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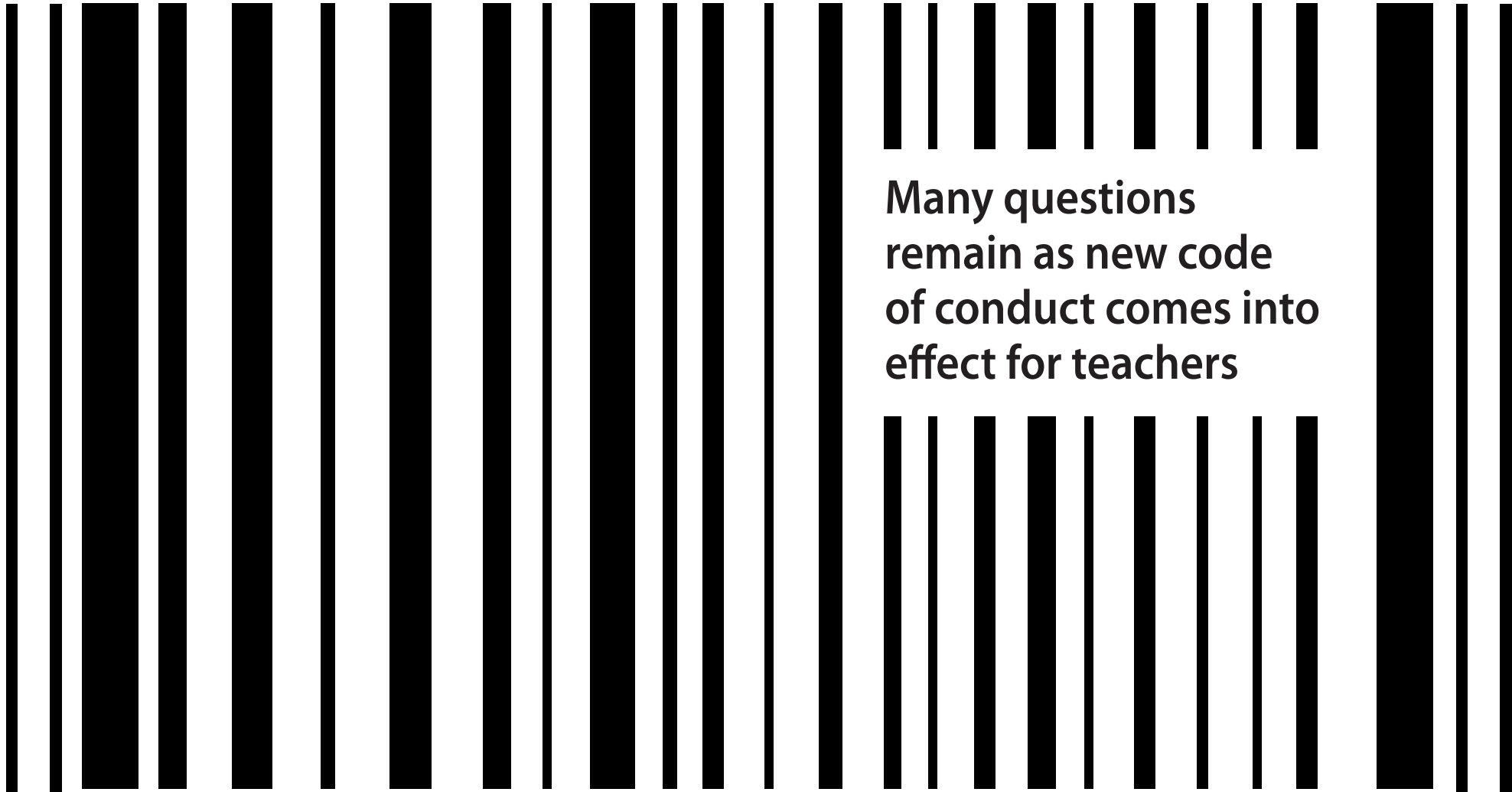


ATA NEWS

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New year, new code



Many questions remain as new code of conduct comes into effect for teachers

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ATA unveils in-person teacher exchanges to Australia.
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Oversight of teacher conduct enters new era



EDITORIAL

Shelley Magnusson
ATA News Interim
Editor-in-Chief

In 2013, I became part of what the Association called the Professional Conduct Committee Secretariat, which means for the last decade I have acted as the secretary for many professional conduct hearings, too many to count.

