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ATA NEWS

November 2, 2021 | Volume 56, Number 4

News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association

STAND FOR EDUCATION

Hayley

Administrator - Red Deer



SUPPLIED

In a new video series that's part of the ATA's recently released Stand For Education campaign, a selection of teachers, administrators and parents share their thoughts about the state of public education. Turn to page 12 to see what participants are saying and learn more about the campaign.



Let's change our approach to assessment

COVID provides an opportunity to ditch PATs in favour of sample testing.

Read Jonathan Teghtmeyers's editorial on page 2.



Questions remain

Announcement of learning supports for grades 1-3 leaves ATA wondering about other students.

See story on page 4.



Off Script

We are here to make a difference and we can do it.

See story on page 4.



Outrage, heartbreak and disappointment

Former Afghan resident reflects on the dire situation in her homeland.

See story on page 5.

Let's ditch PATs and try sample testing



EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

On Oct. 27, Education Minister Adriana LaGrange gave a news conference announcing how \$45 million in previously announced COVID-related learning supports would be allocated.

LaGrange announced that money would be doled out on a per-pupil basis, based on how students performed on literacy and numeracy tests given earlier in the year. About half of all grade 2 and 3 students in the province would benefit from this funding. Grade 1 funding will come in February after those six and seven year olds are tested.

(Excuse me while I set aside the very dangerous notion of tying funding to test results, which I will have to visit in another editorial.)

The minister also announced that diploma exam weighting would be reduced to 10 per cent for this year, but that Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs) would continue as per normal.

"We have heard the concerns of students and others about the stress and anxiety related to academic achievement during COVID,

particularly for high school students writing diploma exams," said LaGrange.

The change in diploma exam weighting is a welcome announcement, given the challenges faced by students and schools these past three school years. However, the lack of acknowledgment for grade 6 and 9 student well-being is puzzling.

Despite having gone through the exact same challenges and stresses, every Grade 9 student in the province will have to sit for 460 minutes of exams in four subject areas.

Alberta Education says that the purpose of PATs is to determine if students are learning what they are expected to learn and to report to Albertans how well students have achieved provincial standards. They also say the tests assist the system in monitoring and improving student learning.

I can understand after two years without PAT exams (the sky didn't fall, by the way) why data-hungry politicians and bureaucrats are particularly eager to see PATs resume.

But there is a better way. There is a way to implement provincial exams that would do a much better job of delivering reliable data to school boards and the province while reducing the risk of harm to students. This year, given all that students and schools have

been through, would have been an ideal time to pilot this better way.

What I am talking about is random sampling.

With a population of 52,000 Grade 9 students in Alberta, the province could get an accurate picture of the achievement of students generally by testing around 1,000 randomly selected students. This size of sample would create an average that would be reliable within about three percentage points of the average for the whole population.

My suggestion would not even be that aggressive. What if the system sample tested students such that each student only had to write one of the four core subject exams? In this case, the provincewide sample would be within 0.7 percentage points of the actual provincial average, 19 times out of 20.

Even taken to the school board level, you would get reasonably accurate and reliable data for the majority of school boards, losing accuracy for only the smallest school boards.

But let's be honest. The data that is generated now is not that meaningful. These tests tend to be so overly engineered that averages typically only fluctuate within a few percentage points from year to year, fluctuations that I would argue often have much more to do with variances in test design than in student achievement.

Teachers would still get feedback on one-quarter of their students in each subject in each year, which is more than enough data to offer feedback on how teachers might want to adjust their instructional and assessment practices. We definitely know that far too much energy is currently placed on dissecting the innards and entrails of test results that really offer very little meaningful information.

This change would also result in less emphasis and stakes placed on the tests by the whole system, thereby reducing the cumulative stress endured by students.

Given that a sample system like what I have proposed would dramatically reduce the risk of harm to students, while maintaining any (albeit arguable) value that these tests have, this year seems like the perfect year to give it a shot. It would free up numerous hours in test preparation and implementation that would be far better spent on bridging so-called learning gaps instead of measuring them.

Given the mental and emotional toll that this pandemic has already had on these vulnerable students, this is the ideal time to make a meaningful move to support wellness by changing the tests. ■

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

What is duty of fair representation?



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive Secretary

Question: I pay my union dues, but I've been told the Alberta Teachers' Association will not be supporting me in my dispute with my employer. Doesn't the ATA have a duty of fair representation to back me up?

Answer: As Sean Brown, the ATA's associate co-ordinator of Teacher Employment Services (Collective Bargaining) reminded me in assisting with this answer, active membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association is a bit like an insurance policy. Many teachers will go through their entire careers without finding themselves in conflict with their employers, at least not at a level or frequency that would require Association assistance. At the same time, it is reassuring to know that if things go pear-shaped, the Association will be there to provide support.

And you can be assured that, on matters relating to employment, the Association is there for you. We even

have a specific legal obligation to do so, which is referred to as a "duty of fair representation" (DFR), which applies with respect to a member's rights under their collective agreement.

