



ATA NEWS

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Orange Leaf Day

ANNETTE LABRASH BLACKWELL

Prompted by a request for fall photos issued via the ATA's Facebook page, Cold Lake teacher Annette LaBrash Blackwell snapped this on Sept. 30, Orange Shirt Day. "The colours really spoke to me that even the trees wore orange that day," she said. See more teacher-shot fall photos on page 11.

Clamping down on COVID

ATA supports vaccine mandates in schools.

Read Dennis Theobald's Q&A on page 2.

See Your Views on page 3.

See news story on page 5.



VaxxFest focuses on Indigenous youth

Festival-style event combines entertainment with vaccination.

See story on page 5.

Time to stand up

New campaign launched in defence of public education.

Read Jonathan Teghtmeyer's editorial on page 2.

See news story on page 4.



Draft curriculum fails to deliver

ATA study taps into teacher expertise and frustration.

Read Jacquie Skytt's Viewpoints column on page 3.

See news story on page 7.

Enough is enough: we're pushing back



EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

The grievances of teachers have been piling up for some time.

Underfunding, growing class sizes, expansion of private and charter schools at the expense of public education, removal of protections for 2SLGBTQ+ students, a lack of engagement and transparency, backwards curriculum, cuts to supports and programs, and a hostile unwarranted and unneeded pension takeover.

Not to mention the abandonment of responsibility last year and this to manage the spread of COVID in schools and the laying off of thousands of education support staff workers in the spring of 2020.

It has felt for some time now that public education has been under attack. The government has brought in numerous reckless changes that have threatened the whole system. Moreover,

the changes are putting our students and their futures at risk.

Enough is enough. Teachers can no longer stand for it. And we know that parents and the public are on our side.

That is why, for the past four months, the Alberta Teachers' Association has been hard at work on developing a wide-reaching and hard-hitting public relations and advocacy campaign to push back.

We knew that parents were our most important ally in this fight and so early

important education issues and then we engaged in online focus group sessions to dig deep on the issues. We carefully constructed a target audience and we hired an innovative campaign team to build out the strategy, messages and content.

For the past two months we have been working hard with them to bring all the pieces together and to completion.

Two weeks ago, we filmed a beautiful flagship commercial that is rolling out this week on television, YouTube, streaming

This is the most comprehensive and extensive campaign I have ever been part of.

But wait, there's more — and this is where you come in. We are going to have a sequence of escalating engagement activities that we will be asking teachers, parents and other supporters of public education to help with. The campaign is designed to turn up the pressure on education decision makers and to achieve real change to how education is handled in this province.

It starts by asking you to sign our open letter to Premier Kenney and Minister LaGrange. Check it out at standforeducation.ca.

After that, grab our social media frame, share it with your friends and family and then stay tuned for the next steps.

We cannot stand down, stand back or stand by while one of the world's best-performing education systems is attacked. Instead, we must stand up and stand for education. ■

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

“ We cannot stand down, stand back or stand by while one of the world's best-performing education systems is attacked. ”

on we reached out to our friends at the Alberta School Councils' Association to see if they would join us. They enthusiastically jumped on board.

We undertook public opinion polling to find out how the public felt about

services, Facebook and Instagram. We also have posters, documentary interviews, digital ads, radio ads and a comprehensive social and email strategy. It all directs people to our campaign website at standforeducation.ca.

Here's our rationale for supporting vaccination mandates



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive Secretary

Question: Why is the Alberta Teachers' Association supporting school board vaccination mandates?

Answer: Like many of my generation, I bear on my upper arm a small souvenir of my very small contribution to one of the greatest accomplishments in the history of medicine. Rather faded now, it is the small circular scar caused by a smallpox vaccination I received as a child. I received that vaccination as part of a 20-year long global effort that finally eradicated the disease in 1980.

Evidence of smallpox has been found in Egyptian mummies; throughout history it was endemic worldwide, occasionally breaking out in epidemics that would claim the lives of a third of those in the populations it infected. When introduced to the Americas through European contact, it literally depopulated the two continents, killing countless millions of Indigenous people and devastating entire civilizations. But variolation and vaccination (beginning in the 19th century) worked; smallpox is one of only two infectious diseases that we have been able to systematically and deliberately eliminate. (Bonus question: What was the other?*)

That vaccination was part of my generation's contribution to ensuring not only our own health, but the health of others in our immediate community and across the planet. As teachers, we have a similar responsibility to support and protect the health and well-being of the students in our care, as well as their families and the communities around us. By choosing to be vaccinated against COVID-19, a disease that has cost the lives of millions worldwide, we affirm that duty.

While there is an abundance of insidious misinformation circulating on social media and other noncredible

implemented by school boards and the Association's statement encouraging them. Our model policy would not force anyone to be vaccinated against their will. Teachers working for school districts that implement mandates will still have choices — to get vaccinated, to be tested regularly, to move to a different teaching environment or to take a leave without pay as a last resort.

We also recommend that such mandates should be temporary in nature and reviewed regularly. Importantly, our [model policy](#) provides for medical and human rights-based accommodations as required by law and states that any

COVID-19 vaccination mandates. The model policy has also been thoroughly vetted by our legal counsel. I'll note that when we polled a representative sample of members in April 2021, only 3.5 per cent indicated that they opposed being vaccinated, and that was before the emergence of the delta variant and additional public health measures.

I appreciate that my response may not satisfy your concerns, but the Association's position on this is well supported by science, legal advice and the popular opinion of teachers. Further information can be found on our [website](#).

If you require further advice or assistance related to your employment situation, you are encouraged to contact Teacher Employment Services at 1-800-232-7208 to seek advice and guidance about your options.

But finally, and most importantly, if you have not already been vaccinated, I urge you to do so. Bookings can be made quickly and easily at www.alberta.ca/covid19-vaccine.

* *Bonus answer:* Rinderpest, a measles-like disease of cattle and related hoofed animals. We are also tantalizingly close to eliminating polio, but that disease is still present in conflict areas of Nigeria, Pakistan and Afghanistan. ■

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

“ Achieving high levels of vaccination is our best way to protect students, fellow staff and their families and the only path out of this pandemic. ”

sources, the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines is [well established by the medical community](#). In fact, the science supporting vaccination is conclusive.

Achieving high levels of vaccination is our best way to protect students, fellow staff and their families, and the only path out of this pandemic.

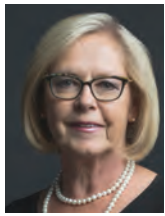
I understand that some readers have concerns about vaccine mandates being

action taken against a teacher who is unvaccinated by choice should be a logical consequence and response to that choice, not disciplinary in nature.

[Our policy](#) supporting reasonable mandatory vaccination in schools has existed since 2017 and was voted on and passed by hundreds of teacher delegates at the Annual Representative Assembly. This pre-existing policy was used to inform our model policy for



I'm proud to be a teacher



VIEWPOINTS

Jacquie Skytt
Special to the ATA News

I've never been more proud to be an Alberta teacher.

