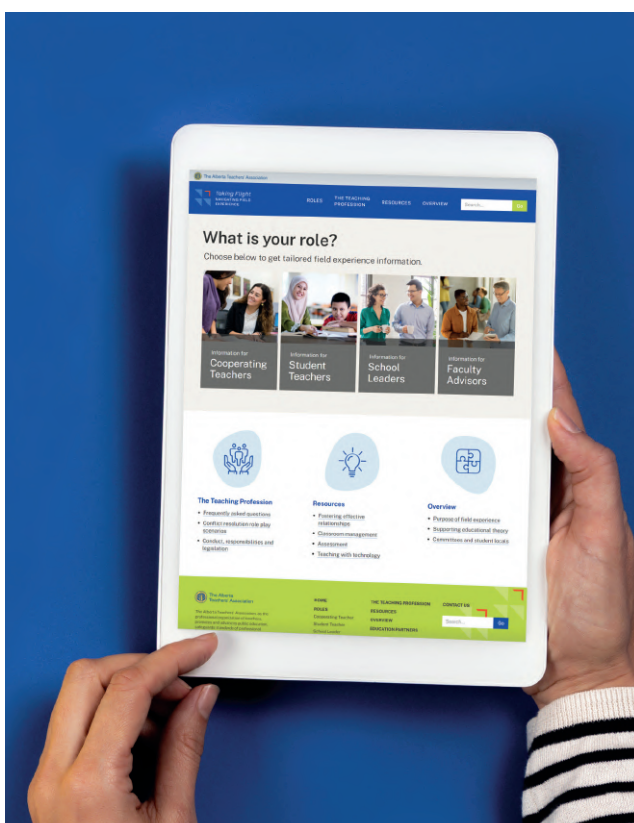
“Given the ever-changing education landscape, it was determined that building a website would allow us the possibility to keep up with both pedagogical and professional changes and provide members with continued current supports and resources.”

The impetus for the project was discussions held by the Joint Committee on Practicum (JCOP) in June 2018, which led to an initial framework and development of guidelines and procedures to gather data for the resource.

The primary researcher and writer of *Taking Flight* was Françoise Ruban, former ATA PD staff officer, who collaborated with Gravel. The resource draws on Ruban’s and Gravel’s extensive backgrounds in teacher education and mentorship. Several ATA staff deserve credit for the project’s successful completion, Gravel said, including supervising editor Sandra Bit, design lead Erin Solano and website designers Kim vanderHelm and Yuet Chan.

“What excites me most about the website is its true potential,” Gravel said, adding that the project tried to capture the comments and suggestions of various subgroups and field members as well as ATA policies and beliefs.

“But we have the true potential to develop this tool further in order to support the four key roles — co-operating teachers, student teachers, school leaders and faculty advisors — all the while advancing the profession.”



ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

CHECK IT OUT | *Taking Flight* is located at fieldexperience.teachers.ab.ca.

New executive staff officer joins TES

ATA News Staff

Former local president Andrea McLeod has joined the Alberta Teachers’ Association as its newest executive staff officer, with initial placement in Teacher Employment Services (TES). She assumed her role on Aug. 1.



McLeod joins the Association from the Rocky View School Division, where she was a high school science teacher for 25 years. She credits her time as a science teacher for preparing her for her new role by exposing her to many changes to the teaching and learning environment.

“I experienced first-hand the challenges faced by teachers, including increased classroom size and complexity, decreased supports, and increased teacher workload and expectations,” she says. “Since I will be working in collective bargaining, I will be advocating for the best possible working conditions for teachers.”

In addition to her extensive teaching experience, McLeod served as president of Rocky View Local No. 35 for four years, which was ultimately what led her to apply for the role at the Association.

“Serving as local president for four years allowed me to serve teachers in a new and exciting way,” she says. “I loved doing this work. This is what motivated me to apply to the ATA to advocate for teachers at the provincial level, full-time.”

Although she is excited about her role, there are some things she will miss about being in a classroom.

“Being a classroom teacher for 25 years, I experienced the incredible joy and satisfaction of seeing my students work toward reaching their full potential,” she says. “I loved that every day was a new and different experience. The composition of the class changes every semester. Also, I love biology, so getting students excited about learning it was easy!”

McLeod received bachelor of education and bachelor of science degrees from the University of Calgary. She is also completing a master of education degree in interdisciplinary studies at the University of Calgary.

6 MORE THINGS about Andrea

Who or what inspired you to be a teacher?

My grandma and I were very close, and she was a teacher. She was an inspiration to me, as she completed her teacher training while raising a young family and travelling long distances to attend university courses. She loved being a teacher!

What makes you the most excited to start work at the ATA?

I am so excited to have the opportunity to work and advocate for teachers.

Knowing what you know now, what advice would you give yourself in your first year as a teacher?

I would tell myself that relationships with students are more important than content. Students learn better when they know their teachers truly care about them and their learning.

What is the greatest life lesson teaching has taught you?

Teaching has taught me patience, compassion, resilience and determination. It has taught me how important it is to defend a strong public education system that is accessible to all.

Favourite song to put you in a good mood?

Anything by Bon Jovi!

Favourite COVID-safe summer activity?

I go outside for a walk almost every morning with my dad. I’m also loving that outdoor concerts are back.