But the key word in that phrase is "fair." This legal duty is not unlimited or at the sole demand or direction of the teacher. In treating a member fairly, the Association as a union needs to act without discrimination, arbitrariness, bad faith or serious negligence. In assessing whether we would have met this requirement in any specific instance, the Labour Relations Board (to which a member might make a DFR-related complaint) would review the actions of the Association, asking

- Did the Association act fairly and reasonably?
- Was there due consideration given to the member when making the decision?
- Was appropriate research used to inform the decision and were appropriate efforts made toward settlement?
- Was the decision made in good faith and without discrimination (particularly in regard to protected grounds in the *Alberta Human Rights Act*)?

- Were appeal or review processes set out in policy followed?

But all of this begs the question, why would the Association not simply do what the member wants? There are several legitimate factors superseding an individual member's interests or preferences. First among these is the concern about the impact on other members or the profession as a whole. If a member is being unreasonable, attempting to act outside or beyond the provisions of the collective agreement or attempting to advance a position that is patently contrary to law, then the Association will seek out other ways to resolve the situation to the greatest possible advantage of the member, but it will not take an aggressive or adversarial approach that would be likely to make the situation worse.

Similarly, the Association will proceed very cautiously when, on the basis of the facts, previous experience, and legal advice, there is little likelihood of success. This is particularly true when a likely loss would crystalize an unfavourable legal precedent that would adversely affect not only the teacher immediately involved but all others who might find themselves

in similar, although potentially more meritorious, circumstances.

Finally, there are considerations of time and cost (financial and human). Proceedings can be very lengthy and emotionally draining for a member and entail the expenditure of tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars on the part of the Association. The Association will attempt to achieve the best obtainable solution for a member so that they can move on, while being wise stewards of our members' money.

If, in its union role, the ATA reaches a conclusion with which a member disagrees, this does not necessarily constitute a breach of the Association's duty of fair representation.

When acting in its professional regulatory function, particularly with respect to professional conduct processes, the Association is obliged to serve the public interest and will not provide representation to members who have been charged with unprofessional conduct. This is why members are not represented by the Association in professional disciplinary hearings. ■

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





Digital media literacy is everybody's business



VIEWPOINTS

Matthew Johnson
Special to the ATA News

Has there ever been a time when we had so much information and yet knew so little? Teachers have always helped students learn not just the content of their subjects but how to think, understand and interpret what they see and read. Many of us, though, don't feel any more capable than our students are of navigating the world of online information. The past year and a half, meanwhile, has shown that being able to find and evaluate good information can literally be a matter of life and death.

Digital media literacy – the ability to critically, effectively and responsibly access, use, understand and engage with media of all kinds – has been part of the curriculum across Canada for almost 20 years. But those 20 years have seen a huge change in media and technology, perhaps the most significant change since the printing press was invented. We can't assume that just because students have grown up with digital technology, they know how to use it effectively; nor can we assume that just because media literacy is in the curriculum, students are learning all the skills they need to make sense of today's information environment.

Rather than having students do a close reading of every source they encounter, for example, we need to teach them quick ways to find out whether a source or claim is worth their attention. The issue is not that students are not skeptical enough, but that they are too cynical: they've learned not to trust anything online, but not to identify which sources can be trusted.

Teaching students to evaluate the validity and authority of sources so that they don't waste their time on those that are dishonest or unreliable has been shown both to improve skepticism and reduce cynicism. These methods have to be quick and easy enough that we can do them any time we're going to share or act on any information we've seen online.

Once they've determined that a source is worth their attention, students can apply more traditional media literacy methods. This might involve, for instance, reading a news article with the understanding that the biggest bias in news is not political but what is seen as newsworthy, and that this man-bites-dog ethos can make rare things – shark attacks, plane crashes or vaccine protestors – seem more common and more significant than they really are.

Digital media is different in other ways that require us to change our approach. Maybe the most important is the role that algorithms play in sorting, selecting and recommending content to us. Unlike with traditional media, where we could imagine how a newspaper or TV network had chosen what to publish, the decisions

that algorithms make generally aren't transparent. To critically engage with today's media, students have to understand how a search engine sorts the results to a query or how a video site decides what videos to show them next, and not assume that these are markers of legitimacy or reliability.

Updating media literacy and making sure it's being taught in every classroom are essential, but they aren't enough. We need to teach it earlier, starting in kindergarten at the latest. MediaSmarts' [Break the Fake](#) program is built around an update of the classic house hippo public service announcement and has resources that start with teaching kindergarten and primary students the basics of media literacy and then show students at different grades how to verify what's real online.

“ We can't assume that just because students have grown up with digital technology, they know how to use it effectively. ”

Teachers generally recognize the importance of teaching students about these issues, but often don't feel confident in addressing them, don't know where they fit in curriculum, or are concerned about the risks of bringing technology or pop culture into the classroom. For teachers who are just getting started with digital and media literacy, MediaSmarts' [Media Literacy 101](#) and [Digital Literacy 101](#) programs are essential. [Our Digital Media Literacy Curriculum Framework](#) provides teachers with a comprehensive series of lessons ranging from kindergarten to Grade 12, and our charts of [Digital and Media Literacy Curriculum Outcomes](#) help to show how digital media literacy can be integrated across the curriculum.

