

Feature: Indigenous educators reflect on truth, engagement, colonialism and reconciliation.



Issue now available in schools.

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## Off Script

with ATA President Jason Schilling

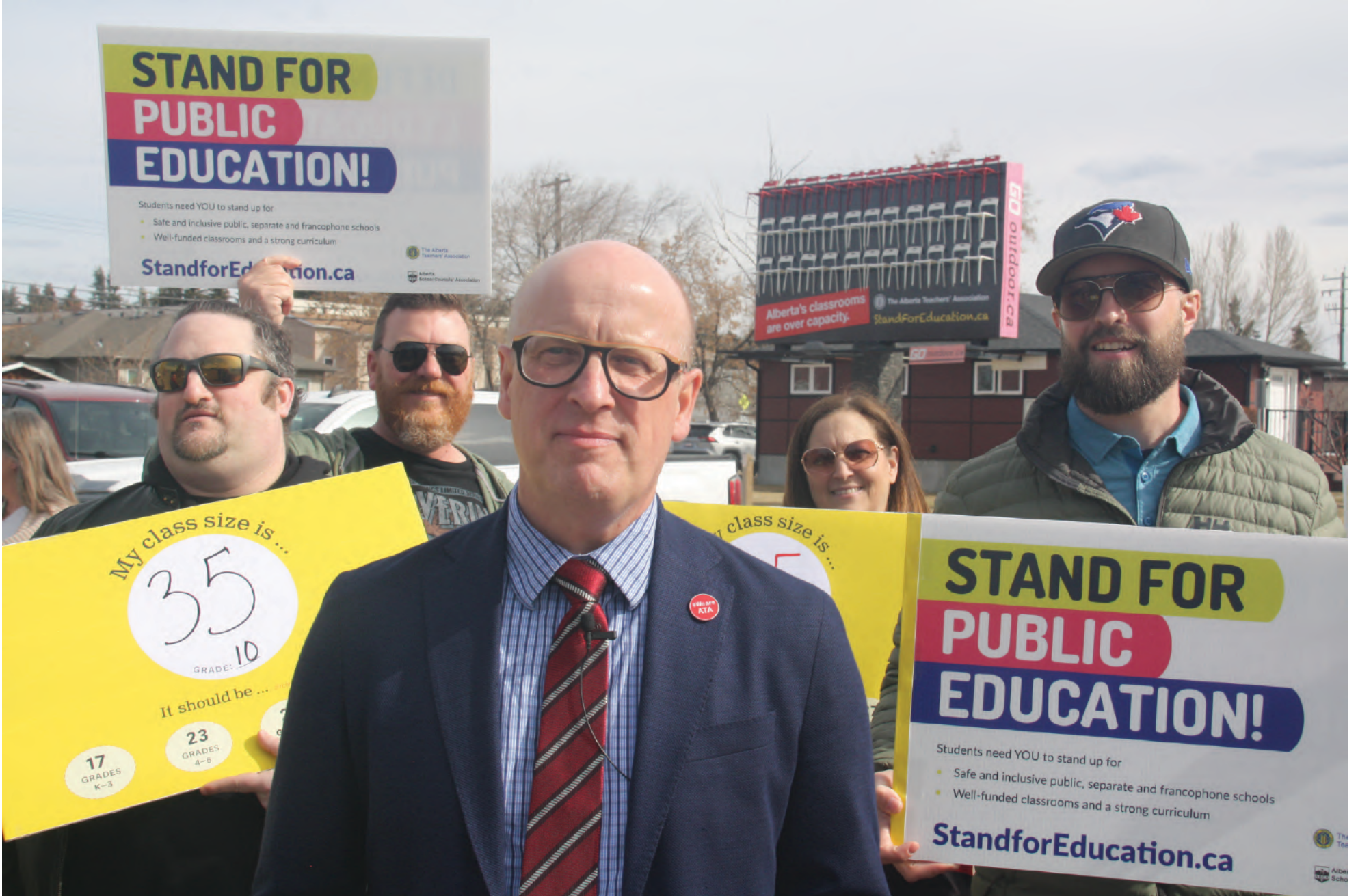


Conferences are about connections. See [page 4](#).

# ATA NEWS

April 15, 2023 | Volume 57, Number 12

News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association



JONATHAN TEGHMEYER

ATA president Jason Schilling gathers with a group of Red Deer teachers to call attention to the issue of large class sizes during a media event on April 18. See story on [page 5](#).



### Choice words

Private school funding is out of whack.

Read Jonathan Teghtmeyer's editorial on [page 2](#).



### Student Vote

Mock election program rolling out in Alberta schools.

See story on [page 7](#).



### Pension reversal?

NDP targets teachers with election promise.

See story on [page 5](#).



### All about leadership

Teachers and leaders share their thoughts.

See Tale End on [page 12](#).



## Private school funding is out of whack



### EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer  
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Imagine if Elon Musk said that the state of California should help fund his private planes and helicopters because he still pays taxes for state highways even though he doesn't use them. Shouldn't the government fund choice in transportation?

Seems absurd, doesn't it? Even for Elon Musk.

What if I want to hire a personal security detail to follow me around? Shouldn't the government use some of the police budget to pay for my security? Don't you support choice in protective services?

So why is the view on education treated so differently? Why, in Alberta, do we believe that we must fund a

public education system and also fund the wants of people who choose not to use it?