The Alberta Teachers' Association

THE HOMEWORK CONTEST

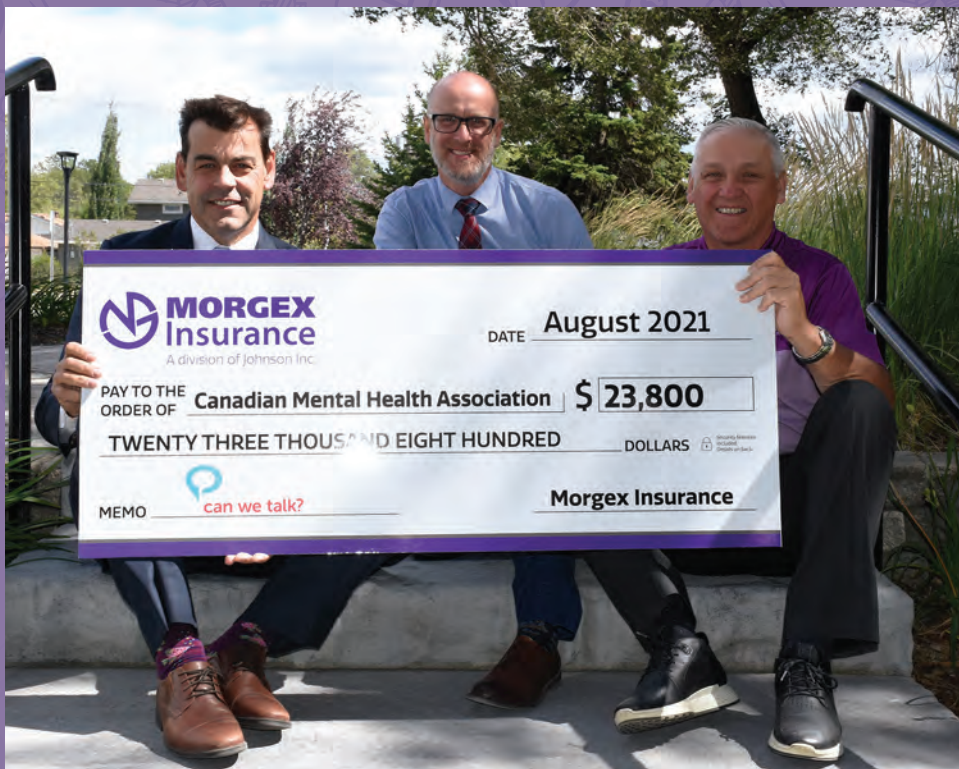
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can we talk?

During the ATA's Summer Conference, Randy Pearson (right) of Morgex Insurance presented a cheque for \$23,800 to Brent Korte (left), board chair of the Alberta division of the Canadian Mental Health Association. Also in attendance was ATA president Jason Schilling. The donation will go toward the CMHA's Can We Talk program, which is a partnership between the CMHA, the Alberta Teachers' Association and Global television. Morgex pledged to donate \$20 for every price quote request received from teachers in April, May and June. The program generated 1,190 requests.

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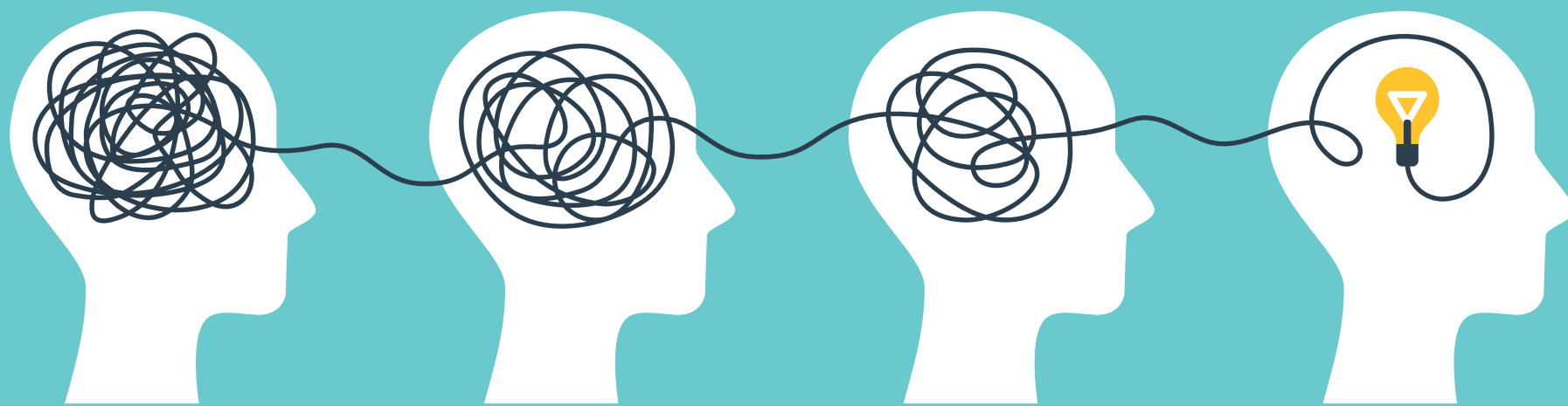
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We asked about mental health; you responded



As the new school year approaches, what's one thing that you plan to do differently this year to help support and care for your mental well-being?

ISTOCK

Cheryl T

I have made a list of my favourite things I can do to calm down when the stress is too much. When my brain is in peak fight/flight mode, I can't always remember how to pause and reset.

Michelle Sherlow

I plan to enjoy all the small things that make life and teaching good. Connections and laughter with students and colleagues will be a key strategy!

Chrissie Epp

Self-care and showing support to my colleagues. We all need a little ❤️. Teaching can be hard sometimes. You need to find someone who has your back and support.

Kae McFadzen

I will remember that connecting with kids is not only the reason I chose teaching in the first place, but is also the thing that fuels me.

Tash Marie

Leave all expectations at the door and appreciate everything we have, while we have it.

Andrea Pantella McGeachie

Enjoy a more normal year and being with students, continuing to support,

cheer and build morale for my colleagues. Set boundaries and say no a bit more. No one else will take care of my well-being!