Digital media literacy is everyone's business, and we all have a role to play, not just by teaching these skills, but in modeling critical thinking and intellectual humility. By admitting to our students that we all can be fooled or misled by media, we can help them walk the line between credulity and cynicism and become effective, responsible and engaged digital citizens. ■

Matthew Johnson is the director of education for MediaSmarts, a Canadian not-for-profit charitable organization for digital and media literacy.

YOUR VIEWS

FACEBOOK FEEDBACK

On the Oct. 12 editorial explaining the ATA's new advertising/public relations campaign, **Stand For Education**.

Steph Alison

Very glad to see there's an escalating strategy to turn the pressure up. We as teachers know the reality, but the public does not.

My own parents didn't realize that teachers pay a hefty sum each month into our pension fund. They had it in their heads that it was solely government funded, and were shocked at how much of my own pay the government hijacked when they turned the ATRF over to AIMCo.

Kyle Hogaboam

And what happens when the “wide-reaching and hard-hitting public relations and advocacy campaign” hits the inevitable ceiling of support and no change comes from the government? How does this align with the ATA's asking the government for funding and resources to properly implement the draft curriculum in 2022–2023?

On the Oct. 12 Q&A article by ATA executive secretary Dennis Theobald explaining the ATA's support for reasonable vaccination mandates.

Ted Wheat

Alberta teachers want to be safe in the classroom doing their job. Just as private companies and Alberta Health etc. are implementing vaccinations. This will be supported.

On the ATA's letter to Education Minister Adriana Lagrange on COVID and contact tracing.

Maggie Day

I have a question that is on the minds of many teachers that is creating stress: how am I supposed to assess outcomes of the students I teach when they are so behind? My students' only “normal” year of school was kindergarten. I wish we had more guidance from the government in this area.

Crystal Whitney

What I would like to see identified is 1) a timeline of when these supports need to be in place 2) if the supports are not in place by the timeline, then what action or non-action will be taken? Are teachers and principals just going to “pick up the slack,” regardless? In that case, what is the point of this public statement? Perhaps it's just too bad, but contact tracing can't start again until they've hired back the people they let go in August, against all advice. And as much as I hate to say this, if schools can't be open as a result, so be it.

FOR THE RECORD

“ If the things that caught my eye at @michaelsstores and the things I absolutely do not need were a Venn diagram, it would just be a circle. ”

– Instagram post
by Edmonton teacher
Emily Howell (miss.howell)



SUPPLIED

No Stone Left Alone

Some 2,000 students will be paying respects to fallen veterans this month as part of the No Stone Left Alone program.

Launched in 2011, the program has participants gather for a short ceremony before they place poppies on the headstones of Canadian veterans. As they place each poppy, they say the fallen soldier's name out loud.

In-person ceremonies are taking

place all over the province, including various locations in Edmonton and Calgary. Many schools are also attending from a distance, with students watching a livestream ceremony on Nov. 4. Many schools have also planned to paint poppies on stones and rely on volunteers to take them to veterans' cemeteries.

For more information on the program, including classroom resources, visit www.nostoneleftalone.ca.



We can make a difference

Throughout my life, all I ever really wanted to do was make a difference. That's why, as a student in school, I was involved in the students' council. In university, I was the vice-president of the student local, and in my first year of teaching, I joined my ATA local's Teacher Welfare Committee.

After I graduated from the University of Lethbridge, I felt well prepared for teaching, but there was one thing that we didn't talk about in university that I felt a lot over the course of my career — the moral distress of teaching. Feeling like I was not meeting the needs of my students every day weighed on me as I trudged to my car at the end of the day. It was not a feeling I had all the time, but it was still there.

This troubling feeling that I was not making a difference motivated me to get involved with my ATA local in a

variety of ways — attending meetings, making sure I was up to date on issues and volunteering for committees and community projects. I am not sure I explicitly planned on being an advocate for public education, but in an effort to make a difference, that is what I became. In the early part of my career, I certainly never planned to be president of the ATA, but one thing leads to another.

Recently, the ATA partnered with the Alberta School Councils' Association to launch a campaign called Stand For Education, which focuses on three main issues: funding, curriculum and class size. Together we are advocating for a more inclusive, diverse, well-funded education system. It's just one more way we as teachers and parents can make a difference for our students and ourselves. I hope you will join us at StandForEducation.ca.

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

Government announces learning supports

Mark Milne
ATA News Staff

Learning supports are on their way to some of Alberta's youngest students and their teachers. On Oct. 27, the provincial government announced it would begin doling out a portion of the \$45 million it promised last May to mitigate student learning gaps resulting from the pandemic. The first phase of the recovery plan will include an immediate \$490 subsidy per qualifying student in grades 2 and 3, and a similar subsidy for Grade 1 students in the new year.

Education Minister Adriana LaGrange announced the funding would be directed toward students who are experiencing learning gaps and deficiencies in numeracy or literacy. "We know that being able to respond to the needs of students as the public health changes is essential to their success," said LaGrange. "Alberta students deserve the best education possible, and we have supported students during every step of this pandemic."

Alberta Teachers' Association president Jason Schilling said he's grateful to see some funding from the government to help young learners who may be falling behind, but he still has some questions as to how the money will be used.