It's not the same in other provinces. Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Prince Edward Island don't fund private schools.

Even provinces that do fund private schools fund them at a lower rate than we do. In B.C., some private schools receive 50 per cent of the funding of public schools, but more elite schools receive just 35 per cent. Saskatchewan and Manitoba fund at 50 per cent and Quebec funds at 60 per cent. Alberta is an outlier, funding private schools at 70 per cent.

Public school advocates say that dollars spent on private schools are diverted funds that could and should be spent on public education. Private school advocates say that their parents pay taxes; therefore, their children should have their schools funded too. So which is it?

I ran some calculations on how much a two-income family with two school-aged children contributes to education. While funding for education comes from general revenue, parents support that revenue in two forms: property tax and income tax.

The average employed Albertan contributes \$5,787 in provincial personal income tax, and the average residential home is assessed \$1,167 in education property tax. For a two-income household, that amounts to an average of \$12,742 in provincial taxes.

With education, including capital expenses, making up 12.5 per cent of provincial expenses, it's fair to say a two-income family of four contributes \$1,591 of their provincial tax bill toward education, about \$800 per child.

However, private schools receive about \$5,213 in per pupil grants from Alberta Education (in addition to a few other non-capitated grants).

So each time a student is enrolled in a private school instead of a public

school, \$5,000 in funding is redirected from the public school to the private school, only \$800 of which comes from the parents.

Why is it that parents feel they are no longer obligated to fund public education when they send their child to a private school?

I have no problem with people sending their kids to private schools — that is their choice. But choice is being used as a pseudonym for privatization. Just because you choose private schools, don't force me to fund your choices.

This is way out of whack.

The degree to which Alberta subsidizes private schools — some of which charge more than \$20,000 a year in tuition — is absurd.

Almost as absurd as funding the private plane fleet of a wealthy billionaire who chooses not to use public highways. ■

I welcome your comments. Contact me at [jonathan.teghtmeyer@ata.ab.ca](mailto:jonathan.teghtmeyer@ata.ab.ca).

## Lawsuits not always the best recourse against false claims



### Q & A

Dennis Theobald  
ATA Executive Secretary

**Question:** Recently, Torry Tanner, the United Conservative Party candidate for Lethbridge West, made false and malicious allegations about teachers. Why doesn't the Alberta Teachers' Association stand up for its members and sue her for defamation?

**Answer:** Sadly, it has become a common political strategy for some Alberta politicians, political parties and interest groups to beat up on teachers, the Association and public education, while paying scant attention to the truth of their claims.

In a slickly produced short video posted to Facebook, candidate Tanner said "Alarming, we are seeing increasing instances where kids, even those attending kindergarten, are being exposed to pornographic materials, or worse yet, having teachers help them change their gender identity with absolutely no parental consent or knowledge whatsoever." She positioned herself as the candidate who would protect children from such abuse.

Of course, the claim is outrageous (although not quite as bizarre as the rumour making the rounds in parts of this province that schools have installed litterboxes for students who identify as cats). Quite apart from the immediate insult to teachers, it combines a pernicious assault on

gender minorities (contending that the lived identity of these individuals is somehow illegitimate or disingenuous, being the result of indoctrination in schools) with a cynical effort to undermine public confidence and support for public education, all presumably to build support for private and charter school alternatives.

In response, many teachers and citizen supporters of public education called for the Association to sue Tanner for defaming teachers. The difficulty is that, to succeed, an action

that the Association should file suit anyway to protest Tanner's comments and demonstrate its determination to support members. While it costs very little to file a claim, such an approach would still be unwise. Where it has a political focus and is intended to intimidate or punish, rather than to assert a right recognized in law, litigation is an abuse of the court. With no chance of succeeding, such a filing would undermine the Association's credibility and reflect badly on members.

“... the court of public opinion ... extracted a more severe and immediate penalty than could possibly have been obtained in any court of law ...”

for defamation normally requires the defamatory comments to be made about an identifiable individual. While in some cases an action could be brought where no named individual is identified, it must still be established that the comments would be recognized by a reasonable person as being directed toward a specific person. Because Tanner's comments were so vague and general, in the opinion of our legal counsel, the Association had no viable course of action.

Despite this reality, some argued

Furthermore, the filing of unfounded actions for defamation with the intention of silencing or impoverishing opposing voices is increasingly being criticized. The strategy has even earned itself an acronym, "SLAPP," standing for "strategic lawsuit against public participation" and has been widely condemned as fundamentally undemocratic and abusive. It is not a practice that the Association would want to associate itself with, even when the "opposing voices" are deliberately spewing disinformation.

Let's be clear, though, the Alberta Teachers' Association will not hesitate to go to court when it has legitimate cause to do so. We have acted to protect the reputation of the Association itself and of individual teachers when they have been attacked by others and have succeeded in either forcing a public retraction of defamatory statements and/or obtaining compensation in the form of court-ordered damages for individual teachers who have been the victims of defamation. As Jim Casey, the Association's senior counsel at Field Law has said, "We know our way to the courthouse."

In the end, Tanner was dealt with in the court of public opinion, which extracted a more severe and immediate penalty than could possibly have been obtained in any court of law — she was forced to resign her candidacy for the UCP in Lethbridge West. Although she made no apology for the offensive content of her video (for that matter, neither did Premier Smith or Minister LaGrange), she still paid the price for her statements.