Meghan Ruth

Focus on being rested and refreshed for my students each day by making time to enjoy the things I love – including lots of walks and naps!

Laurie Jean

I am going to fill buckets! Take the opportunity to be grateful daily. I am also going to work on organizing and getting rid of things I don't use or need.

Andre Wolf

Set boundaries for myself regarding stressful situations. Also, continue implementing Patrick McKeown's breathing techniques and exercises. Getting back to activities I used to like doing prior to the pandemic.

Lindsay Elizabeth

Setting more boundaries for myself! Not working all evening or weekends! I need some me time to be the best teacher I can be.

Kristin Basaraba

I plan to get my body moving a lot more and spend lunchtime with colleagues,

something that was difficult to do in person last year! I also will continue the well-being touch bases with students that I prioritized during COVID. Many great relationships developed with students and families from the increased communication that I hope to continue for years to come.

Tania Kim

Last year was challenging! I will continue using a growth mindset – for myself, too – offering grace to myself like I do for others when a mistake happens or things don't go well.

Allie Caitlin

With a lot going on personally, planning a wedding and other family events, I have decided to only take on committees that I am passionate about. Until now, I have said yes to everything and everyone, but this year I am respecting myself a little more by respecting my time and the time I want to spend planning these exciting personal milestones.

Danielle Cunnin

Make and plan time for play and rest. It is critical for my physical and mental well-being. Smile at my students more, because I miss seeing their faces.

Chris McLean-Sleger

I am planning on enjoying my class more this year. Last year was awfully hard.

Nedra Dreyer

Take time each day to reflect, greet each morning with gratitude.

Carleen Pocklington

For my own mental well-being I am going to make sure I get a good night's sleep, a walk in both the morning and evening, gym workouts and a healthy diet. All of these things will make me feel I'm at my best.

Faye Holt

Make and plan time for play and rest. It is critical for my physical and mental well-being.

Rachelle Huppe Nielsen

By leading daily mental health activities in class, I will model the importance of regularly supporting mental health.

Sunata Lazzari Halliday

I am going to find opportunities to laugh more with my students, with my family and with my friends. This past

MENTAL HEALTH RESPONSES
continued on page 10

Summit aims to improve adolescent mental health

Mark Milne

ATA News Staff

Changing young lives through the power of mentoring will be the focus of an upcoming virtual summit that is now open to registrations from teachers and school leaders.

The Oct. 20 event hosted by the Alberta Mentoring Partnership (AMP) is designed to connect schools with the mentoring organizations and government agencies in their community.

"We're hoping it will get people excited and be another opportunity for schools and organizations that work with schools to connect," said AMP spokesperson Caroline Gosling.

Titled Supporting Adolescent Mental Health by Strengthening Webs of Supports, the full-day summit will be particularly important this year because of the fallout from COVID-19, Gosling said, as the social restrictions during the pandemic have had a significant impact on the relationships between teens and those in their support system.

"Some of our children and youth that had lots of support pre-COVID are now feeling like they have lost some of those connections," Gosling said. "As we come out of COVID, that idea of having mentors, whether formal or informal, is so much more critical for our children and youth's well-being."

The importance of anchors

The summit will feature a youth panel, as well as six breakout sessions focusing on a variety of teen mentoring topics. The event will open with keynote speaker Derek Peterson, an international child and youth advocate.

"We're looking at expanding our definition of mentorship," Gosling said. "Derek's work examines the idea of



Derek Peterson, keynote speaker

informal mentors and how youth can identify the people already in their lives that play a supportive adult role."

The primary focus of Peterson's career has been working with northern communities to examine the support teens get from the adults in their world. He calls these natural mentors "anchors."

"Growing up I had many, many natural mentors," Peterson said. "They were our neighbours, fellow congregants in church, ... people who loved my parents."

His data shows that schools offer an ideal environment for children and youth to connect with one or more life-changing anchors.

"You hope you get that teacher, staff member or volunteer who sees the gifts inside you and brings them out," he said.

Peterson's research indicates that a thick web of anchors in a child's life has a strong correlation with their ability to thrive and avoid risk behaviours later in life. He points out, however, that teachers alone cannot possibly fill this role for every student who seeks it.

"We need to be aware of ways to invite other people into these kids' lives," he said. ■

About AMP

Created in 2008, the Alberta Mentoring Partnership (AMP) now consists of 170-plus school and agency members. The partnership is co-led by the Government of Alberta (Children's Services and Education) and Boys & Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters (BGBigs) of Edmonton and area.



For more information

The AMP summit runs from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 20. Registration is \$25. Details are available at <http://albertamentors.ca/network>.



New ATRF Webinars

In addition to our current Steps to Retirement and Your Pension Matters webinars, we're offering webinars about purchasing service and transferring service, as well as webinars specifically for new members and substitute teachers

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The ATA Educational Trust

Supporting teachers' professional learning

This year, the ATA Educational Trust will award over \$90,000 for

- \$600 grants to help teachers with attending a conference, workshop, seminar, institute or symposium.
- \$500 grants to help teachers attend an ATA specialist council conference or event. The names are chosen in a draw.

Grant application deadline: September 30



www.teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Programs and Services > Grants, Awards and Scholarships > ATA Educational Trust

AR-ETF-25c 2019-09

MENTAL HEALTH RESPONSES

continued from page 9

year has reminded me to let go of things I can't control and that there is joy in connection. I want to rediscover fun.

Eva Hutchinson

I think I will be smiling more because I'm so looking forward to seeing faces and smiles again this year!