"I don't want to see more put on the plates of teachers who already have a lot to do right now," Schilling said. "We need to know what this programming will look like. How will it affect the students? Who will be doing it?"

The ministry will use the results from tests administered to Grade 2 and 3 earlier in the current school year to determine which students are eligible for the funding. Those students experiencing deficiencies in both numeracy and literacy will receive double the subsidy — \$980.

Central table bargaining continues

Kate Toogood
ATA News Staff

Central table bargaining continues, with the Central Table Bargaining Committee (CTBC) meeting with the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association (TEBA) for the second time on Wednesday, Oct. 13.

Negotiations are continuing as expected, says CTBC chair Peter MacKay, who is also the district representative for North West.

"The tone continues to be cordial and our meeting was productive," he says. "Similar to previous rounds of bargaining, during Wednesday's session both sides spent time asking lots of questions about items within the proposals in an attempt to gain a greater understanding of where the other side is coming from."

"This is typical for this early stage of

Lori Jess, president of the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA), and Wilco Tymensen, president of the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS), joined Minister LaGrange for the announcement.

"We are pleased that boards will have the flexibility to use this funding within their local context," said Jess, "as each board has faced challenges unique to their own communities."

Tymensen echoed Jess's praise for the funding. "These supports," he said, "will help our staff, our administrators, our students, and our school communities and families."

Schilling noted that while the minister indicated school boards would be able to use the funding to hire staff, she fell short of specifying the new hires would need to be certificated teachers.

"Reduced class size was part of our nine recommendations for a safe return to school," Schilling said. "Every student needs that opportunity to have more one-on-one time with their teacher. We need to increase qualified teaching staffing levels so those class sizes can finally start to come down."

While acknowledging the importance of literacy and numeracy in young students, Schilling also expressed concern that the ministry's announcement did not address the learning needs for students in our education system outside Grades 1 to 3.

"We also have students that are in grades 4 to 12 who are also experiencing stresses and pressures and have gone through the same past 20 months as everybody else," he said. "We need to make sure we're focusing on those students as well."

LaGrange said the decision to target the early grades was a result of consultation with CASS and other education stakeholders who indicated that it was these early learners who were experiencing the most impact and were struggling to catch up.

The next phase of the subsidy rollout will target Grade 1 students and will be based on their numeracy and literacy testing, which is expected to take place in January 2022.

the process and always provides helpful context for the days to come."

MacKay says that although these beginning stages look similar to previous rounds, he thinks negotiations will be a little different this time.

"We got the sense earlier on that this round will be a bit unique compared to previous bargaining," he says. "So, we'll need to be very strategic in how we bargain, and we will want to take our time. However, things are moving forward."

Teachers will continue to receive regular updates through bargainer's blogs (found in the Bargaining Updates section of the ATA website) and through emailed member's updates. This will be done regularly as bargaining continues, even if details or new information may be scant.

Anyone with questions is encouraged to reach out to your local Teacher Welfare Committee representative.

STORIES AND PHOTOS WANTED



If something newsworthy is going on in your school, district or local, please let us know. We will also consider articles, photos and cartoons. Please email tips and submissions to managing editor Cory Hare: cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

20 years of progress ... gone

Former Afghan resident reflects on the dire situation in her homeland



Former Afghan resident Murwarid Ziayee fears for the future of her homeland and those who are still living there.

SUPPLIED

ATA News Staff

Murwarid Ziayee is the senior director for Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, an organization that the Alberta Teachers' Association has sponsored for several years through its International Co-operation Program.

Originally from Kabul, Afghanistan, Ziayee came to Canada in 2018. The *ATA News* interviewed her about her life in Afghanistan and the current situation in her homeland.

What was it like for you growing up in Afghanistan?

I come from a generation of war. I was born and raised in war. So it has always been an uncertain future ahead of me and my generation. During my life, I have had some dull moments that allowed me to live a reasonably normal life, and other times that robbed me of everything I had gained in life, including my right to education.

There were times when I had been only five minutes from a huge bomb blast in Kabul, times when rockets were flying around us and windows were smashed, and times when I wasn't allowed to leave my house as a girl. Nevertheless, I never gave up despite the never-ending conflict and the uncertainties. I was taught by my family to resist whatever comes my way, so I did just that.

I lived all of my life in Afghanistan, invested in myself by completing my education, even though it was interrupted for several years due to the civil war and the Taliban regime, and gained knowledge and experience. All I believed was that I could stand alongside other Afghans and we could work together to build a better country where everyone could live peacefully and with dignity. I also thought I was moving toward a dream that now appears to be just an illusion.

Why did you leave?

I was offered a new role in our organization (Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan), where I had been working since 2010. I was working as their country director prior to moving

to Canada and now am working as their senior director.

What goes through your mind when you see the news about Afghanistan?

I am outraged, heartbroken and disappointed. It is hard to believe the Afghan government collapsed, the country collapsed, and 35 million people were turned over to terrorism. I reflect on the past 20 years, how Afghan and international forces as well as aid workers sacrificed their lives to establish a democratic system, and how donors and NGOs invested in human capital, infrastructure, establishing institutions in all sectors, and advancing women's rights. What we have gained in the past 20 years has disappeared overnight.