And ultimately, that is where the solution lies — ordinary Albertans must stand together with teachers to hold politicians and would-be politicians accountable for their statements and policy through political processes and, ultimately, on May 29, at the ballot box. ■

Questions for consideration in this column are welcome. Please address them to Dennis Theobald at [dennis.theobald@ata.ab.ca](mailto:dennis.theobald@ata.ab.ca).





# Get to know your pension early



## VIEWPOINTS

Sharon Vogrinetz  
Special to the ATA News

Why should I care about my pension? I'm only 31! This is a common sentiment among early-career teachers, and I hear you. Newer teachers have lots of expenses — student loans, housing, insurance — which makes 25 or 30 years down the road seem irrelevant, if not impossible. However, looking for opportunities to save and invest money early in your career will serve you well, as it maximizes the impact of compounding interest.

The best option to save money for your future, with minimal personal risk, is your Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund (ATRF) pension.

“... awareness of your pension plan at an early age ... will pay off in the long run.”

Your ATRF pension is a defined benefit pension, which means that your final pension income is based on your average salary and years of service, not investment returns. Teachers sometimes ask if they can opt out of the ATRF and just invest for themselves. That is not permitted, and there are several reasons why the pension plan is a better way to prepare for your future rather than personal savings or RRSPs.

Your contributions typically make up only about 20 per cent of your future retirement income. The rest comes from gains made by investments. And before you ask, no, you are very unlikely to be able to invest better on your own. Why?

**1. Risk:** If you invest your money yourself, you carry all the risk. So if you make a poor choice, or there's a recession, you lose. ATRF can distribute the risk over 50,000 individuals over decades of time. Because of its size (\$21.6 billion), ATRF is able to invest in a diverse portfolio, which helps even out any losses or bad events. In addition, ATRF invests for the long term, which allows even more investment diversity.

**2. Access:** Because of its size, ATRF can invest in stuff no individual can, like commercial real estate or infrastructure (the 407 highway in Toronto, for example).

**3. Investment cost:** Most mutual funds charge more

than two per cent to invest your money. While you can find less expensive options, it would be very hard to match the 1.07 per cent cost that ATRF spent last year, especially given the complexities of some investments. If you don't have the time or expertise to manage your personal investments daily, you'll be paying for someone else's expertise (and hoping they have your best interests at heart).

**4. Guarantee:** Once you are eligible for a pension (after five years), your pension, payable at age 55, is guaranteed until your death. And if you have a pension partner, you can choose an option that pays until their death too. You can't get that from any other investment plan for this price.

**5. Cost of living:** Each January your pension increases by 70 per cent (for service after 1991) of the current cost of living increase, regardless of the performance of the plan or increases paid to active teachers. Try asking a life insurance agent to quote the purchase price for an income policy that provides an increase each January ... see what they say.

Not teaching long? Leave your contributions on deposit. You can always get your pension (or contributions) at age 55 if you don't return to teaching. Teaching is a very flexible career. Many teachers take time away for family or to try different careers. Many return to teaching later, and those early years left in the plan increase the value of the pension. Substitute teaching service can be purchased for half price at retirement too. Plus, there are reciprocal transfer agreements with all other provincial teachers' plans if you move away from Alberta.

Parental or other unpaid leave? You can "purchase" any unpaid leave on your return, which means that time counts as if you were working. While you can buy a leave at any time prior to retirement, it's based on your current salary and service, so it is much more expensive the closer you are to age 55. If you can afford it, buy it while you're young and "cheap." If you have questions about the cost and value of buying a leave, contact ATRF at [member@atrf.com](mailto:member@atrf.com) (for those actively teaching).

While it may be difficult to imagine retirement this early in your career, having a defined benefit pension means you don't have to think about retirement just yet, but awareness of your pension plan at an early age — its nuances with respect to contributions and leaves — will pay off in the long run.

If you have any questions about your pension, contact ATA Teacher Employment Services at [tes@ata.ab.ca](mailto:tes@ata.ab.ca).

Sharon Vogrinetz is a former ATA assistant executive secretary and sat on the ATRF board of trustees from 2000 to 2012.

## YOUR VIEWS

### FACEBOOK FEEDBACK

**On the statistic that four in 10 teachers have more than 33 students**

**Richard Richards**

We have been talking about the "disastrous future" for too long; it's actually now.

**On the ATA's new Stand for Education billboards depicting overcrowded classrooms with chairs**

**Suzanne Elizabeth**

Can I have those chairs for my classroom after? I don't have enough.

**On Jason Schilling's op-ed on teachers being cut out of curriculum development**

**Lee Bannister**

It's a win-win for the government. If we succeed, it was because of them. If we fail, they have reason to invest in non-public education. I just wish they would open it up to teachers because we are great at helping out and creating content ... IT'S OUR JOB!!

**Steph W-j**

90 per cent of teachers in AB did not support this terrible curriculum. Curriculum experts did not support this curriculum. Many parents did not support this curriculum. Still it was rammed through, and unsurprisingly is a complete failure. When LaGrange is confronted on these facts, she gaslights and disregards teachers' valid arguments about why it was doomed from the start.

**Julie Sabo**

They just don't care — teachers are still working hard to help the younger students catch up after COVID. They do not need more on their plate right now!!

**On the free text message-based Wellness4Teachers Program**

**Step Mac**

It's nice that a service like this is available, but the more important piece is why isn't there a "real" plan in place? Burnout appears to be in overdrive and I'm not convinced a cognitive behavioural therapy app is gonna fix that issue when there isn't any change in the workplace.