Charis Dawn

Focus on my physical health by eating gut-healthy foods and exercising regularly. Focus on emotional health by acknowledging my feelings and celebrating the unique gifts that come with being a highly sensitive person. Focus on my mental health by recognizing lies I tell myself and change them into positive affirmations. Focus on my spiritual health through meditation, gratitude and prayer.

Sacha Reanne

I will continue to love my students first, and teach them second, knowing that it's been a stressful time for everyone and that the most important thing they (still) need is to feel safe and loved.

Heather Gagne

Make sure that I am setting boundaries. Evenings and weekends should be mine. Encourage my students to show those pearly whites (or lack thereof), let them see faces and expressions, find things to be grateful for, every day.

Amanda Rae

See my students face to face! I was an online teacher last year and it was so challenging. I missed the amazing discussions that come from group work. I am ecstatic to see them in person in September. Also, boundaries! Less work on nights and weekends because that's well-deserved family time!

Heidi Tanner

I'm going to be the best teacher I can from the minute school starts to the minute it ends and then be the best wife and mom the rest of the time, with at least 30 minutes to an hour just for myself, be that reading a book, exercising or just some much-needed alone time!

Kristine Woodford

I am going to make sure I say thank you to the people that make a difference in my day. Leave a note of thanks to my librarian, hall mates, department team and everyone who goes above and beyond to cheer me on and bring that sparkle with them to share. ■



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Regal continues in role as CTF VP



Jenny Regal, vice-president, ATA and CTF

Ottawa—ATA vice-president Jenny Regal was elected to a third term as vice-president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) during that organization's annual general meeting in July. The two-year term runs until 2023.

Taking over as CTF president is Sam Hammond, a long-time leader with the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO). Hammond was elected president-designate by acclamation in 2020 and officially took over for outgoing president Shelley Morse on July 15. Hammond says that he's honoured to represent more than 300,000 elementary and secondary teachers from coast to coast to coast.

"I've been actively engaged in the critical work of the CTF since attending my first annual meeting in July 2004 and have worked tirelessly to solidify ETFO's place in the labour movement," Hammond said. "This has allowed me to forge solid alliances with unions and union leaders across the country. We should be very proud of our individual and collective efforts to protect our members, our fundamental collective bargaining rights and publicly funded public education."

Besides Regal, the following three leaders in public education were elected CTF vice-presidents, serving two-year terms alongside Hammond on the executive committee from 2021 to 2023:

- Clint Johnston, British Columbia Teachers' Federation
- Paul Wozney, Nova Scotia Teachers Union
- Heidi Yetman, Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers ■

Ray Martin granted ATA's Public Education Award

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

The value of public education extends far beyond teaching fundamental knowledge to children.

This was the message shared by Ray Martin, former teacher, NDP MLA, opposition leader and school board trustee, in accepting the Public Education Award from the Alberta Teachers' Association. ATA president Jason Schilling and past president Greg Jeffery presented the award to Martin at Barnett House on June 23.

In his acceptance speech, Martin emphasized his view of the true value of education.

"Education is more than the three Rs. Public education is also the greatest social initiative that you can make," he said.

Martin held up a photo of himself surrounded by students during one of the many school visits he made during his tenure as a trustee on the board of Edmonton Public Schools.

"This is why this award means so much to me. It would mean a lot anyhow, but to me this is the future, these kids," he said.

In his introduction, Schilling noted that Martin started his schooling in a one-room school in Delia, northeast of Drumheller. While he described himself as a lazy student, by the end of Grade 12 he'd decided to become a physical education teacher — mostly due to his love of sports and of coaching.

Martin earned his BEd from the University of Alberta, taught and coached in high schools in Calgary and Sherwood Park, and later obtained a master's in education from the University of Calgary.

By the early 1980s, Martin was becoming disillusioned with the rhetoric and policies of the conservative government in Alberta, and in 1982 he ran and was elected as a New Democrat in the provincial election. He and Grant Notley were the only two members of the New Democrats elected that

year, so after Notley died in a plane crash in 1984, Martin became the party leader.

In 1986 Martin led the party to an astonishing 16 seats in the legislature, becoming the leader of the official opposition. The same result occurred in 1989, but in 1993 the party suffered a crushing defeat when none of its candidates was elected.

In 1994 Martin left provincial politics and went on to serve two terms as trustee for Edmonton Public Schools. He returned to the legislature in 2004, and it was during this second tenure in provincial politics that he became known as a champion of public education, often sparring with the education minister as he advocated for teachers.

"He continually held the minister's feet to the fire regarding the teachers' unfunded pension liability," Schilling said, adding that Martin was especially known for his fierce stance on the need to fund full-day kindergarten and advocating for funding to help vulnerable families overcome the challenges of poverty.

"This brief speech cannot begin to totally capture the dedication to teachers and students exhibited by Mr. Martin over his long and illustrious career. He truly exemplifies the adage 'once a teacher, always a teacher' as even in retirement he continues to advocate for public education," Schilling said.

The Association's Public Education Award is offered occasionally to an individual or a group that has given outstanding support to public education in Alberta other than through teaching. Provincial Executive Council identified Martin as a deserving recipient in 2020. The presentation was delayed due to the disruption of last year's Annual Representative Assembly, which is the usual venue for handing out the award.

In concluding his own speech, Martin thanked teachers, principals and the Association for all the important work they do.

"Your work is so appreciated and, if I may say so, any time you need me, please free to call because I



CORY HARE

Former MLA and school board trustee Ray Martin speaks after receiving the ATA's Public Education Award at Barnett House on June 23.

so strongly believe in what the ATA is doing and also the work that the people on the ground are doing," he said.