I've had a long career as a teacher, school division curriculum co-ordinator, manager with Alberta Education, and the ATA's co-ordinator of Professional Development and assistant executive secretary. I have many memorable moments and achievements, but my most recent one is special.

Like all of you, I was surprised and disappointed that Alberta teachers were pushed out of the curriculum development process. It felt abusive when some people even suggested that Alberta teachers were indoctrinating students with leftist, communist views. (How could this be possible when teachers are required by law to follow provincially mandated curriculum?) When the Association's curriculum report was released on Sept. 29, some columnists, along with their uninformed readers reacting on social media, called the report political and aligned with the left.

What makes me proud to be a teacher when teachers have been marginalized, discredited and undermined so much over the past year? On Sept. 29 the Association released the *Professional Curriculum Analysis and Critique of Alberta Education's 2021 Draft Curriculum*. I'm deeply honoured to have been the project manager for this review and lead author of the report.

After poring through all of the data and the thoughtful submissions from teachers, I emerged with overwhelming pride to be a member of Alberta's teaching profession.

Alberta teachers meet high standards of certification, quality teaching and learnership, and ongoing professional growth. The culture of our profession is to focus on student learning and to work collegially and collaboratively to enhance our practice. We have the right and responsibility to voice our professional opinion on this draft curriculum.

The Association's review of the draft curriculum is a shining star of that professionalism. Work on it started the same day the draft curriculum was released. The goal of the review was to gather teachers' feedback on the quality and utility of the draft curriculum and to share teachers' collective voice.

Between March 29 and May 30, more than 6,500 teachers reviewed the draft curriculum, responded to the Association's survey, developed written submissions and participated in discussion groups to analyze and evaluate the draft. These activities resulted in a huge amount of data for the analysis, which was astonishing to read. On every measure, between 65 and 95 per cent of teachers disagreed or somewhat disagreed that the curriculum met Alberta Education guidelines. Many teachers took great time to deeply analyze the draft and provide thoughtful, detailed responses

that resulted in thousands of written comments for each question.

The data was overwhelming, and I was moved to read these survey comments because teachers' professional expertise and passion for teaching was clear. Teachers expressed frustration, disappointment, disgust and anger with the curriculum philosophy, structure and the terminology used. They said this curriculum reads like one from the 1950s. Many were emotional and deeply concerned, with some being fearful about how this curriculum will negatively impact student learning. Teachers labelled it as a "rank and sort" curriculum that requires students to memorize discrete bits of knowledge instead of a modern curriculum that develops students' knowledge, skills and competencies to prepare them to live and work in the 21st century. Teachers described the draft curriculum as "terrible," "appalling" and a "dumpster fire."

The results of the review and analysis are published in the report, and the view of teachers is that this curriculum has four fundamental flaws:

1. It lacks the foundational elements teachers need to plan for instruction, and the learning outcomes do not adequately describe what students should know and be able to do.
2. It does not reflect current research and best practices for teaching and student learning.
3. It does not support the development of the whole child and establishment of inclusive learning environments.
4. It is in conflict with several legal education frameworks and policies that are the foundation of Alberta's education system.

Clearly, Alberta teachers are experts in curriculum and student learning. They care deeply for students and the future of this province. Reading the submissions made me proud to be a member of this profession, which is collegial, collaborative and deeply committed to education excellence.

As I finish work on this project, I leave you with this: as teachers, you should be proud to put forward your opinions, expertise and principles. Don't be discouraged or pressured to back away by individuals who will attempt to discredit teachers using personal attacks. These people are mistaking your commitment to students, passion for education and expert opinion as political messaging. Well, if it is political to band together to fight for our students' future, then wear that label proudly and continue the good work. ■

Over her teaching career, Jacqueline Skytt has worked in the classroom, for Sturgeon School Division and for Alberta Education. She retired from the Association as assistant executive secretary in 2013.

YOUR VIEWS

FACEBOOK FEEDBACK

On the ATA's statement in support of vaccination mandates for teachers and other school staff

Laurie Thompson

I am a teacher; I am a principal; I am vaccinated. When my choices protect children and families then I am fostering effective relationships and applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit. I can keep going, but the Teaching Quality Standard speaks to safe and caring learning environments!

Golda David

I am a teacher and this doesn't represent my viewpoint either. I am strongly opposed to this statement violating our rights and freedoms and it's doubly alarming coming from a union, which is supposed to be protecting those rights and freedoms. The sole job of a union is to protect the people who pay them — the teachers in this case — and the ATA has clearly failed this time.

Sheveryn Deschambault

I am very proud to belong to an association that views student, staff and community safety as paramount when making difficult calls. This is, after all, our responsibility as educators.

This decision is overwhelmingly

supported by scientific studies and medical experts worldwide. Vaccines are safe and effective for the vast majority of people, and help reduce spread and protect vulnerable populations. It's a shame that our UCP government doesn't acknowledge or respect science in the same way, and leaves the tough calls to others in order to protect their own optics.

Way to go, ATA! This teacher is thrilled!

Jay Grieve

This does not represent what many teachers think.

Madison Grace

Proud of our association for taking this stance!

Steph Alison

Thank you for taking such a strong stance, I fully support this. I've fielded a few questions from members of the public about why there hasn't been a public stance about mandatory vaccines for teachers and school staff yet. This needed to happen.

Mark Leenders

I think the basic problem, the basic dividing point of the vaccine issue, is trust. Those against vaccination do not trust the government or the statistics provided by health-care workers and experts. ... I am pleased that the ATA has sided with the science and math its members teach, and trusted the health professions. Well done ATA!



FOR THE RECORD

“ This #WorldTeachersDay I would like to recognize teachers for the tremendous work they do every single day. Teachers work tirelessly to ensure every student receives the best education possible. ”

– Tweet from Education Minister Adriana LaGrange

ATA joins parent group to stand up for education

New campaign brings parents and teachers together to ensure no student is left behind

ATA News Staff

The government's reckless changes to public education are putting our children's future at risk. That's the message coming out of a new campaign launched this week by the Alberta Teachers' Association.

The campaign is designed to respond to a number of threats facing Alberta's world-class public education system, from the problematic draft curriculum, to larger class sizes, to funding cuts. Produced in partnership with the Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA), the campaign is intended to build awareness and support for education by building an alliance of parents and teachers who will stand up and fight back for Alberta's children and their futures.

"These changes cannot stand," says ATA president Jason Schilling. "As teachers, we know funding cuts, class sizes and these changes to the curriculum can be dangerous."

Schilling says the consequences can be severe: students will experience learning gaps in important subjects while receiving an overload of irrelevant and inappropriate information. Funding and classroom issues mean a lack of individual time with teachers, the loss of special education supports and reduced access to programs.

As a parent, ASCA president Brandi Rai is also concerned.

"These children are the future leaders of our province — the decisions we make about public education now will affect all of us."

The ATA's new campaign highlights these issues and encourages supporters to take action.