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



## FOR THE RECORD

“Public charter schools are increasingly popular choices for families because every family is unique, every child is unique. And our publicly funded system is designed for those choices.”

— Education Minister Adriana LaGrange during the unveiling of a new \$118 million charter school hub in Calgary



# Career task force report raises red flags

Cory Hare  
ATA News Managing Editor

A task force report that aims to improve the way the grade 7–12 education system prepares students for careers is creating concerns about deprofessionalizing the teaching profession in Alberta.

Formed in September 2022, the government’s Career Education Task Force released its final report last week. Its 21 recommendations contain several that the Alberta Teachers’ Association has flagged as problematic for public education and the teaching profession.

Among the problematic recommendations is a call to streamline and expand the use of alternative methods for industry experts to become certificated teachers without an education degree.

“These proposals are contrary to the interests of teachers and public education. They will continue to contribute to the denigration and deprofessionalization of teaching as a profession,” said ATA president Jason Schilling.

Another recommendation that the ATA finds problematic calls for teachers being removed from supervising off-campus placements and reduce requirements for safety inspection reports, thus putting students at potential risk.

In a news release, Education Minister Adriana LaGrange seemed to endorse the task force’s work.

“Alberta’s government is committed to ensuring students have every opportunity to pursue their career interests and succeed in Alberta’s expanding job market. Thanks to the valuable advice of the Career Education Task Force, we have a plan to improve career education that will set students on the path to success, in the workplace and beyond,” she said.

The ATA continues to assess the task force recommendations and engage in internal discussions in order to create a co-ordinated response. ■



Education Minister  
Adriana LaGrange



## CTF/FCE CORNER

f CTF-FCE @CanTeachersFed www.ctf-fce.ca

# New Brunswick teachers thank Canadian colleagues

ATA News Staff

Teachers in New Brunswick have been without a contract since 2021. With negotiations at an impasse, the New Brunswick Teachers’ Association (NBTA) has applied for conciliation. NBTA president Connie Keating issued the following letter to colleagues across Canada.

Dear colleagues,

New Brunswick teachers would like to thank you from the bottom of their hearts for the support expressed during the first week of festive after-school rallies! We appreciate you sharing images from the rallies and spreading our message on your social media. These messages help us share the concerns of teachers across the country.

In times when many provincially elected officials are not listening, your ears and your support mean a lot.

For more than five decades, the working relationships between the province’s teachers and successive governments has been conducted under the sign of good faith and the search for solutions. We find it disappointing that the current government is not following suit.


The Conservative government’s initial offers are leaving a bitter taste for teachers across New Brunswick. To highlight this unwillingness of our premier to seriously address the issues of inflation, recruitment and retention of qualified teachers, dozens of other rallies are being organized from one corner of the province to the next over the next few weeks.

We are counting on you to share the messages and images of what is going on with New Brunswick teachers on your social media.

Sincerely,

Connie Keating  
NBTA president ■

**Off Script**  
with ATA President Jason Schilling



*I welcome your comments. Contact me at [jason.schilling@ata.ab.ca](mailto:jason.schilling@ata.ab.ca).*

# Conferences are about connections

Recently I had the privilege of attending the 2023 uLead Conference, hosted in Banff by the ATA’s Council of School Leadership. It was a great few days of connecting with colleagues and hearing keynote speakers talk about the value of school leaders, unconscious bias and how we are all essentially imperfect when it comes to leadership.

Dr. Steve Munby’s comments on imperfect leadership resounded most for me over the course of the weekend. Like many of you, I have strived in my teaching career to be perfect — I had to have the best, most interesting lessons that my students would love and be so entirely intrigued by that they would totally and completely forget they

even had a smartphone. Yeah, I know, I laughed just writing that. It was entirely how I felt early in my career, but we all know that is not the reality of teaching. It’s messy, imperfect and challenging.

It’s that imperfection that makes us authentic to our students, especially when we model that it’s OK to make mistakes and ask for help. It shows we are learning and growing. I learned after several years in the classroom that the idea of perfect doesn’t exist. I can say it was at that point in my career that I eased up on the imposter syndrome I felt (which never truly goes away) and focused on the relationship aspect of my teaching.

At uLead, it was great to connect and hear about the changes in the lives of

colleagues I have not seen in years. It was especially fun to reconnect with a colleague who is also a former student, and his spouse, who had worked at my former school. We reminisced about our time working together, students we had taught and the fact that the one teacher’s mother was an educational assistant in my science class.

Sure, we can learn a lot from speakers at conferences. They can open our minds about pedagogy, leadership and how to shape the education system into something that is better, but conferences can also remind us of the importance of our connections to each other. Banff delivered stunning views, but the people at uLead provided much needed inspiration. ■

# Running for election?

Are you a teacher who is running for MLA?

Send your name, party affiliation, name of riding and a photo to [cory.hare@ata.ab.ca](mailto:cory.hare@ata.ab.ca).

A listing will be published in the next issue of the *ATA News*.

**DEADLINE: MAY 3**



## 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](mailto:cory.hare@ata.ab.ca).



# NDP pledges to open the door to pension reversal

Cory Hare  
ATA News Managing Editor

If the Alberta NDP become the next government, they will allow teachers to take back their pension plan from AIMCo.