"These kids are important. They're very important. They need all the help they can get and they're getting it from the ATA members." ■

Teachers must adhere to agreements



PITFALLS & PRECAUTIONS

Lisa Everitt
ATA Secretary to Professional
Conduct Committees

Pitfalls and Precautions is a series that aims to educate teachers on professional conduct issues by highlighting situations addressed by the ATA Professional Conduct Committee.

One hallmark of a profession is the establishment of and support for a professional code of conduct and standards of practice. In Alberta, the Alberta Teachers' Association is responsible for ensuring that teachers employed in public, separate and francophone school jurisdictions adhere to the Association's Code of Professional Conduct. The code of conduct outlines the minimum standards of conduct expected of active members of the Association. These expectations cover how teachers should conduct themselves with regard to students, colleagues, school authorities and the profession itself. Included within the relationship to school authorities is article 11, which stipulates that teachers abide by the agreements negotiated on their behalf by the Association.

From time to time, the Association will provide support and assistance to teachers who are experiencing a breakdown in their employment relationship. In these instances, there are times when it is beneficial for both the school jurisdiction and the teacher to end the employment relationship. The Association will, at the request of and with input from the teacher, engage with the school authority to outline the conditions of the cessation of the employment relationship. This formal, legally binding agreement is referred to as a settlement and release agreement. Ultimately, the terms of the agreement are signed off on by the teacher and the school authority.

Once a settlement and release agreement is signed by the teacher and the school authority, both parties are expected to abide by its terms.

In a recent precedent-setting case, the employment contract of a teacher was severed through a settlement and release agreement negotiated with the school authority by the Association on the teacher's behalf. Within the terms of the agreement, there was a requirement that the teacher would not disparage the name or impugn the reputation of the school authority or its officers, directors, employees, agents or representatives.

A lengthy period of time after the formalization of this settlement and release agreement, the local media covered a story involving the school authority and its officers. The media story was unrelated to the teacher's individual circumstances. It was featured in several community publications, as well as on the Global News website. On various occasions, the teacher contributed to the comments sections of the posted stories and, in doing so, made several critical comments about the board and its officers, both past and present. When the school authority became aware of the comments, they made a request to the Association to investigate the teacher's actions.

The Association launched an investigation that led to two charges of unprofessional conduct. The first charge alleged that the teacher had failed to uphold the dignity of the teaching profession, and the second alleged that the teacher had failed to adhere to the agreement negotiated on their behalf by the Association.

The Professional Conduct Committee found the teacher guilty of the two charges, reasoning that the teacher had failed to uphold the terms of the settlement and release agreement, bringing dishonour to the profession and their obligations as a teacher. Furthermore, the actions of the teacher in disparaging their former school authority over social media brought disrepute to the profession in a very public fashion.

The public must have confidence in the work of teachers at both the school level and the system

level, and by publicly criticizing the school authority and its officers, the teacher undermined the teaching profession. In addition, the teacher was found guilty of breaching article 11 of the Code of Professional Conduct. It was the first time in the ATA's history that a teacher had been found guilty of breaching this article, which specifies that teachers must adhere to agreements negotiated on their behalf by the Association.

FACT

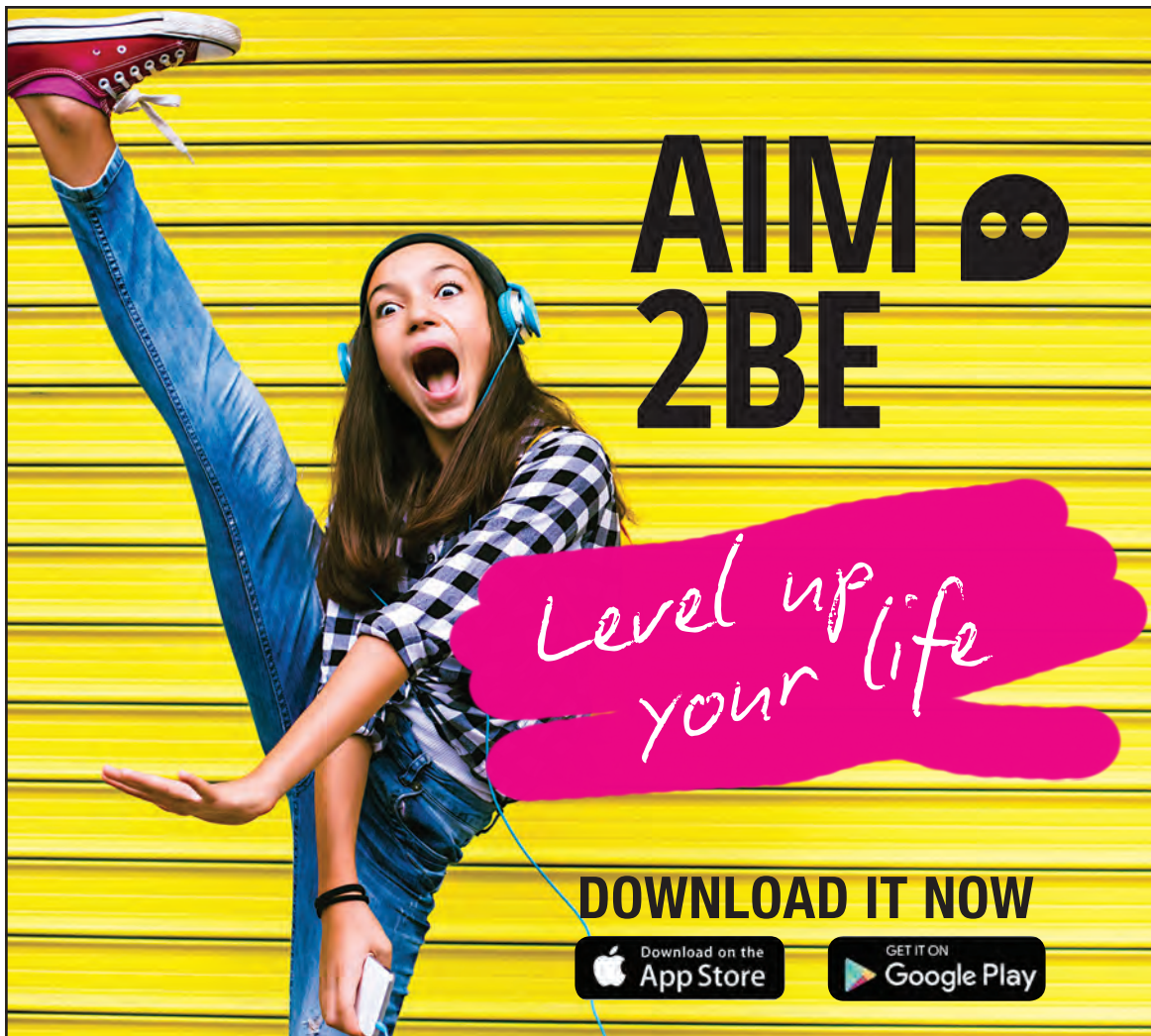
Article 11, Code of Professional Conduct