Challenging experiences

The campaign launched with a video that focuses on children's experiences through the challenges of these attacks on education. The impactful spot features metaphors grounded in truth — school hallway lights dramatically turning off, books slamming shut as students try to read them — to convey the message of children being left behind. The video ends with a rallying call for the viewer to join parents, teachers and school boards to stand up for public education.

In addition to this ad, the ATA will also be producing a series of videos featuring personal and poignant interviews from teachers and parents. These videos focus on their lived experiences and reflect the importance of public education and the impact these drastic changes will have.

Each video focuses on a different side of the story: students' futures in jeopardy, teachers not being consulted in the curriculum drafting process and the impact on the future of Alberta.

"This campaign is the first step toward our goal of building pressure for government decisions that are pro-public education," says Schilling. "We are fighting to ensure the government understands that this is a big issue for Albertans."

Schilling says the campaign will turn up the pressure on MLAs and encourage them to push back against the draft curriculum, funding cuts and increasing class sizes. He hopes they might begin speaking up in their caucus and the legislature in support of public education.

"Teachers and parents will always put kids first," Schilling says. "Through the pandemic, we have been working together to ensure students continue to have the best opportunities to learn and be safe doing so. Now we are coming together once again to fight for their education, their opportunities and their futures." ■

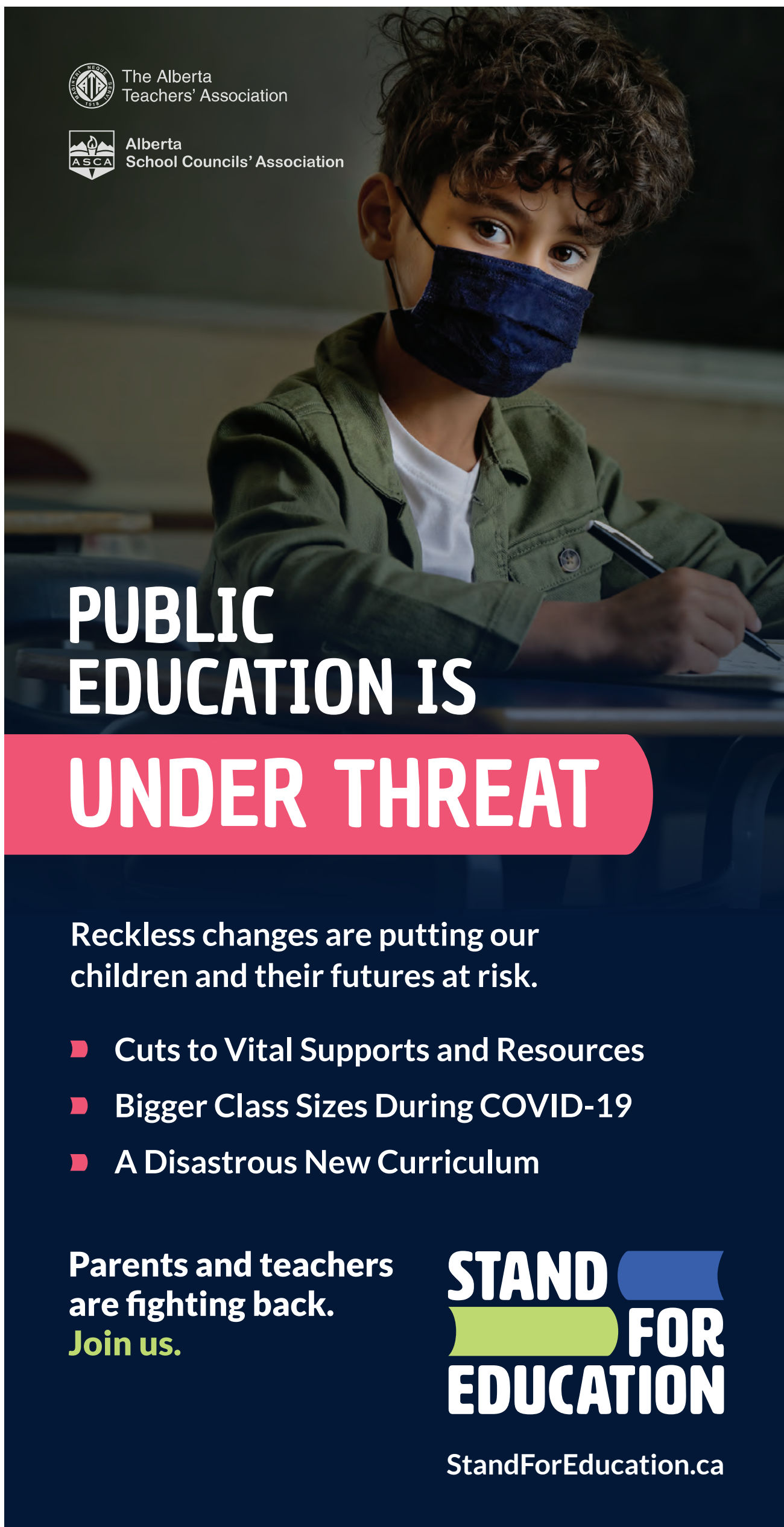
WHERE WILL I SEE IT?

The campaign will include

- Television ads
- Preroll video for streaming services and online
- Radio ads
- Posters
- Ads on Google, Facebook and other social media sites
- Documentary videos

For how long?

- The campaign will run from Oct. 11 to Nov. 15.
- Additional media messages will run again in January.
- Advocacy and social media initiatives will run throughout the school year.



The Alberta Teachers' Association
Alberta School Councils' Association

PUBLIC EDUCATION IS UNDER THREAT

Reckless changes are putting our children and their futures at risk.

- ▶ Cuts to Vital Supports and Resources
- ▶ Bigger Class Sizes During COVID-19
- ▶ A Disastrous New Curriculum

Parents and teachers are fighting back.
Join us.

STAND FOR EDUCATION

StandForEducation.ca

A new public relations campaign produced by the ATA in partnership with the Alberta School Councils' Association aims to put pressure on government to make decisions that support public education.

HOW TO STAND UP

Sign the open letter at www.StandForEducation.ca.

Vaccination policies taking root in schools

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

Several school boards throughout the province have adopted vaccination policies following an official statement from the Alberta Teachers' Association in favour of reasonable policies that require school staff to be vaccinated.

The ATA issued a statement on Sept. 28 encouraging the government of Alberta or, in its absence, individual school boards, to introduce policies requiring teachers to be vaccinated against COVID-19, provided such policies are consistent with the respective collective agreement and comply with human rights legislation.

"The best way to support student safety at a time when so many students cannot be vaccinated is to ensure that the adults around them are vaccinated," said ATA president Jason Schilling in the statement.

"We cannot mandate vaccination for our members so we are making it clear that we believe those who can — like the Government of Alberta or individual school boards — should."

In the week following the statement's release, several school boards in the province announced that they were implementing their own vaccination mandates, including both public and Catholic boards in Edmonton and Calgary.