The international community, led by the United States, has betrayed us. It wasn't the right way to end the mission in Afghanistan. The United States and its allies have always claimed partnership with Afghanistan. The question is what kind of partnership this is, that they came into Afghanistan without consulting Afghans and left Afghanistan the same way. Respect, mutual understanding and accountability are essential to a partnership – none of which was shown by our international partners.

What is your greatest concern about the situation there now?

The safety of those Afghans who stood up with the Afghan government and its international partners for the past two decades, including my own colleagues who contributed to the delivery development projects in the country's far reaches. I am concerned about the lives of women and civil society activists. The Taliban has vocally targeted them before and will continue haunting them if not stopped. I am seriously concerned about losing all the fundamental rights women and girls enjoyed for the past 20 years. They have already restricted girls' access to education beyond primary school and forbidden them to work.

The Taliban announced their cabinet, which includes hardliners and

most-wanted figures in the U.S. Those who had carried out the most complex and deadly attacks are now leading the interior and defence ministries. Those who enforced the most inhumane punishment to civilians through the field courts are now part of the judiciary system. How can people be ensured of safety and justice if these people are in power?

What connections do you have with people currently in Afghanistan?

My colleagues, family, friends and women activists.

What are you hearing from them about life in Afghanistan right now?

Life is horrible for everyone. People are living in fear and despair. An uncertain and dark life is awaiting them. There are some people I know who change their locations constantly to avoid being identified by the Taliban. Girls are anxious about their education and women are concerned about their employment and livelihoods.

Afghanistan is experiencing a humanitarian crisis. The economy has collapsed, the cash is gone and jobs are gone in all sectors. The United Nations warns that 18 million people are facing humanitarian disaster in the country, and that another 18 million may follow. With winter fast approaching, their situation will only worsen.

Can you tell us how school has changed for teachers and students since the Taliban seized control?

The Taliban announced a ban from secondary education for girls, while boys are allowed to return to their schools. This decision has left more than five million girls out of school. Thousands of female teachers have also been restricted from teaching. Students and teachers are anxiously awaiting their return to school.

While the Taliban mentions security as the main reason for stalling girls education, there is a hard question

[being asked] by female students: if security is a concern, then why are children aged 7–11 allowed to attend school? Donors should identify the leverage they have in order to push for concrete commitments on the rights of women – through targeted sanctions, aid, political pressure and other means.

What are your thoughts, hopes and fears about the future of Afghanistan?

I am not optimistic about Afghanistan's future. If the international community and world leaders close their eyes to Afghanistan (like they did in the 90s), do not listen to Afghan people and give legitimacy to the Taliban by recognizing their regime, this will leave me and other Afghans with no prospects.

Tell us about your organization's work and the specific initiatives it's focusing on.

Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (CW4WAfghan) is a charity and not-for-profit organization. We have been working in Afghanistan for more than two decades with a focus on providing quality education to Afghan women and girls and their families. Through implementing hundreds of educational projects, we have contributed to the progress of the education sector in the country, reaching women and girls from diverse backgrounds and educational levels – from rural to urban areas, from students to teachers and from illiterate women to educators.

What can people here do to help?

- Participate in our advocacy campaigns. Currently, we run the International Day of the Girls campaign in solidarity with Afghan girls: <https://cw4wafghan.ca/human-rights-2/>.
- Donate to support our work.
- Consider hosting a Breaking Bread event to keep Afghanistan in the public eye and raise funds.
- Follow us on social media, consider becoming a member or starting a chapter in your city. ■



ATA Research Collaboration 2021/2022

GRANT PROGRAM

The Kule Institute for Advanced Study (KIAS) and the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, in partnership with the Alberta Teachers' Association (the "Association"), is pleased to announce a 2021/2022 Signature Collaborations grant program to encourage the codevelopment of research collaborations between University of Alberta faculty and certificated Alberta teachers.

Application deadline: Friday, December 10, 2021

Value: \$10,000 for a period of 18 months

Areas of research priority are guided by key findings emerging from a series of recent Alberta Teachers' Association research studies. Priority research topics this cycle are

- a. equity, diversity, inclusion in public education,
- b. teaching and learning through disruptions from COVID-19,
- c. student voices on the nature of schooling during COVID-19,
- d. leadership in times of COVID-19 and
- e. curriculum within Alberta K–12 education.

HOW TO APPLY

Applications must have a research partner in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. Instructions can be found in the KIAS Quick Reference Guide - Request for New Application/Proposal/Project NEW:

<https://www.ualberta.ca/research-services-office/media-library/forms/qrg-request-new-application-proposal-project-with-online-approval-june-2019.pdf>

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Are you interested in facilitating workshops?

BECOME AN ASSOCIATION INSTRUCTOR!

Association instructors facilitate a variety of workshops for school and district-based professional development events, teachers' conventions, and specialist council conferences, both in person and online.

The Alberta Teachers' Association is seeking outstanding classroom teachers and school leaders from across the province for immediate appointments to begin January 2022.

The application process has three parts:

1. Provide a letter of interest, including the following information:
 - Areas of interest and expertise (referencing the competencies of the Teaching Quality Standard)
 - Experience leading professional development (online and in person)
 - Reasons for applying
2. Download and complete the application form on the Alberta Teachers' Association website (see below for website information).
3. Provide a resume outlining education, work experience, leadership experience, publications, presentations, and volunteer experience.