This is a promise contained in a letter posted recently to social media and signed by NDP education critic Sarah Hoffman.

The letter specifically targets teachers by promising to

- give the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund (ATRF) and other public sector pensions representation on the AIMCo board of directors;
- remove the power of the minister of finance to direct specific investments with your pension dollars;
- following reforms, allow the ATRF to leave AIMCo if investment performance is not satisfactory, as determined by teachers.

"This letter is our commitment to you that the Alberta NDP will support you in re-establishing your control over your pension. It never should have been taken away," the letter states.

The issue over the teachers' pension plan traces back to the fall of 2019 when the UCP government passed Bill

22, which required the ATRF to use AIMCo, an Alberta Crown corporation, as its sole investment manager. The bill led to a ministerial order imposing an agreement between the ATRF and AIMCo and an ATA lawsuit. Finally, the ATRF and AIMCo reached an agreement that ATRF officials felt served the plan's interests.

Regarding the NDP's letter, an interview request to comment on it did not garner a response from Finance Minister Travis Toews' office.

## Teachers still upset

ATA president Jason Schilling said teachers are still upset about the pension takeover and the letter is an obvious attempt to tap into that discontent by the NDP.

"They are addressing some of the concerns that teachers have been expressing about pensions over the last several years, which is good, but it's an election promise, so you always have to keep that in mind," Schilling said.

Transferring ATRF assets to AIMCo was extremely complicated and cost the plan \$30 million, so doing the reverse would be just as complicated and at least as costly, Schilling said.

"It's not just as simple as moving money from your chequing account to your savings account," he said.



Sarah Hoffman, NDP education critic

The NDP letter also addresses broader pension issues, pledging to keep the province in the Canada Pension Plan and expand private workplace pensions.

Schilling stressed that, as a non-partisan organization, the ATA does not endorse particular candidates or parties, but it does work to elicit commitments to public education from all parties and candidates.

The ATA's current Stand For Education campaign is aiming to get

political parties to make concrete commitments related to education, including addressing issues such as class size, complex needs of students and teachers, curriculum and funding.

"The next step is trying to get political parties on the record of where they stand on those issues," Schilling said. "That's why it's important for our members and their family and friends to push those issues out there and engage in those conversations." ■

# Teachers demand action on classroom conditions

ATA News Staff

A group of Red Deer area teachers joined ATA president Jason Schilling on Tuesday, April 18, to raise awareness about overcrowding in Alberta's classrooms.

Teachers held signs showing how large their classes are while gathered in front of a three-dimensional billboard on which actual chairs have been affixed to represent an overcrowded classroom.

Similar billboards are located in Edmonton and Calgary. The billboards are part of phase three of the ATA's Stand for Education provincial campaign, which is calling on all political parties to make real commitments in the upcoming election to solve critical classroom conditions and help all students develop their full potential.

The campaign, which also includes television advertisements, print flyers, lawn signs and radio ads, is being used to raise the profile of education in the upcoming provincial election.

"Teachers are deeply concerned about the impact large class sizes are having on students," Schilling said. "If students are going to get the support they deserve, teachers and parents need to see real commitments from all political parties to solve the many issues facing our public education system."

Thousands of people have signed up on the StandforEducation.ca campaign website to show that they will vote based on a political party's commitment to address the issues in the public education system. The ATA will continue to share information about education issues and the platform commitments of parties and will host events in the lead-up to election day on May 29. ■



JONATHAN TEGHMEYER

A group of Red Deer area teachers gathered with ATA president Jason Schilling to raise awareness about large class sizes. The demonstration drew plenty of honks from passing motorists.

## POLL RESULTS

Recent polling from TrendWatch Alberta shows that ...

# 77%

of Albertans say that K-12 education will be an important issue for them when determining how to vote

# 73%

believe that class sizes in Alberta's schools are too big

# 70%

believe that the Alberta government is not spending enough on public education





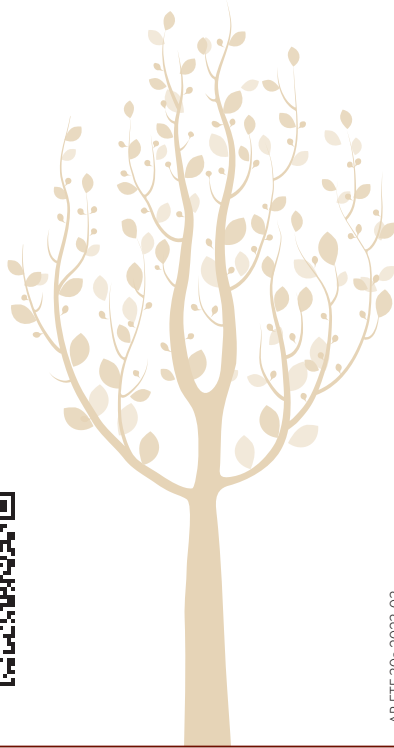
## The ATA Educational Trust

The ATA Educational Trust is a charitable organization that has been supporting public education and providing grants to advance teaching practices in Alberta for over 30 years.

Apply for a **\$700 BT Keeler Continuing Education Bursary** for teachers wishing to advance their knowledge and teaching skills in a subject area through taking university courses.

Application deadline:  
**May 1, 4:00 PM**

[www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca)



AR-ETF-30a 2023-03

## NOTICES AND EVENTS

### Professional educator group seeks Edmonton area members

Are you looking for ways to get involved in efforts to improve education; to maintain your current knowledge of local, national and international educational trends, issues and initiatives; to improve your own practice; and to advance your own career?