The teacher adheres to agreements negotiated on the teacher's behalf by the Association.

The committee imposed a letter of severe reprimand, a fine of \$2,000 for the first charge, a fine of \$4,000 for the second charge, and an order to the teacher to remove all social media posts that disparaged or impugned their former school authority and its officers. The committee further imposed a 120-day timeline for the teacher to pay the fines. As is standard in these cases, the committee indicated that if the member failed to pay their fines in a timely fashion, their membership in the Association would be suspended.

In imposing the penalty for this case, the committee reasoned that it should reflect the seriousness of the matter and act as a deterrent for other members, that it should maintain the public's confidence in the profession, and that the public must have confidence that when the Association negotiates on behalf of its members the agreements will be upheld.

Finally, the \$4,000 fine for the second charge was imposed because it was precedent setting and the actions of the teacher negatively impacted the reputation of the Association and its ability to effectively represent teachers in matters involving the negotiation of agreements on their behalf. ■



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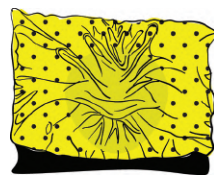
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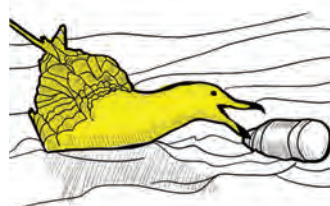
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Beginning Teachers' Conference to proceed virtually

PEC POINTS

Audrey Dutka
ATA News Staff

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held June 10–11, 2021, via Zoom

1. Declared in effect an amendment to General Bylaw 4, as contained in Electoral Ballot 2 of 2020 and approved by the 2021 Annual Representative Assembly (ARA). The amendment includes Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Cultural Advisors and noncertificated educators employed by First Nations school authorities as individuals eligible for associate membership in the Association.
2. Declared in effect an amendment to General Bylaw 121, as contained in Electoral Ballot 3 of 2020 and approved by the 2021 ARA. The amendment transfers the responsibility for administering alternate professional development requests, currently received and adjudicated by convention board attendance committees, to the provincial Association.
3. In accordance with General Bylaw 70, approved that voting for the 2023 Provincial Executive Council general election be conducted by electronic ballot.
4. Approved that the date for announcement of voting results for the 2023 Provincial Executive Council general election will be March 17, 2023.
5. Approved that all 2022 teachers' conventions be held virtually on their assigned dates.
6. In accordance with section 31(2) of the *Teaching Profession Act*, approved an extension to the time period to commence a hearing.
7. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of one charge of unprofessional conduct for touching a student's clothing and/or person while making comments about the student's appearance. The hearing committee imposed a penalty of a letter of reprimand.
8. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of two charges of unprofessional conduct for failing to recognize the duty to protest through proper channels and for criticizing the professional competence of other teachers. The hearing committee imposed a penalty of a single letter of reprimand covering both charges.
9. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of one charge of unprofessional conduct for playing golf when the teacher was scheduled to be teaching. The hearing committee imposed a penalty of a letter of reprimand and a fine of \$200.
10. Approved that the Beginning Teachers' Conference be held virtually on Sept. 24 and 25, 2021.
11. Approved 15 applications for a Diversity, Equity and Human Rights (DEHR) grant, which supports innovative projects that build inclusive learning communities and promote the principles of diversity, equity and human rights.
12. Authorized the DEHR Committee to approve the DEHR grants to the maximum budgeted amount.
13. Authorized the Association to undertake a process of research and engagement with advertising agencies to develop a revised fall 2021 public relations campaign that would build a strong, visible alliance of parents and teachers in defence of public education.
14. Named an Association staff member to the position of vice-chair of the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan Insurance Board, effective July 1, 2021. ■

DIGITAL NEWS



The ATA News is available in a digital format.

For the latest issue, visit www.teachers.ab.ca > News and Info > ATA News. Subscribe to receive an email when a new issue is available.

READY... SET... GROW

This is the time of year when teachers turn their attention to (among dozens of other things) their professional growth plans.

TEACHERS' CONVENTIONS

Teachers' conventions enhance professional practice by providing teachers and school leaders with opportunities to share innovative practices, discuss professional issues and meet the learning goals identified in their professional growth plans.

Each of the Association's nine teachers' conventions is organized by a regional convention board. Members are assigned to conventions based on their employing school authority and ATA local.