Successful candidates are expected to deliver 7–10 workshops per year and are required to attend two training sessions per year. The Association covers release time and associated expenses and provides an honorarium for workshops delivered. Additionally, new instructors will attend next year's ATA Summer Conference in Banff, August 8-12, 2022. As a courtesy, please advise your superintendent and principal that you will be applying prior to doing so. All applicants must be active or associate members of the ATA and hold an Alberta teaching certificate.

APPLICATION DEADLINE IS NOVEMBER 30, 2021.

Send your letter of interest, resume, and completed application form to Nancy Luyckfassel, ATA Executive Staff Officer, Alberta Teachers' Association, nancy.luyckfassel@ata.ab.ca

For information or to download an application form, visit www.teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Engage with us > Getting Involved as an Individual > Joining a Corps > Association Instructors.

In making an application to become an Association instructor for the Alberta Teachers' Association, you are voluntarily providing your personal information to the ATA. Visit the ATA website for more information.



The Alberta Teachers' Association

60-1002761-04

ATA 101

AN INTRODUCTION TO
YOUR ASSOCIATION

A bit of history and context



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

This instalment provides a brief glimpse of the historical context that gave rise to the formation of the ATA as well as some of the organization's main functions. Watch for additional instalments in upcoming issues of the ATA News.

In 1916, the life of an Alberta teacher was characterized by poor wages and deplorable working conditions. Teachers had no employment security and could be replaced at any time by someone less qualified (and lower paid). If school boards couldn't collect enough taxes in a particular year, schools closed and teachers weren't paid at all.

In those days, most teachers were young, single women who, if they married, were deemed no longer suitable for employment. Those teachers who were paid faced falling salaries in the midst of strife caused by the First World War. The average annual salary for an Alberta teacher in 1916 was \$828.69, not a lot more than the \$800 salary paid by the Edmonton

School District to its first teacher in 1885.

While teachers' circumstances were grim, Alberta's agriculture-based economy was in much better shape. Crops were excellent, grain prices were high and farmers were doing very well in 1916 – the general prosperity just didn't get to teachers.

It was against this backdrop that Alberta teachers succeeded in organizing the province's first teachers' organization, with the Alberta Teachers' Alliance being incorporated in 1918.

The Alberta government did not respond generously to the establishment of a teachers' organization, nor did Alberta's school boards, but that didn't stop the fledgling organization from tirelessly pursuing its goals:

- Professional and organizational recognition
- Automatic membership for all teachers
- Higher school grants
- A pension plan
- Transfer of teacher preparation programs to universities (and the closure of normal schools)
- Higher professional standards

During the organization's first decades of existence, the ATA's top (and only) executive was general secretary John Barnett, a teacher and former member of the National Union of Teachers in England. A large part of Barnett's job was to drive around the province each year convincing teachers of the benefits of belonging to the ATA and to collect the annual membership dues, which were originally \$5.

From the Alliance's inception in 1918 and up to 1935, Barnett and other organization officials worked tirelessly to convince successive governments – first the Liberals, then the United

A DEFINITIVE PURPOSE

The ATA's purpose is outlined as four objects in the *Teaching Profession Act*:

The objects of the association are:

- to advance and promote the cause of education in Alberta
- to improve the teaching profession
 - by promoting and supporting recruitment and selection practices that ensure capable candidates for teacher education,
 - by promoting and supporting adequate programs of preservice preparation, internship and certification,
 - by promoting the establishment of working conditions that will make possible the best level of professional service,
 - by organizing and supporting groups that tend to improve the knowledge and skill of teachers,

- by meetings, publications, research and other activities designed to maintain and improve the competence of teachers,
- by advising, assisting, protecting and disciplining members in the discharge of their professional duties and relationships, and
- by assessing the professional competence of its members by means of a professional practice review process provided for under the bylaws of the association;
- to arouse and increase public interest in the importance of education and public knowledge of the aims of education, financial support for education, and other education matters;
- to co-operate with other organizations and bodies in Canada and elsewhere having the same or like aims and objects.

Farmers of Alberta and finally the Social Credit Party – to enact legislation establishing teaching as a profession.

In 1935, the United Farmers of Alberta government passed the *Teaching Profession Act*, which ended the Alliance and created a legal foundation for a new organization: the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). In 1936, the new Social Credit government amended the act to require mandatory ATA membership for all certificated teachers employed by publicly funded school boards. These two developments, the passing of the *Teaching Profession Act* and its subsequent amendment, were watershed moments for Alberta teachers, moments that form the core of today's ATA.

From that point forward, freed from the need to conduct perennial membership drives, the Association turned its full attention to fulfilling

its new statutory obligations and to building a strong, determined, effective and respected teaching profession.

Over the next 10 years, the government approved legislation giving teachers a process for appealing dismissals, a pension plan and the right to bargain collectively. In 1942, Alberta's first faculty of education was established at the University of Alberta, beginning the process of moving teacher education from normal schools to universities. ■

DID YOU KNOW?