I have to admit that, at first, I was not enamoured of my new duties. The idea of listening to a litany of ways my fellow teachers had screwed up didn't appeal to me at all. But, over time, I recognized that we were doing really important work, work that was best done by teachers for teachers and for the profession.

I was often asked about the supposedly contradictory role of the ATA in both defending teachers and disciplining teachers. But these roles were not in opposition to each other. Both had the goal of ensuring that the process was fair and just for everyone. And once a hearing was ordered, the ATA's role was to protect the dignity and honour of students and the profession.

At the start of almost every hearing,

the legal counsel to the committee would remind the members that, under the *Teaching Profession Act*, only the committee could determine if the conduct we were about to learn about was unprofessional or not. We had hearings where teachers said "yes, I did that, but I don't think it was unprofessional." Sometimes the cases were mundane and obvious; other times I found myself wondering, what the heck were they thinking?

“The idea that it will no longer be a jury of their peers that passes judgment on teachers is not just sad, it also seems to fly in the face of natural justice.”

That was the magic of our system — it was a group of teachers (and sometimes a public member) who decided what was unprofessional conduct and what wasn't. Teachers who were members of the committee had willingly given up their time to learn the intricacies of the Code of Professional Conduct, the *Teaching Profession Act* and the steps and procedures of the hearing processes and regulatory case law.

Many times our committee did arduous work, sifting through hundreds of pages of evidence and listening to days of witness testimony. And then they would have to render judgement on their colleague, judgment that could, and sometimes did, include a recommendation to the minister to cancel their colleague's teaching certificate. I can tell you that those decisions were never made easily or lightly. Committee members

understood the gravity of what they were recommending and had to be able to articulate clearly and concisely why they decided what they decided. What did the evidence show? Which witnesses were more believable than others? What had been the result in previous similar cases?

I witnessed teachers come into the hearing room full of bravado only to have the overwhelming weight of evidence

against them pile up to the point that their bravado turned to acceptance that they had indeed been unprofessional in their conduct. I witnessed teachers who, even after the committee rendered their judgment, remained steadfast in their belief that they had done nothing wrong. I witnessed teachers coming into the hearing room to express their deep remorse for their actions. And I witnessed some of the best and the worst of people.

For those reasons, I am sad that this part of my work is coming to a close. The idea that it will no longer be a jury of their peers that passes judgment on teachers is not just sad, it also seems to fly in the face of natural justice. Who better than fellow teachers to make these decisions? Who are the new panel members? Have they been in a classroom recently? Will they be able to separate the incident of unprofessional conduct from the entirety of the teacher's past actions? Will they understand the nuances of teacher-pupil relationships?

I hope so. I can only surmise that the people who have been chosen to do this work have the best interests of parents, students, teachers and the profession at heart. I can only hope that when they sit in judgment, they too will understand how important this work is. ■

ATA is there for teachers as new discipline processes unfold



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive
Secretary

Question: Occasionally I have heard news reports of teachers who have behaved horribly, bringing disgrace on our profession. Why is the Alberta Teachers' Association now representing bad teachers?

Answer: The Association's role has fundamentally changed as of Jan. 1, 2023. That's when the government officially took over the management of teacher professional conduct.

Prior to this takeover, for the previous six decades, the Alberta Teachers' Association upheld high standards of conduct and, more recently competency, with the objective of protecting the public interest. Under this model, teaching was similar to other self-regulating professions such as law and medicine. In its own disciplinary processes, the Association's role was to investigate all complaints received and bring before professional conduct hearing committees those cases where there were grounds to believe that a teacher's conduct had failed to meet the

standards set out in the Association's Code of Conduct. This was difficult work, but we did it conscientiously.

Now, with the government taking over the management of complaints and the prosecution of alleged unprofessional conduct or practice, the Association will be pivoting to represent members who are caught up in the new process.