The University of Alberta chapter of Phi Delta Kappa International (PDK) is now recruiting new members and extends an invitation to Edmonton-area practicing educators and leaders from schools, school districts, the Department of Education and post-secondary institutions (including faculty members and graduate and undergraduate students).

The chapter is proud to be affiliated with PDK, a professional association for educators that includes tens of thousands of members in over 600

chapters worldwide. PDK's mission is to promote high-quality education as essential to the development and maintenance of a democratic way of life. Service, research and leadership are the three basic tenets that guide the work of the association.

The chapter is the only remaining one in Western Canada and needs to recruit new members for its future sustainability. Membership is declining with the retirement of long-serving members, and there are not enough dues-paying members from which to recruit for executive positions. As a consequence, the chapter faces dissolution.

Join today and become a part of this powerful network of educators. Information on PDK, including membership applications, can be accessed at [www.pdkintl.org](http://www.pdkintl.org).



Follow us on Twitter: @albertateachers



### Code Jumper

in your ATA Library

To learn more about this kit, visit [teachers-ab.libguides.com/makerspaces/atod](http://teachers-ab.libguides.com/makerspaces/atod).

### Exciting new coding kit for students with visual disabilities!

Code Jumper allows blind students to code on a screen using tactile coding tools. Students will learn

- computational thinking; and
- programming concepts such as sequence, variables and iteration.

This kit comes with a guide and ready-to-use lesson plans in both French and English. An online tutorial for teachers is available in English.

Contact your ATA Library at 1-800-232-7208, or email us at [library@ata.ab.ca](mailto:library@ata.ab.ca) and request to borrow it today.

# YES!

## I want to know more about Learning Disabilities & ADHD!

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CALGARY REGION

403-630-1616

[LDADHDnetwork.ca](http://LDADHDnetwork.ca)





# Your pension is your future

*No matter where you are in your career, now is the time to learn about your pension plan*

## ATA News Staff

As an Alberta teacher, your pension is one of your most valuable assets. Many teachers have more immediate concerns in the classroom and may postpone future planning because retirement is down the road. However, the choices members make now may

affect how much income they receive in retirement.

"It's important for members to understand their pension early on in their career," said ATA president Jason Schilling, a former pension consultant for the ATA.

The Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund (ATRF) is the pension manager for the Alberta Teacher's Pension Plan.

The plan is a defined benefit plan, meaning that the pension amount received in retirement is based on many factors such as salary and length of service as a teacher.

"I always encourage members to attend ATA and ATRF workshops even if they may not be retiring in the near future, to understand fully what ATRF does," Schilling said.

A teacher's retirement income will be affected by changes to their income or length of service, such as moving from full-time to part-time, a strike or taking leaves.

When a teacher takes a leave, it is not counted as pensionable service. To receive the same retirement income as

was projected before a leave, a teacher can retire later or buy back pensionable service. The longer a teacher waits to buy back pensionable service, the more expensive it will be, because the cost is determined by a teacher's age, salary and years of service at the date of purchase.

Understanding your pension plan is crucial to your financial planning and retirement security. The ATRF is a valuable resource for Alberta teachers, providing education, support and assistance with all aspects of the pension plan. By taking advantage of the ATRF's resources and services, you can feel confident in your retirement planning and secure in your future financial well-being. ■



SUPPLIED

Learning about your pension plan early in your career will help you make sound decisions to set you up for a favourable retirement.

## WHO DOES WHAT?

### ATRF

- Manages the Alberta Teacher's Pension Plan
- Offers webinars, presentations and answers questions about the plan

Visit the MyPension portal at [atrf.com](http://atrf.com) or call 1-800-661-9582.

### ATA

- Appoints half of the members of the ATRF's governing board.
- Answers questions and offers sessions on general retirement planning.

Visit [teachers.ab.ca](http://teachers.ab.ca) or contact Teacher Employment Services.

[tes@ata.ab.ca](mailto:tes@ata.ab.ca)  
780-447-9400 (Edmonton area)  
1 800 232 7208 (toll free)

# Student Vote program gearing up for election day

Cory Hare

ATA News Managing Editor

A program aimed at giving students a taste of democracy is gearing up for a busy season with a provincial election on the horizon in Alberta.

Student Vote, a school-based program operated by CIVIX, provides resources and lesson plans aimed at helping teachers encourage students to become informed about election issues and candidates.

The program enables students to vote in parallel elections held alongside actual elections. In the weeks leading up to the vote, students learn about government and democracy, research the candidates and discuss campaign issues in school and at home. Students then take on the roles of election officials and co-ordinate a parallel vote, whose results are tabulated and released publicly after official voting ends.

Participating schools receive free learning materials and election supplies such as activity guides, posters, an election manual, ballots and ballot boxes. So far, the program has registered more than 1,200 Alberta schools and expects more than 175,000 students to cast a ballot, said CEO Lindsay Mazzucco.

"Alberta is probably our most committed network of teachers across the country," Mazzucco said.

The program is popular with teachers because it enables students to get a direct experience of the democratic process, Mazzucco said.

The provincial election slated to take place on May 29 will mark the fifth time the Student Vote program has taken



SUPPLIED

The Student Vote program enables students to participate in a mock election held in conjunction with real elections.

place in Alberta at the provincial level. Packages are being shipped to schools and a variety of online resources are available on the Student Vote Alberta website. The organization is also working on a video project in which political leaders will respond via video to questions collected from students.