Two days after the ATA policy release, the government of Alberta announced a new proof of vaccination policy for all public service employees. And on Oct. 5, a joint letter from Education Minister Adriana LaGrange and Health Minister Jason Copping was distributed to various education stakeholders including school board chairs and superintendents. The letter called for school authorities to develop policies

that require proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test for any adult who enters a school.

"Taking the steps necessary to have these measures in place as soon as possible will help all of us look out for our fellow Albertans and protect our province's health-care system," the letter stated.

"Vaccines are among our best weapons to combat this pandemic, and the best way to protect children is to ensure the adults around them are vaccinated. During this critical time we must do all we can to reinforce that message — and to encourage as many Albertans as possible to get vaccinated."

Legal background

Prior to formulating and releasing its statement, the ATA received legal advice that helped to define the conditions the ATA believes are required for a reasonable vaccine mandate. These conditions include that mandates are temporary and reviewable, that reasonable accommodations are available and that noncompliance is handled in a way that is nondisciplinary but still protects school safety.

The statement indicated that the Association does not anticipate providing support to members wishing to challenge vaccine mandates that meet the criteria outlined in the statement.

"We will not be part of opposing or challenging vaccine mandates, as long as the policies are reasonable," Schilling said. "School boards will have to ensure that employee privacy is respected as much as possible and personal information will have to be stored securely, but this is an area where a balancing of rights and responsibilities is warranted."

Since making the announcement, the ATA has received many calls and emails

from members, both in support and opposed to the position taken. Schilling said the organization is unwavering in its support of reasonably structured and implemented vaccination policies.

"Credible legal and medical opinions are clearly weighted in favour of going this direction," he said. "We are absolutely committed to protecting teachers' rights. At the same time, we must ensure we're doing as much as is reasonably possible to protect children and prevent the spread of COVID-19 — our recommendations find that balance."

Schilling pointed out that the new policy statement is consistent with pre-existing Association policy on vaccinations previously approved by the ATA's Annual Representative Assembly.

The Association has also introduced directives that mandate proof of vaccination requirements for anyone to attend any in-person events organized by the ATA or any of its subgroups.

Contact tracing returns ... with a catch

In other COVID/school-related news, on Oct. 5 the province announced additional protection measures, including public reporting of COVID-19 cases in schools, initiating contact notification in schools, clarifying COVID-19 outbreak definitions and providing rapid testing kits.

"As we have said all along, as the pandemic evolves, we will make adjustments when necessary to keep students and staff safe," LaGrange said. "The actions we are taking right now will help students to continue learning safely in person as we combat this fourth wave. Keeping students, parents and school communities safe remains our top priority."

The ATA has been calling for the return of contact tracing for months.

And while the news is welcome, it's troubling that the province won't be taking over contact tracing until mid-November, placing the responsibility on school administration in the interim, Schilling said.

"With this government, even when they do the right thing, it's way too late and it places a huge burden on others — in this instance, school administrators and other staff," Schilling said.

Schilling has sent a letter to LaGrange, copied to the Alberta School Boards Association and the College of Alberta School Superintendents, calling for greater supports for administrators who are being asked to take up contact notification activities until Alberta Health Services sets up its recently dissolved contact tracing program.

In the letter, Schilling calls for the government, school boards and superintendents to support schools and administrators by providing additional funds to support staffing needs, developing templates that can be used, and clearly articulating procedures, policies and definitions related to the notification and testing programs announced. ■

A Q&A outlining further details related to the vaccination of employees is available at www.teachers.ab.ca > COVID-19 > COVID-19 FAQs.

Members are invited to contact the Association for advice on whether a vaccine mandate meets the above criteria or if they are unable to be vaccinated on the basis of a protected ground under the *Alberta Human Rights Act* and are not being accommodated to the point of undue hardship.

VaxxFest provides COVID protection to youth

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

Come for the protection against COVID-19 and stay for the food, fun and prizes.

That was the slogan of VaxxFest, a festival-style event held in southern Alberta to get more First Nations people vaccinated.

Billed as "the best vaccination event you'll ever experience," the event took place on the Stoney Nakoda and Tsuut'ina first nations from Sept. 24 to 26. It included a live DJ, snacks, drive-in movies and a vaccination tent where people could get their COVID-19 shot. A range of Indigenous celebrities were also on hand to socialize with attendees.

The event was created by a project called The Power of 100, which aims to achieve a 100 per cent COVID-19 vaccination rate for all First Nations in Canada. It's the creation of Dr. Lana Potts, medical director at Aakom Kiyii Health Services Centre in Piikani and Dr. James Makokis, a family doctor from Saddle Lake First Nation.

"When a herd of buffalo face a threat, they surround their young and face the danger head on. Their unity is their protection. COVID-19 is devastating our communities, but we can stand strong and ensure our future by vaccinating together," states the Power of 100 website.

The fourth wave of COVID-19 is causing more outbreaks in First

Nations communities than it has during previous outbreaks, and First Nations Peoples are impacted by the deadly virus 13 times more than non-Indigenous people, Potts said.

"VaxxFest aims to protect the herd by encouraging youth to get behind their Elders, 95 per cent of whom are fully vaccinated," Potts said.

The three-day event saw 138 people get vaccinated.

Personal connection

The event kicked off with renowned hoop dancer James Jones (known as Notorious Cree) and popular Indigenous social influencer Kendra Jessie each taking their first dose of the vaccine after recently contracting COVID-19.

"Once we personally went through COVID-19 and realized how it affected us as fairly healthy people, we knew the vaccine was an important step in helping protect ourselves from other strains of the virus and keep others safe," Jones said. "I hope it encourages other youth to connect with their doctors and trusted health professionals to learn more and get the shot."

Attendees had a chance to win prizes like \$100 gift cards, MacBooks and iPads, while also meeting a variety of Indigenous celebrities, such as famous TikTok creator Kairyn Potts, singer Fawn Wood and actor/comedian Conway Kootenay (aka Smudge Pan).

Makokis was on hand with partner Anthony Johnson. The pair formed Team



Taking place in southern Alberta in late September, the first VaxxFest event saw 138 people receive a COVID-19 vaccination. The next iteration is scheduled for Oct. 15 and 16 in Onion Lake, Sask.

Ahkameyimok during a victorious turn on *The Amazing Race Canada* in 2019. Makokis has since become a sought-after speaker at many ATA events.

"The choice to get vaccinated is an individual decision that affects everyone and the overall health of our people. Getting vaccinated helps protect our Elders and communities from the COVID-19 virus, and those who are vaccinated are less likely to end up in hospital," he said. "This is why we encouraged our young people who are the most at risk to show up to this weekend and get vaccinated."

Promotion for the event included the

school divisions operated by the Stoney and Tsuut'ina first nations.

Teacher Marie Daumler, who works for the Stoney Education Authority, visited the event along with some colleagues.

She was impressed by the welcoming atmosphere, which helped allay fears that some had around getting vaccinated. Having the opportunity to meet role models in their own community was a great benefit to students, she said.

"I think anything that can be done to put people at ease and see the bigger picture is awesome." ■

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*All entries are also eligible for a participation reward and implementation funding.