It is important to remember that not all complaints are well founded and not every accused person is guilty. By virtue of the intensity and complexity of their work, the competing demands placed upon them and the fact that they are always on public display, teachers are uniquely vulnerable to false accusations. Even if a teacher has behaved badly, the provision of Association representation does not constitute approval of that teacher's behaviour. Rather, it is an effort to ensure they are treated fairly and in accordance with law and principles of natural justice.

Just as in criminal proceedings, every accused person is entitled to mount a defense and to have representation to assist them. In the criminal courts, this representation is undertaken by defense lawyers. In the case of proceedings under the government's new process, representation will be provided by Association executive staff officers with the advice and assistance of legal counsel. The nature and extent of this

representation will be determined by the Association, balancing the interests of the individual teacher with those of the general membership and profession.

I believe that the Association's executive staff officers are well positioned to take on this new role. Not only are they familiar with undertaking complex investigations and presenting at quasijudicial hearing tribunals, but they are also all teachers who have a deep understanding of the realities of the classroom and of the working lives of their professional colleagues.

As well, the Association has, through processes kept strictly separate and apart from its previous disciplinary functions, always provided guidance and representation to teachers in conflicts with their colleagues and employers and legal assistance in instances where they have faced criminal charges arising out of their role or work as teachers. This body of experience applies directly to the provision of support to teachers who are the subjects of complaints and proceedings under the new regime.

I'll note as well that the Association offers mediation services and related professional development that in many cases would assist teachers to more effectively manage and satisfactorily resolve conflicts than lodging a complaint with the government.

Association representation will be very important for teachers who are accused of unprofessional conduct or practice. At this point, we do not know how the government's processes will function in practice and won't know until we see them in actual operation. In contrast to previous Association processes, where an accused teacher would appear before a hearing committee comprised of a majority of active members, the general panel appointed by the minister of education consists of a pool of 30 individuals, of whom only 15 have teaching certificates and, of those, just two are classroom teachers currently working in public, separate or francophone schools. We don't know who will be presenting cases on behalf of government or who will be advising those panel members assigned to hearing committees or to perform dispute resolution or mediation.

Facing uncertain processes, with little prospect of appearing before a panel comprised of peers, with potential career and life consequences being so high and with the looming potential for ministerial interference in any outcome, teachers deserve effective representation. The Association will be providing it. ■

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



YOUR VIEWS

FACEBOOK FEEDBACK

On the ATA's pulse survey results

Sheri Wnuk

Of course there is "learning loss." When kids are not in school this happens. The gap widens and teachers are expected to close a widening gap with less time, money and way more complexities. These complexities are learning issues, social issues, economic issues, and physical and mental health issues for both students and teachers. The problem is not simple and won't be fixed with random tests, new curriculum or even money thrown without a strategic plan at every level!

Katey Scully

When you underfund things as drastically as the UCP has done, it ends up costing more in the long run. Fiscally irresponsible. Like a home, you must maintain it, and there are costs associated with that; if you cut and save you end up with bigger problems later.

On the ATA's roundtable sessions and pulse survey results that show 90 per cent of teachers feel exhausted

Darcie DK

Teachers' workload needs to be reduced then. But that won't happen without proper funding. There are no new aspirational ideas; it's funding. Period. Schools need to be funded appropriately, and parents and the ATA should be demanding that the government do that. Teachers don't have the capacity

to create new solutions for something that we seem to have no say in. Demand we have proper funding.

Lori Karoly Szmul

I will be respectful — the graphic says over 90 per cent of teachers feel exhausted at the end of the day — yet I just registered for a roundtable that takes place in the evening of a workday. Honestly, I can't guarantee I can follow through on being there.

Katey Scully

I am on the Teacher Welfare Committee for my school. Engagement for teachers in the bargaining process has been abysmally difficult because there is nothing left in the tank. They can't do even another meeting for bargaining, round tabling, anything. They just can't give anymore. It's really scary. I'm afraid for our profession. I love my job and my school and my kids. It's the first time in years I have had the energy to give back by being on a TWC or coaching, but I keep getting sick.