Teacher Alix Esterhuizen of John Ware School in Calgary says the Student Vote program provides an outstanding

opportunity for students to learn about the electoral process, but most importantly, allows them to develop and express an informed opinion about the world around them.

"What I most want for students when they graduate is for them to be empowered to make educated and informed decisions about the world around them," Esterhuizen said. "CIVIX helps provide the skills necessary to do that." ■

## DEMOCRACY BOOTCAMPS

In ramping up for election season, CIVIX held day-long Democracy Bootcamp sessions at four Alberta teachers' conventions this year. Topics covered included facilitating effective discussions, perspectives and biases, discussing controversial issues, online verification skills and Student Vote best practices. The sessions attracted a total of 261 Alberta teachers.

## STUDENT VOTE:

For more information about Student Vote, visit [studentvote.ca](http://studentvote.ca).



# We have your back.

Have you received notice of a complaint from the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission?

Help is available to Association members but timelines are tight.

## Please contact us immediately!

[professionaldiscipline@ata.ab.ca](mailto:professionaldiscipline@ata.ab.ca)

780-447-9460



The Alberta Teachers' Association



## DIGITAL NEWS

The ATA News is available online.

For the latest issue, visit [www.teachers.ab.ca/news](http://www.teachers.ab.ca/news).

Subscribe to receive an email when a new issue is available.

<http://bit.ly/ATAeNews>



## The Alberta Teachers' Association

The Alberta Teachers' Association invites applications for the position of

### ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY (DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER)

**Competition: ESO2/23**

**Location: Edmonton**

#### Position Overview

Under the general direction of and reporting directly to the Executive Secretary (who serves as the Association's chief executive officer), the Associate Executive Secretary assists in providing strategic and operational leadership related to the general management of the affairs and programs of the Association. Some of the duties include:

- Planning and coordinating the business of the Association
- Overseeing and directing various Association initiatives, events and activities
- Examining trends and evaluating potential risks and opportunities originating within and outside the education sector
- Attending and participating in meetings of Provincial Executive Council, Table Officers and other committees as assigned and being responsible for Association representation
- Having general responsibility for matters related to the status of the teaching profession, political and legislative affairs, public relations and internal and external governance
- Bearing responsibility for the order paper, resolutions and related legislative processes for the Annual Representative Assembly
- Acting as coordinator, Government
- Supervising and directing staff and acting on behalf of management in negotiations with and management of professional and support staff

#### Qualifications

Candidates must demonstrate:

- Extensive experience in providing leadership in public education with excellent strategic, financial, operational and people management skills
- Ability to foster effective working relationships and collaborative partnerships with both internal and external stakeholders
- Knowledge of roles and responsibilities respecting governance and management
- Superior interpersonal, collaboration and communication skills, including the ability to communicate effectively in writing
- Effective consultative and negotiation skills
- Strong organizational skills and attention to detail
- Awareness of relevant legislation, regulations and policies
- Commitment to improving service to members
- Resilience, focus and ethical probity when confronting complex and stressful situations

In addition, the following are required:

- Possession of a valid teaching certificate and a minimum of five years of successful teaching experience in public education
- Ability to undertake travel and evening/weekend work
- Demonstrated prolonged commitment to the Alberta Teachers' Association (or another Canadian teachers' organization) will be considered an asset
- Ability to work in the French language is also considered an asset

#### Who We Are

As a professional organization and the voice of the province's teachers, the Association is dedicated to advancing the cause of education and to building the teaching profession in Alberta. The Association represents all public, separate and francophone school teachers in the province of Alberta.

The provincial Association, its locals and subgroups perform both union and professional functions. As a union, the Association negotiates and monitors collective agreements and represents teachers in matters of employment. Effective January 1, 2023, the Association has begun representing members who may be subject to regulatory processes relating to professional conduct and practice administered by the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission.

In its professional role, the Association promotes and supports the preparation of candidates to the profession, provides ongoing professional development to members, makes representation to the government on matters of education policy, advocates for public education, and works with like-minded organizations provincially, nationally and internationally. To better achieve these ends, the Association actively promotes the representation and participation of member teachers in its governance and the delivery of its programs.

#### What This Position Offers

Total compensation for this position includes a competitive salary, pensionable service under the Teachers' Pension Plan of the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund Board and employer-paid benefits as stipulated in a collective agreement. The initial location will be in Edmonton, but future assignments may be to any present or future Association office. Duties will commence formally on September 1, 2023 with a transitional period beginning as soon as possible following appointment (negotiable).

Applicants should quote position ESO2/23 and include two letters from references who are not Association employees or elected officials of its provincial executive. Applications must be received by 1600 on Wednesday, May 10, 2023 and should be addressed to

Ms Kathryn Dick  
Human Resources Director  
The Alberta Teachers' Association  
11010 142 Street NW  
Edmonton T5N 2R1  
E-mail: [hr@ata.ab.ca](mailto:hr@ata.ab.ca)

For more information, please see our website at [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca).





## Transfers Code of Conduct Sick leave Benefits



**You are not alone—call us first.**

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The Alberta Teachers' Association

Winter issue of the *ATA Magazine* now available in schools.