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SOCIAL STUDIES

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Draft fails to meet government standards

ATA curriculum study draws responses from 6,500 teachers

Kate Toogood
ATA News Staff

If the Alberta government were grading the new draft K-6 curriculum, it would have to fail itself.

That's the conclusion of a professional review conducted by the Alberta Teachers' Association, which included feedback gained through an online survey, as well as written submissions and focus groups, with more than 6,500 teacher participants. The review assessed the curriculum by comparing the draft to the government of Alberta's own vision.

"The government may have set out to develop a high-quality curriculum, but our analysis shows they have failed to meet their own goals," says ATA president Jason Schilling. "If they won't listen to the thousands of teachers who have spoken, perhaps they will listen to themselves."

In addition to failing to meet provincial guidelines, other key findings of the report show that the new curriculum has a variety of shortcomings:

- not logically sequenced and not appropriately designed for teacher use;
- narrowly defined content that does not reflect the development of knowledge, understanding and skills for the 21st century;
- developmentally inappropriate learning outcomes that lack high academic standards and do not adequately describe what students must know and be able to do;
- inclusion of Indigenous content that is not authentic and appears as tokenism;
- inadequate inclusion of francophone histories, contributions and perspectives;
- lack of respect for Alberta's diversity and support for a peaceful, pluralistic society;
- failure to address racism, sexism and other forms of bigotry, and the use of language that actually promotes such bigotry; and
- inclusion of world religions as a mandatory topic in K-12, which infringes on the religious freedoms of Alberta parents.

Although the review contained many findings that showed the curriculum fell short, for Schilling, one of the most outrageous revelations was the lack of classroom experience of the draft's writers.

"This curriculum is based on ideological, antiquated ideas of what children should learn, by those who seem to have no experience with teaching in Albertan or even Canadian classrooms," he says. "Why would the government think it is acceptable to allow people with no understanding of the purpose of curriculum, or how to bring it to life, to guide this process?"

Ultimately, due to the draft's illogical, unfocused and unorganized condition, Schilling says it is children who will suffer.

"How can we expect kids to thrive in the modern world if we don't prepare them with the skills or knowledge they'll need?"

angry frustrated appalled
content disbelief grade
shocked
children horrified inappropriate racist
disgusted curriculum thinking
learning lack developmentally



ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

"If this curriculum moves ahead, Alberta's kids will get left behind and be set up for failure in the 21st century."

Although the teaching profession is frustrated by being left out of the curriculum development process, Schilling says teachers are more than willing to assist the government with a rewrite that reflects their extensive expertise and knowledge.

"As teachers, we're committed to supporting the

development of a high-quality curriculum, so the Association prepared to work in partnership with the government of Alberta toward that end," he says.

"We're happy to come to the table to co-create a modern curriculum that meets the needs of Alberta students."

Schilling said that he had requested a meeting with the minister in September to discuss the curriculum draft but was told there was no time available. ■



Remember that you're making a difference

Often when people ask me how's it going, I give my standard "It's fine." If you have ever spent time with me, you'll come to know that when I say things are fine, it can mean 100 things, from everything really is fine to I won't talk about what I know or feel for a variety of reasons.

That being said, I'll admit that, for me, these last few weeks have not been so fine. And I know from my conversations with teachers and members of Council that I am not alone. These last few weeks have been relentless and a bit of struggle — long days compounded by sleepless nights. Like many of you, I am carrying a lot stress and frustration over the handling of the pandemic in our province and our schools.

But I want to focus on something a bit more positive.

Earlier this month, I attended portions of the ATA's Women in Leadership Committee. The chair of the committee, Nancy Ball, started the meeting with a TEDx Talk by Jaz Ampaw-Farr titled "The Power of Everyday Heroes." The description from TEDx says, "Jaz is passionate about the difference teachers make. Through celebration and provocation, she uses the transformative power of her own story to inspire the ordinary heroes of education — teachers."

As Ampaw-Farr shared her story of how teachers helped her become the successful person she is today, I was struck by her words and emotion. As teachers we sometimes lose sight of the positive impact we have on our students. This short video reminds us of the importance of our work, especially during stressful times.

I was further reminded of our positive impact later in the week when I received an email from a former student, now the father of three, all of whom attend public school (which I will admit made me feel a bit old). He thanked me and the Association for the principled stance we have taken throughout the pandemic. He stated that he saw our hard work and that he was grateful we were looking out for his children. This email came when I needed it most.

It was a reminder of why I deeply admire and respect the work of teachers and administrators. In case it hasn't been said enough, I'm grateful for your passion and for the difference you make, day in and day out. Your dedication inspires me, especially on those days when things don't feel so fine. ■




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ATA 101

AN INTRODUCTION TO
YOUR ASSOCIATION

Bargaining – a three-stage process



ATA 101 is a feature series aimed at informing members, both new and experienced, about various aspects of the Alberta Teachers' Association.

This instalment explains the basics of the three-stage bargaining process employed to negotiate teacher collective agreements. Watch for additional instalments in upcoming issues of the ATA News.

The negotiation of teacher collective agreements takes place in three stages.

1 LIST BARGAINING

Negotiation on the assignment of matters to central and local bargaining

RESULTS IN TWO LISTS

1. Matters to be bargained centrally
2. Matters to be bargained locally

Matters to be negotiated come from teachers through the ATA and from the government and school boards through the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association.

PARTICIPANTS

- ATA's Central Table Bargaining Committee (CTBC)
- Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association (TEBA)

As bargaining proceeds, the ATA shares information and gathers feedback from members through a variety of methods, including telephone town halls, the Bargainers' Blog and webcasts.

2 CENTRAL TABLE BARGAINING

Negotiation on matters assigned to central bargaining

RESULTS IN A CENTRAL TABLE AGREEMENT

- Is incorporated into all 61 local collective agreements
- Requires provincewide ratification from teachers and TEBA members

PARTICIPANTS

- CTBC
- TEBA

3 LOCAL BARGAINING

Negotiation on matters assigned to local bargaining

RESULTS IN A LOCAL AGREEMENT

- Requires ratification by bargaining unit and school board(s)

PARTICIPANTS

- ATA on behalf of individual bargaining units
- Individual school boards

GETTING PAST DISAGREEMENT

If agreement cannot be reached on items being negotiated at a central or local table, either party may apply to have a government-appointed mediator come to the table to help.

The mediator may help the parties reach a negotiated agreement, write a recommendation for settlement or determine that the two parties are too far apart to reach a settlement. If the parties are too far apart, the mediator would "write out" of the dispute.

At this point, after a 14-day cooling off period, either side can move toward job action (a strike or lockout). A negotiated agreement can occur at any time while strike or lockout votes are taking place.

FOR UP-TO-DATE BARGAINING INFORMATION

- Subscribe to Members' Updates at <https://bit.ly/MembersUpdate>
- Watch the ATA's social media channels
- Visit the ATA website

WHO HAS A SEAT AT THE TABLE?

WHO SITS AT THE CENTRAL TABLE?