The Annual Representative Assembly is the ATA's equivalent of an annual general meeting and operates as an annual parliament. Each May long weekend, more than 450 teacher delegates gather to debate ATA policy and the organization's annual budget.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION + UNION

Since its inception in 1935, as outlined within the objects contained in the *Teaching Profession Act*, the ATA has performed both professional and union functions. Over the decades, the Association has evolved structures and processes that allow it to fulfil both functions without conflict.

The investigation and adjudication of complaints relating to professional conduct or practice are handled separately from the protection provided to members in matters of employment and collective bargaining. The Association does not represent members who are subject to its professional discipline processes.

On the professional side, the Association also supports a wide range of professional development activities as well as advocating for the cause of public education in the public interest. All this is paid for by its 45,000 member teachers through fees set by their representatives at the Annual Representative Assembly.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS SERVICE

Everyone wants to get paid what they're worth, and for Alberta teachers that happens through the work of the Teacher Qualifications Service (TQS).

The TQS was created in 1967 as a partnership between the government of Alberta, the Alberta School Trustees Association (now the Alberta School Boards Association) and the department of education.

The service evaluates the coursework of new education graduates and working teachers who have completed additional study so that their educational credentials are taken into account in their salary grid placement.

The service operates out of the Alberta Teachers' Association building in Edmonton as an arm's length operation that's administered by a board composed of members from the ATA, the Alberta School Boards Association, Alberta Education and the universities of Alberta, Calgary and Lethbridge.

SPECIALIST COUNCILS

In 1960, delegates at the Annual Representative Assembly approved a resolution to form specialist councils "for the purpose of improving practice in the various specialities." The first specialist councils included English, modern languages, science, social studies, mathematics and a council for school administrators. In 1961, the guidance counsellors established their council and there were councils underway for home economics, business education and industrial arts.

Inaugural specialist council conferences took place in May 1961, and the first specialist council seminar was convened in October 1961. Fine arts and health and physical education signed on in 1963. Today the Association has 22 specialist councils in a wide array of specialities.

WHAT THE HECK IS PEC?

If the Alberta Teachers' Association were a city, PEC would be its city council. It is an executive committee of 20 teachers that is responsible for directing the business of the Association.

On PEC, there are five table officers (ATA president, two vice-presidents, past-president and executive secretary) and 15 district representatives. The executive secretary serves as the Association's chief executive officer and is responsible for the operations and staff of the Association.

All positions, with the exception of the past president and executive secretary, are elected to office by ATA members every two years.

PEC is also referred to as Council.

Members of PEC

- are certificated practicing teachers;
- meet as a council two days at a time at least eight times each year;
- serve on internal and external committees and Association subgroups, like specialist councils;
- engage in professional development as part of their duties;
- make decisions affecting the budgets, policies and strategic direction of the ATA; and
- are accountable to the ATA membership, i.e., you.



You Teach to Make a Difference. So Do We.

The Post-Graduate Certificate in Special Education for Alberta Teachers delivers the in-depth theory and practice you need to ensure positive learning experiences for students with Special Education needs. Consisting of 3 core courses and 2 electives **offered fully online**, the certificate covers Special Education policies and practices in Alberta, as well as the cognitive, academic, and social-emotional implications of various learning needs. Through collaboration, discussion, and instructor engagement, you will be given the tools and resources required to lead successful delivery of Special Education. The Post-Graduate Certificate in Special Education also grants you advanced standing in our Post-Graduate Diploma, and Professional Masters of Education.



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Learning Disabilities & ADHD Network
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Learning Disabilities and ADHD impact nearly 10% of children.

How many of your students are struggling to learn with these challenges?

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- reliable, researched information
- evidence based strategies
- helpful articles and blogs
- Alberta resources
- a professional community dedicated to the success of those with LD or ADHD

LDADHDnetwork.ca



SEEKING FURRY SUBMISSIONS!

The ATA News is seeking entries for Teacher's Pet, which profiles teachers' furry, feathered or even scaled friends.

If you have a cuddly companion that you'd like to share with your colleagues, please send us a picture, along with the following required information:

- Your name, grade, school and the subject(s) you teach
- Your pet's name and breed

Also, please answer these two questions:

- 1) What makes your pet special?
- 2) How does your pet help you in your profession?

A selection of entries will be published in an upcoming issue of the ATA News.

Please email your submissions to cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

DEADLINE: DEC. 14



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.

**SAVE THE DATE
NOVEMBER 22-23, 2021**



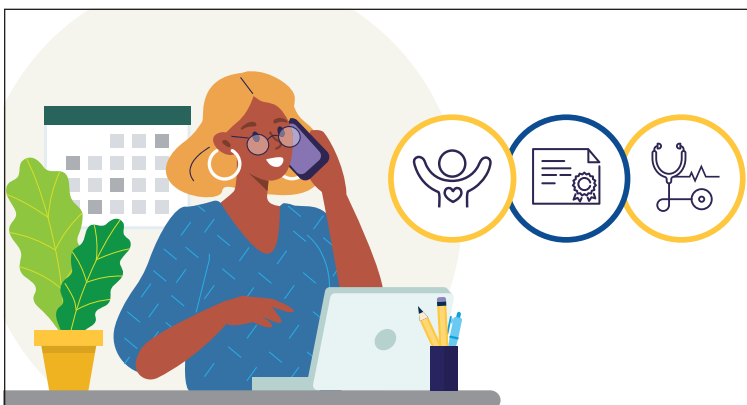
LEADERSHIP ESSENTIALS
FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

School and system leaders new to their role within the last five years are welcome to register for the ATA's foremost conference in educational leadership.