The Alberta Teachers' Association

### IN THIS ISSUE:

#### Feature

Indigenous educators reflect on truth, engagement, colonialism and reconciliation

#### Unsung Hero

Carol Van Slyke: In the business of giving hope

#### Wellness

Sleep plays a critical role in overall health

#### Technology

- Tips for navigating social media as a teacher
- Want to start a podcast? Here's how

#### Diversity

Confronting ableism and disablism in education

#### In Profile

Drama-teaching duo celebrates 25 years of collaboration

#### Research Insights

Teachers, school leaders report unsustainable levels of moral distress

#### Most Memorable Lesson

Improvised act of kindness has lifelong impact

Winter issue of the ATA Magazine is now available in schools. Digital version at



COMM-47-5-2b 2023 04

## 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](mailto:cory.hare@ata.ab.ca).



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**It was great seeing you at the 2023 ATA Conventions.  
Stay tuned for the announcement of our 15 lucky E-Bike winners!**

Morgex Insurance is a tradename of and a division of Johnson Inc. ("Johnson"), a licensed insurance intermediary. Home and car policies are underwritten exclusively, and claims handled, by Unifund Assurance Company ("Unifund"). Described coverage and benefits applicable only to policies underwritten by Unifund. Car insurance not available in BC, SK or MB. Home and car insurance not available in NU. Johnson and Unifund share common ownership.





The **ATA News** invites you to get your camera out and start shooting those award-winning photographs.

**1st place: \$200 2nd place: \$100 3rd place: \$50**

**GOTCHA! Contest rules**

- 1 Photos taken by active, associate and student ATA members of education- or school-related activities are eligible. (Hint: photos depicting action are best.)
- 2 Entries must be submitted by the member who took the photos.
- 3 Photos taken between Sept. 1, 2022 and May 15, 2023, are eligible.
- 4 Please email photos to [cory.hare@ata.ab.ca](mailto:cory.hare@ata.ab.ca). Entries must be received by 5 p.m. on May 15, 2023.
- 5 Each entry must be accompanied by a description of the activity; the names (if possible) of the people in the photo; the date when the photo was taken; and the photographer's name, school and contact information.
- 6 Cash prizes will be awarded to entrants whose photos place in the top three, as follows: first place, \$200; second place, \$100; and third place, \$50.
- 7 Each winner will also receive a certificate of merit, as will those receiving honourable mention.
- 8 Up to 20 additional entries may be selected for an award of honourable mention.
- 9 Each entrant may submit up to five photos but no entrant can win more than one top-three prize.
- 10 A panel of individuals with photography, publishing and teaching experience will judge the entries. The decision of the judges is final.
- 11 Winning photographs will be published in the *ATA News*.
- 12 Photos submitted for the contest may be published in the *ATA News*, the *ATA Magazine* or other Association publications.
- 13 Please read carefully. Failure to comply with any of these rules may result in disqualification.

Get snapping and good luck!

COMM-65-1 2023 02




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# TALENTEND

April 15, 2023 | Volume 57, Number 12

## All about LEADERSHIP

We asked teachers to take a selfie with their school leader and tell us why they are awesome.



This is our principal Scott Flintoft and vice-principal Corre Mahan at Joe Clark School in High River. We have the best team, always helping out when needed, caring and so supportive AND brings us snacks too!!

Marisa Schulz Blanchard



This is Michelle Nantias (left) with St. Patrick Catholic School in Camrose. She is so caring and kind. She makes sure her staff are taken care of! She is a shining light in our school.

Alysha Blackburn

And you're understanding and easy to talk to.

Sandra Carlson

Thank you. I feel blessed to be in our school and surrounded by such a great team!

Michelle Geraldine Nantias



This is Keith Early from Athabasca Delta Community School, Parkland School Division, on our flight into Fort Chipewyan. Keith is kind, he's empathetic and he cares.

Stephanie Mellross



## LEADERSHIP TIPS

The ATA's Council for School Leadership held its annual uLead summit from April 15 to 18, attracting hundreds of school-based, district-level and provincial and state education leaders. We asked a selection of leaders this question: What tips do you have for working with teachers as colleagues?



As with most cases, it's about building relationships and trust. If you have a staff team that feels that they can work comfortably with you, and you can work comfortably with them, you're able to collaborate easily. Making sure that you understand who they are, they understand who you are ... that makes a huge difference.

Scott Bloxham  
Principal, George McDougall High School, Airdrie



The biggest thing for me is creating those connections and finding out what gifts and talents they bring to the work. And I think recognizing that when we walk into any type of leadership role, it's really helping to walk alongside people, helping to see their gifts and talents so that they can really start to feel like they're part of the process and have that sense of belonging within it.

Lynn Leslie  
Learning services supervisor, Calgary Catholic School Division



The first thing is capital F fun — have fun and get to know people and connect. So, I would say connect and have a good time. I mean, you've got to have fun in this work. It's really, really hard. It's hard on everyone at times, so have fun, build relationships and connect first before you get to the hard work.

Kristy Smith  
Director of learning, Battle River School Division, Camrose



It's all about relationships. I have to be super intentional about my relationships with teachers, even at my own school site. So it's maybe going in earlier than I would normally like, so I can get my own work done, because then by the time people start showing up, I just want to talk and socialize. So I'm intentional about that, and then just making sure I physically walk around my school, to different parts that I maybe normally don't get to, when I don't have supervision.

Sarah Cresswell  
President, Parkland Teachers Local No. 10