Central Table Bargaining Committee

The ATA's CTBC comprises five members of Provincial Executive Council, the executive secretary (or designate) and the associate co-ordinator of collective bargaining.

Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association

TEBA includes representatives of government and school boards.

WHO SITS AT THE LOCAL TABLES?

Teacher Welfare Committee

Each local teacher welfare committee (formerly economic policy committee) has a negotiating subcommittee to represent teachers at the local table, along with an executive staff officer assigned by the ATA to act as representative of the bargaining agent.

School Board Negotiation Committee

School boards appoint their own negotiation committees.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?



2020 NEGOTIATIONS

- Central table bargaining is underway.

Central table bargaining begins

Kate Toogood
ATA News Staff

Following some delays related to the pandemic and list arbitration, central table collective bargaining has begun. The Central Table Bargaining Committee (CTBC) met with the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association (TEBA) on Wednesday, Sept. 29 to commence bargaining and exchange initial proposals.

Peter MacKay, chair of CTBC and ATA district representative for North West, says the committee is expecting this round of negotiations to be different from previous ones, but they are prepared for the road ahead.

"We will need to be very strategic, and we will want to take our time," he says. "There are lots of issues to discuss, and

we may need to play our cards close to our chests."

MacKay says one card they'll be keeping close to the chest relates to the exchange of opening proposals. CTBC got a sense early that TEBA would not be tabling the full details of all the items in its opening proposal. As a result, TEBA has decided not to table its full proposal at first either.

This means a delay in the release of the full proposal to members.

"Normally, we would provide to members the full initial proposal after it has been tabled, but since we have reserved some items for tabling later, we can only share with members the items that have been put on the table so far," MacKay says. "In fair negotiations, we must ensure that the other side is given the first look at our proposal."

"As such, we must wait to publish our full, detailed initial proposal until we have presented each element to TEBA in its entirety."

MacKay says that once those reserved positions are tabled, teachers will be notified and an updated document will be placed on the ATA website.

Teachers were given a first glimpse of the initial draft proposal for collective bargaining via a telephone townhall and webcast on Sept. 21 and 22. There they received an overview of the proposal and were given the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback. Overall, roughly 6,000 teachers attended the two events.

Sean Brown, ATA associate co-ordinator of collective bargaining, says the response from members from September's engagement events and


the discussion groups last spring was invaluable.

"It is critical for us to hear from teachers, because we bargain for teachers," he says. "We benefited greatly from teachers' comments on the initial proposal."

Brown says the overall tone of the first days of bargaining was cordial and productive.

"At the first meeting we established rules under which we will conduct these negotiations, which includes commitments from both sides to keeping discussions at the table confidential and privileged," he says.

"We will honour these commitments, but we will also continue to provide you with updates as we continue to meet — even if sometimes those updates lack specificity." ■



The Alberta Teachers' Association

LISA 2021

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TES-MS-79F/2021

REPRESENT YOUR COLLEAGUES ON THE Alberta Advisory Committee on Educational Studies.

What is the committee?
This position is an opportunity to represent your colleagues and the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) on the Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies (AACES), an external committee that encourages and financially supports educational studies.


Who is eligible to apply?
All ATA members holding the highest level of membership available to them are eligible for the position. The successful candidate for the position will possess experience and expertise in academia related to educational studies. A graduate degree in education is considered an asset. In addition, consideration shall be given to those who have evidenced commitment to the Association through attendance at the Annual Representative Assembly or the Summer Conference, and/or the holding of office in a local, specialist council, bargaining unit or convention association.

How do I apply?
To apply for this position, please complete the online application form, available in the Members Only section of the website, by the closing date for the position. All applicants are encouraged to reach out to their district representative(s) to better understand the work that ATA representatives to external committees undertake.

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

**Application
Deadline:**

JAN 30

 The Alberta Teachers' Association



Planning a leave of absence?

Make sure your e-mail is up to date!
Effective December 2021, requests for payment will now be sent via e-mail, not letter.

Make sure you maintain your membership status in good standing, by paying your leave of absence fees when you take a leave. The Association invoices teachers on leave twice a year (in September and February).


-  **To update your membership profile,** visit www.teachers.ab.ca and click on Update your Profile.
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SLIP US A TIP!

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

Those autumn leaves

Teachers all over the province captured the glorious colours of fall in their viewfinders. See our Facebook page for more dazzling images.



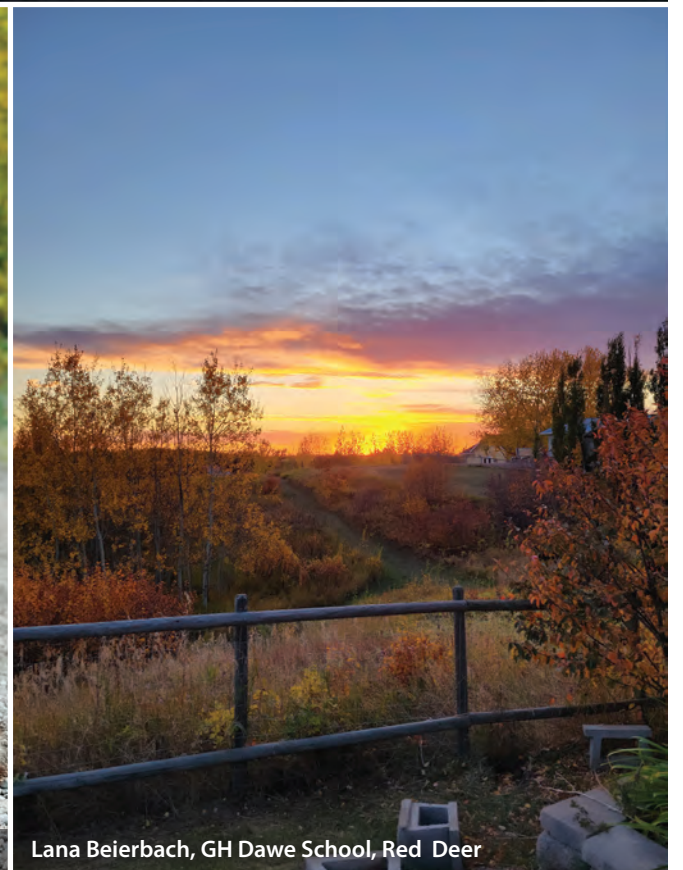
Sandra Ray, inclusive education co-ordinator, St. Albert Public Schools



Heather Taylor, Elmwood School, Edmonton



Evie Rastas, Florence Hallock School, Edmonton



Lana Beierbach, GH Dawe School, Red Deer



Jason Swanton, Western Canada High School, Calgary



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Teacher finds her groove

New assignment brings apprehension then joyful expression for 20-year veteran

SUCCESS STORIES

Nolana Wieclaw
Special to the ATA News

I am a teacher. Yet I feel like a rock star and this is why.

Like many of you reading this article, I find myself teaching new classes this fall. Not only am I a Grade 2 teacher this

year, but I am also the Division 1 music teacher. For me, this means I teach music to about 100 kids each week from kindergarten to Grade 2. Music is a subject that, in my 20-year career, I have not yet taught.