Teachers' conventions will take place online during the 2021/22 school year. Teachers are advised to participate from home or other non-school locations. If you have any questions, please contact executive staff officer Danny Maas at daniel.maas@ata.ab.ca.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about teachers' conventions, visit www.teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Professional Development > Teachers' Conventions.

North Central Teachers' Convention

Dates: Feb. 10–11, 2022
Contact: Carryl Bennett, president
Email: president@nctca.ab.ca
Website: www.mynctca.com

Calgary City Teachers' Convention

Dates: Feb. 17–18, 2022
Contact: Lisa Fulton and Shae Frisby, co-presidents
Email: cctcapresident@gmail.com
Website: www.cctca.com

Endless Skies Teachers' Convention

Dates: Feb. 17–18, 2022
Contact: Melissa Petruk, president
Email: estcapresident@gmail.com
Website: <http://estca.teachers.ab.ca>

Central Alberta Teachers' Convention

Dates: Feb. 24–25, 2022
Contact: Brenda Lewis, president
Email: brendalewis@gmail.com
Website: www.mycatca.com

Palliser District Teachers' Convention

Dates: Feb. 24–25, 2022
Contact: Jennifer Munton, president
Email: president@pdtca.org
Website: www.pdtca.org

Southeastern Alberta Teachers' Convention

Dates: Feb. 24–25, 2022
Contact: Cam Bernhard, president
Email: cam.bernhard@grasslands.ab.ca

South Western Alberta Teachers' Convention

Dates: Feb. 24–25, 2022
Contact: Kevin Sheen, president
Email: sheenk12@gmail.com
Website: www.swatca.ca

Greater Edmonton Teachers' Convention

Dates: March 3–4, 2022
Contact: Lloyd Bloomfield, president
Email: president@getca.com
Website: www.getca.com

Mighty Peace Teachers' Convention

Dates: March 10–11, 2022
Contact: Jodie Dell, president
Email: mptcpresident@gmail.com
Website: <http://mptca.teachers.ab.ca>

SPECIALIST COUNCIL OPPORTUNITIES

Membership in a specialist council is another potentially integral component of a teacher's professional growth plan. The Association has 21 specialist councils, and every active member is entitled to join one at no cost. Specialist councils organize annual conferences, host webinars, produce publications, maintain websites, and offer regional workshops and seminars, thus providing professional development opportunities and promoting teachers' expertise in curriculum and specialty areas.

Many specialist councils have begun planning learning and collaboration opportunities for teachers across the province for the 2021/22 school year.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about specialist councils, visit www.teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Professional Development > Specialist Councils.

To select your no-cost membership to a specialist council, visit <https://bit.ly/SpecialistCouncilJoin>.

Alberta School Learning Commons Council

Date: Nov. 3, 2021
Time: 10–11:30 a.m.
Location: Virtual
Theme/topic: Let Them Be Heard! Giving Students Voice
Details: www.aslc.ca

Council for School Leadership

Date: April 10–12, 2022
Location: Banff
Theme/topic: Reimagining School Leadership
Details: <http://tinyurl.com/ulead22>

Council of School Counsellors

Date: Oct. 19, 2021
Time: 8:45 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
Location: Virtual
Details: <https://csc2021.sched.com>

English as a Second Language Council

Date: Oct. 13, 2021
Time: 10–11 a.m.
Location: Virtual
Theme/topic: Strategies for Refugee and SLIFE Students
Details: <https://eslc2021.sched.com>

Date: May 6, 2022
Location: The Malcolm Hotel, Canmore
Theme/topic: Staying Ahead of the Curve

English Language Arts Council

Date: Nov. 8, 2021
Location: Banff
Details: www.elacata.ca

Indigenous Education Council

Date: Oct. 9, 2021
Time: 6–7 p.m.
Location: Virtual
Theme/topic: Land Acknowledgement – More Than Words
Details: <https://atapdwebinars2020.sched.com/event/ijEb/land-acknowledgment-more-than-words>

Mathematics Council

Date: Oct. 22–23, 2021
Location: Red Deer
Theme/topic: What Have We Learned?
Details: www.mathteachers.ab.ca

Middle Years Council

Date: April 28, 2022
Location: Banff
Theme/topic: Back to the Middle
Details: www.ata-myc.com

Religious and Moral Education Council

Date: Nov. 1
Time: 7–9 p.m.
Location: Virtual
Theme/topic: World Catholic Education Virtual Pub Night
Hosts: Nick Simoni and Chris Ferguson

Social Studies Council

Date: Oct. 9, 2021
Time: 4–6 p.m.
Location: Virtual
Theme/topic: Mapping Electoral Districts: What Makes an Electoral District Fair?
Presenter: Joseph Pélouquin-Hopfner, Education Coordinator, Elections Canada

sustainable Youth Challenge

Let's empower our youth by enabling them to innovate new ideas in solving global challenges. *After all, they are the driving force behind change!*

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Challenge provides an exciting educational experience full of learning, teamwork and productive competition while empowering youth to have a voice and learn to be the drivers of change. The challenge is a circular-linked assignment for students in grades 9-12. It is designed to educate and engage students with the world's 17 SDGs and provide opportunities to pioneer innovative solutions that address some of the world's biggest challenges related to agriculture.

Join our **FREE** teacher workshop on October 6, 2021. The workshop consists of a virtual presentation including experts from mixed backgrounds sharing their professional insight and experience when it comes to the world's SDGs. The workshop will offer teachers valuable information about the challenge and what is entailed for student success.

Visit www.agricultureforlife.ca to register.

This special initiative is brought to you by **Ag for Life**



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Visit vote4kids.ca for more information on voting, issues affecting education and candidates in your jurisdiction.