For event information and to register visit www.teachers.ab.ca and click on My ATA > Professional Development > Conferences and Events > Leadership Essentials for School Leaders.

COOR-70w 2021-07



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.

For more information on leaves of absence, visit www.teachers.ab.ca and click on My ATA > Pay and Benefits > Leaves of Absence.

COMM-287 2021.08

The Alberta Teachers' Association

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The fall issue of the ATA Magazine has landed!



IN THIS ISSUE:

Feature

Ending the silence on racism:
Black teachers share their stories

Looking Abroad

Public education a prime target of corporate profiteers

Research Insights

New curriculum needs teachers

In Profile

Principal makes her mark by embracing change ...
and connection

Diversity

Finding common ground to honour religious differences

Unsung Hero

Teacher sets legal precedent by standing up against ageism

Most Memorable Lesson

Cheerleader moment saves the day

Watch for it in schools now

Digital version at www.teachers.ab.ca >
News and Info > ATA Magazine.



The Alberta
Teachers' Association

TALENT

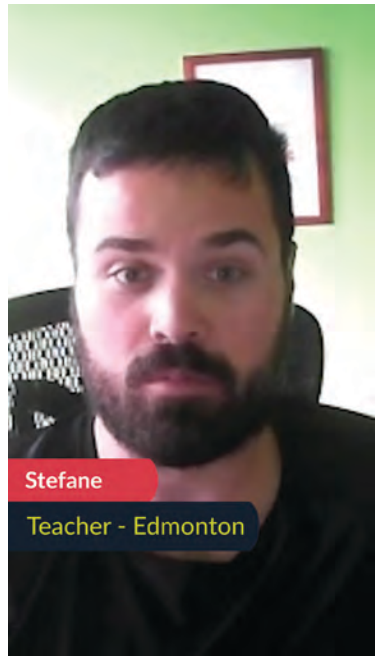
November 2, 2021 | Volume 56, Number 4

STAND FOR EDUCATION

Last month the ATA launched the Stand For Education campaign in partnership with the Alberta School Councils' Association.

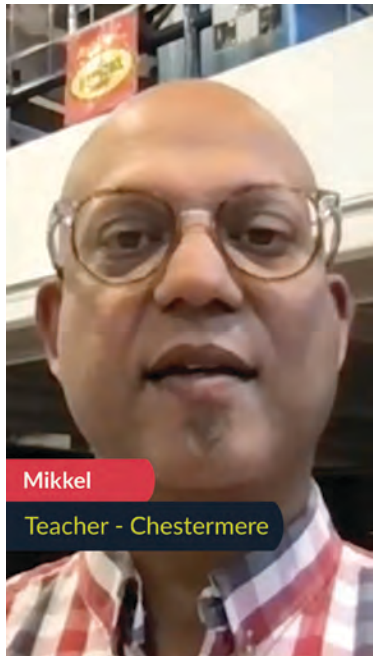
The most recent iteration of the campaign includes a series of short videos containing candid comments from teachers and parents, in their own words. See the videos at www.youtube.com/albertateachers.

Here are some examples of what they have to say.



Stefano
Teacher - Edmonton

“ I don't want to be driven out of this profession through someone's political agenda, by someone's lack of understanding of our kids' needs.”



Mikkel
Teacher - Chestermere

“ Because of all the things that the government is throwing at us, it's hard to continue being an expert in the one thing that I'm meant to be doing.”



Hayley
Administrator - Red Deer

“ The previous draft curriculum that came out in 2018 ... we had 17 teachers from our district that consulted. The last consultation, we had one teacher from our district. They lied to the public and said that they consulted with teachers.”



Erin
Parent - Sherwood Park

“ I worry a lot about my kids. I worry about them getting the proper supports they need. As a special needs parent, if my kid can't get the supports he needs, I'm going to have to look somewhere else for him [to go].”



Jean
Teacher - Leduc

“ It's 2021. We need to bring the curriculum up to modern times. We need to understand that our children of today are not us.”



Marcello
Parent - Calgary

“ I don't feel like we're being supported provincially. I don't feel like the school systems are being supported. I don't feel like those teachers are being supported. I feel they're doing the best that they can, but I feel kind of abandoned.”

ADD YOUR VOICE

Sign the open letter to Premier Jason Kenney and Education Minister Adriana LaGrange:
<https://standforeducation.ca>

So what's new with you?

Did you know that the *ATA Magazine* has a section dedicated to sharing information about teachers' extracurricular endeavours and adventures?

Yes, it's true. It's called **Who's Out There?** and we're currently seeking submissions.

The section highlights new projects or accomplishments by Alberta teachers who are also

- authors
- musicians
- visual or performing artists
- podcasters
- athletes
- volunteers
- entrepreneurs