I love music. Music lives in my heart. Music makes me feel. Yet I was not sure I wanted to share this passion with students. I thought maybe my love of music would wane and music would become a chore instead of a love if I "had to teach it."

My apprehensions have melted away. Teaching music to little kids is awesome! They love me! (Well, most of them, anyway!) We sing, we dance, we are silly, we play instruments and attempt to find the beat. I find myself teaching them old classics such as "On Top of Spaghetti" and "Wheels on the Bus" while they are teaching me new songs like "Keep the Beat" from a Netflix movie called *VIVO*. (I had no idea!)

Now that I teach a lot of students in my school, and not just my Grade 2



class, I often hear "Hi Mrs. Wieclaw!" out on the playground, after school when the buses are pulling out, and so many times at our community swimming pool or grocery store. It seems like I am noticed everywhere, which makes me feel like a rock star! My fans (aka my students) are ready to give me high-fives, hellos, hugs and an occasional "I love you!" shout-out any time of the day!

A shout-out to my own music mentors would be appropriate right about now. Teaching new subjects is daunting and finding resources can be a challenge. Thank you to Mrs. Essington, Mrs. Matthews and Ms. Olson for helping me with this new challenge of teaching music. (Attention new teachers: Even old teachers like me need mentors. You do too! Reach out and find a great teacher to learn from. I have been blessed in my teaching career with so many mentors!)

Perhaps my attitude towards teaching music will change after I help plan our schoolwide Christmas concert. I may feel more like a washed-up, has-been rock star. Ha ha! I will always have the memories of the good times. For now, I will rock on. ■

Nolana Wieclaw teaches at Clear Vista School in Wetaskiwin.



SUPPLIED

Becoming a new music teacher after 20 years in the classroom was a scary but ultimately positive change for Wetaskiwin teacher Nolana Wieclaw.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Success Stories is an ongoing feature that enables teachers to share their successes with their colleagues. To submit an idea or an article about a new program or approach that you've instituted, please contact managing editor Cory Hare at cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

NOTICES

On June 14, 2021, a hearing committee of the Professional Conduct Committee established under the *Teaching Profession Act* found that Douglas Lang engaged in unprofessional conduct. The hearing committee declared Lang permanently ineligible for membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association effective June 14, 2021.

On June 21, 2021, a hearing committee of the Professional Conduct Committee established under the *Teaching Profession Act* found that Edwin Arias engaged in unprofessional conduct. The hearing committee declared Arias permanently ineligible for membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association effective June 21, 2021.

PD staff officer takes on new role

Kim Clement
ATA News Staff

Veteran staff officer Nancy Luyckfassel has taken on the newly created role of associate co-ordinator in the ATA's Professional Development program area. She assumed the role on Oct. 1.

Luyckfassel joined the Alberta Teachers' Association as a Professional Development staff officer in 2016 and has focused much of her attention on improving the work and effectiveness of the ATA's PD Instructors and Administrator Instructor Corps, in addition to undertaking other assignments related to Curriculum Committee, the Beginning Teachers' Conference and Ever Active Schools.

Prior to joining the Association, Luyckfassel worked as a teacher and school leader in Elk Island Schools and, prior to that, taught with Rocky View Schools.

"The work I most look forward to

is connecting with members, through committees, locals, specialist councils and the instructors' corps, to name just a few," Luyckfassel said.

ATA executive secretary Dennis Theobald said that Luyckfassel has demonstrated a commitment to fostering positive, supportive relationships with her colleagues.

"Her personal integrity and her commitment to improving service to members were all commented upon as Council arrived at the decision to appoint her to this newly established designation," he said.

In addition to her bachelor of education, Luyckfassel attained a master of education degree in secondary education, focusing on second language instruction, in-school counselling and teacher wellness. During a recent sabbatical, she completed a certificate in adult and continuing education from the University of Victoria.

Although she is excited about her new role, there are some challenges



Nancy Luyckfassel, PD associate co-ordinator

ahead, including the government's draft K-6 curriculum.

"The proposed K-6 draft curriculum is a serious concern for me and will be a focus of my work in this role," Luyckfassel said. ■

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Being there is a teacher's professional duty



PITFALLS AND PRECAUTIONS

Chris Gibbon
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.

A teacher who chose to be on the golf course when they should have been online teaching their students was found guilty of unprofessional conduct.

The pandemic brought many challenges to everyone, and when golf courses reopened, it brought

back a sense of normalcy to so many people. In this case, the teacher chose on multiple occasions to leave their online classroom both before the lunch hour and before the end of the day to play a round of golf. While the Alberta Teachers' Association condones all teachers living a healthy and active lifestyle, it should not be during the school day unless they are involved in a classroom activity with their students or during unassigned time.

When school divisions transitioned to online instruction, many of them required their employees to sign an agreement that they would be available online for instruction of students in either a group setting or one to one for a specific period of time during the school day. When this teacher chose to golf rather than be available online, they violated that trust relationship with their employer. Further to that violation of trust, when asked by the employer, the teacher did not readily admit that they had golfed on multiple occasions. Sadly, it took some sleuthing by

the employer to discover that the teacher had golfed many times in May and June rather than the one time that they first admitted to.

As a result of their actions, the teacher was deducted at least seven days' pay by the employer and received a letter of reprimand. The committee, in its decision, considered the employer's penalty and in turn imposed both a fine and letter of reprimand. If the fine was not paid within 60 days of receipt of the decision, the teacher would be suspended from the Association until the fine was paid in full.

Through their short-sighted decision to golf during the school day, the teacher neglected to behave in the best interests of the teaching profession. These actions had the potential to harm the reputation of the entire teaching profession. Further, this teacher did not have the best interests of students in mind when they chose to golf during the school day. This was a contradiction and violation of the division's guidelines for working from home. ■

Council proposes electronic voting as new norm

PEC POINTS

Audrey Dutka
ATA News Staff

Association administrative guidelines provide for the attendance of observers at selected portions of Council meetings. Association members who are interested in observing selected portions of Council meetings at their own expense are advised to contact their district representative.

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held June 28, 2021, via virtual platform

1. Appointed an Association representative to the board of the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund, effective June 30, 2021.

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held Aug. 9, 2021, via virtual platform

1. Approved in principle for distribution a document entitled "Priority Expectations of Alberta Teachers for the Return to School During the COVID-19 Pandemic—Fall 2021."