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SCHOOL LEADERS SPEAKER SERIES

ATA VIRTUAL EVENTS

SAVE THESE DATES

2021—OCTOBER 5
2022—JANUARY 13, MARCH 16 AND MAY 2

The Alberta Teachers' Association School Leaders Speaker Series provides a virtual opportunity for school leaders and aspiring leaders to learn from popular keynote speakers in the areas of leadership development and planning, embodying visionary leadership, fostering effective relationships, and developing leadership capacity.

REGISTER

Register for each event using the QR code above or the following link <https://zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tJclcO-rqT4qGN3fzA7z8awO-wpapO3POVnS>.

COOR-185a 2021-07

<h2>ADVERTISING IN ATANEWS</h2>	<p>For advertising information, contact Trevor Batty at Trevor Batty Advertising Sales 1-778-773-9397 trevor@tbasales.ca</p>	<p>Next deadline Thursday, Sep. 9, 2021, 4 p.m. (Publication date Sep. 21, 2021) Advertisers are encouraged to book early – space is limited.</p>	<p>Circulation: 38,000 We accept Visa, Mastercard, cash or cheque.</p>
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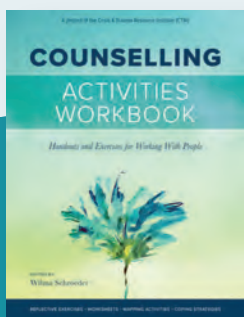
FALL 2021
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All workshops run from 9am-4pm Central Time.

Challenging Behaviours in Youth <i>Strategies for Intervention</i>	Sept 16
Mental Health Concerns in Children and Youth	Sept 25
Resilience in Children <i>Creative Strategies for Helping</i>	Sept 28-29
Regulation Strategies for Children and Youth in Crisis	Oct 14
Attachment <i>Strategies for Fostering Connections</i>	Oct 19
Anxiety in Children and Youth <i>Practical Intervention Strategies</i>	Nov 6
Gender and Sexual Diversity in Youth	Nov 23-24
Self-Injury Behaviour in Youth	Nov 30-Dec 1
Social-Emotional Learning <i>A Whole-School Approach</i>	Dec 7
Addictions and Youth <i>Substances, Technology, Porn</i>	Dec 14

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Recherché: facilitatrice ou facilitateur bilingue

Mandat

créer et présenter un atelier sur la perspective francophone en Alberta lors des grands congrès enseignants.

Profil

- bilinguisme (anglais/français)
- résident(e) de l'Alberta
- bonne connaissance du système scolaire francophone élémentaire et secondaire de l'Alberta
- expérience en enseignement (auprès d'adultes, un atout)
- aptitudes à la recherche et à la vulgarisation
- compétences technologiques

Pour appliquer

remplissez ce formulaire : <https://forms.gle/8KXbzUrcz65nbc3P8>
Ou rendez vous à www.leconseilfrancais.com et cliquez sur l'onglet "Plus"
Date limite : le 17 septembre 2021

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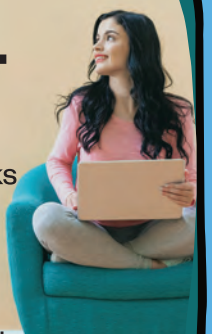
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We want to hear about news in your school, district or local. Please email managing editor Cory Hare at cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.



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TALENT

August 31, 2021 | Volume 56, Number 1



ISTOCK



MOOT POINTS

Ray Suchow
Special to the ATA News

Recently I received a surprise email from a student I had taught in Computers 7 six years ago. I hadn't seen him in three years, since he transferred to a different school.

As I read his message, the words of this mature young adult interplayed with my memories of the thoughtful young soul who quietly completed his work in my class. He began by saying that his overall school experience had been interesting, as he had learned to deal with being sensitive to others (while others were not always similarly gifted). He felt that he'd been going through a phase back then, and the joy and comfort he'd felt in my class had helped him feel better and learn that he should be his own person.

"I'd like to attribute a decent amount of my success to the way you taught," he wrote, adding that he'd

grown as a person and had just graduated from his current school with honours. Then came the interesting part.

"I didn't feel weird in your class, because you were weirder."

Wait! What?

On one hand, it was nice to know that I'd helped somewhat in his schooling and ongoing character development, but on the other hand—what was this about my being weird?

At that time my school was grades 7–12. Computers 7 was the entry course into the entire program, and I'd been happily teaching it for 16 years. I loved that course!

Despite being able to use their personal devices quite adeptly, none of the students had ever been in a lab before, learning in depth about hardware, software and troubleshooting and how to use all of these together in the strange new world of junior high. I tried to make sure that whatever their skill level, they all felt welcome, were ready to learn amazing new things and were set to have some fun while doing so. And away we flew!

As I reflected, the depth of my former student's message soon became apparent. What I gained from

his words was that when we don't merely teach but rock those classes where we know our best comes out, we might just be helping our students more than we realize. We may think we're just teaching our favourite subjects in the best way we know, but students might be seeing something different and more inspiring—a teacher who isn't afraid to combine knowledge, humour, acceptance and outright joy.

And that might come across as weird to students, since they may not have seen that kind of energy before. But this example shows that it made an important difference in one young life, and I bet there are more that I'll never know about.

So, this year, let's all try to be a bit weirder in a subject or two! After the year we just had, our students will appreciate it more than ever—now and in the years to come. ■

Ray Suchow teaches CTS computer studies, religion and humanities at Christ the King High School in Leduc.

Moot Points is your chance to write about a funny incident, a lesson learned or a poignant experience related to teaching. Please email articles to managing editor Cory Hare: cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

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