2. Authorized the Association to provide the minister of education with a copy of an Association-led study consisting of an online survey open to all Alberta teachers, written submissions from select specialist councils and a one-day curriculum circle of classroom teachers who participated in guided conversations about the government's draft K-6 curriculum, and to call for

- 1) a moratorium to be placed on piloting the K-6 draft curriculum and further development of the Grades 7-9 and 10-12 curricula;
- 2) a provincial curriculum committee to be established including representatives from the Alberta education stakeholder groups including Indigenous representatives and Alberta Francophone representatives, with the mandate to
 - a) develop a new framework for K-12 curriculum development,
 - b) oversee the development and piloting of a new K-12 curriculum,
 - c) oversee the development and/or selection of teaching and learning resources for the new K-12 curriculum, and
 - d) design and facilitate the implementation of the provincial curriculum;
- 3) the development of the curriculum to be led by curriculum working groups, including practising teachers identified by the profession, representatives of the Alberta teacher preparation institutions, experts in subject disciplines, human rights scholars, members of the Indigenous community and members of the Alberta francophone community, as appropriate;
- 4) the curriculum working groups to review and make all necessary revisions to the K-6 draft curriculum (2021) considering all the input received and

draft the curriculum consistent with the well-established standards of an Alberta program of studies; and

- 5) the development of the curriculum to be open and transparent and include authentic opportunities for public consultation prior to piloting.

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held Aug. 23, 2021, via virtual platform

1. Approved the 2021 public relations campaign concepts.

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held Sept. 9, 2021, via virtual platform

1. Authorized the Association to conclude all legal proceedings with respect to the challenge of Treasury Board and Ministry of Finance Ministerial Order No 42/2020.

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held Sept. 16-17, 2021, via virtual platform

1. Approved the final form of one electoral ballot for distribution to the membership, which would amend General Bylaw 70 to indicate that voting in a Provincial Executive Council election or byelection shall be done by electronic means in accordance with processes set out in the Association's Administrative Guidelines.

2. Appointed Nancy Luyckfassel as associate co-ordinator in the Professional Development program area, effective Oct. 1, 2021.

3. Authorized disbursement of the 2021/22 budget for international cooperation for 12 international goals, including Project Overseas, Teachers' Action for Gender Equality, Change for Children PD by Alberta Teachers and Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan.

4. Approved a \$2,000 donation to MediaSmarts in support of Media Literacy Week, taking place Oct. 25-30, 2021.

5. Approved the names of four teachers for nomination to the Indigenous Education PD Facilitator Corps name bank.

6. In accordance with 31(2) of the *Teaching Profession Act*, approved an extension to the 120-day hearing time period for one outstanding case of alleged unprofessional conduct.

7. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of one charge of unprofessional conduct. The teacher was convicted of an indictable offence under the Criminal Code and was therefore guilty of unprofessional conduct under the *Teaching Profession Act*. The hearing committee ordered the penalty of a declaration that the teacher be permanently ineligible for membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association and a recommendation to the minister of education to cancel the teacher's teaching certificate.

8. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of one charge of unprofessional conduct for engaging in conduct for which the teacher was convicted of an indictable offence under the Criminal Code for unlawfully committing a sexual assault upon a person. The hearing committee imposed a penalty of a declaration of permanent ineligibility for membership in the Association and a recommendation to the minister of education to permanently cancel the teacher's teaching certificate.

9. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of two charges of unprofessional conduct for communicating with students through text messages about drug use, the teacher's sexual activity, the students' sexual activity, and sharing images and videos with students that were of a sexually graphic nature, thus failing to treat the students with dignity and respect and failing to be considerate of the students' circumstances. The hearing committee imposed penalties of a letter of severe reprimand, a declaration that the teacher is permanently ineligible for membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association, a fine of \$2,000 and a recommendation to the minister of education to cancel the teacher's teaching certificate.

10. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of one charge of unprofessional conduct for engaging in conduct for which the teacher was convicted of an indictable offence under the Criminal Code of Canada for fraud exceeding \$5,000. The hearing committee imposed a penalty of a letter of severe reprimand, a declaration of ineligibility for membership in the Association for a period of two years and a recommendation to the minister of education to suspend the teacher's teaching certificate for a period of two years.

11. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of one charge of unprofessional conduct for engaging in a physical struggle over a backpack with a student. The hearing committee imposed a penalty of a letter of reprimand.

12. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of four charges of unprofessional conduct, for displaying poor physical boundaries while demonstrating skills to students during team drills and for making condescending remarks to students. The hearing committee ordered penalties of fines of \$250 and letters of reprimand for each of the four charges.

13. Authorized a one-time addition of \$750 to the equipment allowance provided to Council members for the 2021/22 fiscal year to assist with the purchase of equipment, such as computer chairs and desks, used during virtual meetings.

14. Approved for submission to the 2022 Annual Representative Assembly a resolution that long-term policy 1.3.7.7 be amended to read, "When a substitute teacher is required to spend a school day on Association business, the Association pays for their time at [an average rate of substitute pay] the highest daily rate for substitute teachers within the province." ■

TALENTED

October 12, 2021 | Volume 56, Number 3

ENCHANTMENT UNDER THE SEA

The ATA's SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS' CONFERENCE will take place on Oct. 22 and 23. Online registration is available at <https://cutt.ly/2021STC>. Deadline: Oct. 15.

Teachers share memorable moments from their "subbing" experiences.

Those aren't your knuckles!

I was subbing in a kindergarten class and the teacher was observing the kids for an assessment. We were playing a game to see if they knew their body parts and when I asked, "Where are your knuckles?" one little guy grabbed his chest ... he got mixed up between knuckles and nipples! The teacher and I got the giggles after that. You never know what you will get in kindergarten!

– Tara Kwasney

Unforgettable at any age

As a retired teacher and substitute too, I always hear "Did you teach my mom or dad?" Also "My mom says you taught her." One day subbing in Grade 1, a student looked at my face and the wrinkles and said, "Wow, are you ever old!" Will never forget that.

– Erika Foley

Minor aches and pains

When in a kindergarten class, I took the children to the gym, and one little tyke says to me, "Miss, I cannot run today. I got a bum knee."

I looked at him and said incredulously, "You are four, and you've got a BUM KNEE???"

Little ones are adorable.

– Kimerica Stephanie Parr Ottogalli

According to my calculations ...

Silent reading time in Grade 1. One little guy was looking at a book about machines. He raised his hand and I went over to see what was up. "What's this one?" "Oh, that's a great big machine called the Large Hadron Collider! Pretty cool, huh?" "But what does it do?" "Um....."

Never thought I'd be asked to explain theoretical physics in a whisper voice to a six year old!

– Caitlin Elizabeth

Sub on the battlefield

When I was teaching junior high in my late 20s, I had a Grade 7 student ask me if I was alive for any of the wars ... she was talking about world wars one and two.

– Shari Harris-Doetzel

Baby bump

I was hugely pregnant (around 34 weeks) subbing in a Grade 1 class. I was talking to one of the kids about the baby and another little boy overheard and said, "You're having a baby!?" That's why you look like [points in horror] THAT?"

– Cassie Lesyk

Halloween switcheroo

One Halloween, a fellow teacher and I decided to switch classes. We were similar heights and weights and wore costumes that totally hid our identities. Or so we thought!

We refused to speak and gleefully anticipated the students' reactions. They displayed their great powers of observation. My class observed that their mystery teacher wasn't me because my neck wasn't that wrinkled. My colleague's class clued in that I was not their regular teacher because her feet were not nearly that large.

Kids can be so cruel! LOL

– Terry J. Riter