ON TWITTER

On the ATA graph showing that Alberta spends the least per student out of all provinces

CareForEd @CareForEd1

All educators in Alberta are fully aware of how little the UCP government spends per student. Class sizes are larger than ever and struggling students are not receiving the support they need. It's time the @albertateachers truly becomes vocal about the dire situation in Alberta classrooms.

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

FOR THE RECORD

“What the new year brings to you will depend a great deal on what you bring to the new year.”

– Vern McLellan



Building connections takes effort but it's not complicated



VIEWPOINTS

Danielle Nelson
Special to the ATA News

As teachers, we know how important it is to build connections with students, but sometimes we fall into a trap of thinking that these connections need to be some big lesson or experience. That's not the case.

For most students it's the little things that matter most. It's as simple as saying good morning every morning, writing thank you cards, learning everyone's name, waving goodbye to the buses (even if they don't wave back), showing up to the band concert, school play, badminton game, lunch hour clubs, just to say hi and check it out.

Students always notice when you show up. They see you. Find that one thing that interests your students and ask them about it. You would be surprised how much students will share when they are passionate about it. This year, the gerbera daisies on my desk sparked a conversation about plants, which led to reptiles, and now I know more about snakes and lizards than I ever did before.

Sometimes the way you organize or decorate your classroom has the potential to build connections with students. Last year I put a very large map of the world on the wall, and this became a gathering place for students. They discussed places they had been, and places they would like to go. I have posters around the room with quotes and pictures of famous people — I made a conscious decision to include quotes and pictures that represent diversity and inclusivity.

It was important to me that all types of students be represented.

I found that keeping my door open at lunch or during breaks allows students to visit, chat, or simply provides them a quiet place to just be. Being available to chat and giving your students your time and your undivided attention goes a long way in building a lasting connection. Whatever email, marking or planning we try to cram into our recesses or breaks, while important, will not be as meaningful as the five-minute conversation we have with a student who comes to visit between classes. That might be the only five minutes that student gets to connect with an adult in the building that week.

“... keeping my door open at lunch or during breaks allows students to visit, chat, or provides ... a quiet place to just be.”

Several years ago, during a professional learning session on assessment, I heard Sandra Herbst say, “give students an honorable task.” I took her message to heart, and when I recognize a talent or passion in my students, whether it be artistic, athletic or academic, I try to acknowledge their talent by inviting them to participate in an honorable task — asking the athlete to help coach the elementary basketball team, or the artist to design the program cover for awards night.

Knowing my students well enough to see these talents helps build a connection, but asking them to

participate and use their talents can have a significant impact on how connected they feel to their school, their classmates or their community. It makes them feel seen, heard and appreciated. They might struggle in other areas, so focusing on a strength has the potential to build confidence, independence and ability.

Building connections with some students can be difficult; it requires patience and perseverance. All the usual techniques of building connections and community in the classroom might not work.

Early in my career, I struggled to form a connection with a particular student in my Grade 7 social class. I said good morning to this student every day, starting on the very first day of school, but it took until February before they acknowledged my presence and responded to my greeting. I was committed to making sure that this particular student felt welcome in the building and my classroom. It was important to me that every student felt connected, and I wasn't about to give up.

Now, as a more experienced teacher, I have realized that just as much as our students need and benefit from a sense of community in the classroom, our staff — certificated, classified and contract services — also need and benefit from feeling like a community. So, these days, I am also focused on building community with the adults in my building: thank you notes, random snacks in mailboxes, wellness events, after school chats, hat days and donations to the food bank, all in service of my school family, because that is what we are — a family, a community. ■

Danielle Nelson is a teacher with 17 years of experience building connections with junior high students. She has also worked as a consultant within Elk Island Public Schools supporting teachers in student-centered learning and innovative teaching practices.



Let's make 2023 a better year

Happy new year colleagues! I have always found New Year's to be an interesting holiday. I am not sure about you, but I don't make New Year's resolutions for a few reasons. The first is, as a teacher, I feel that New Year's should fall in September, in accordance with the school calendar. Second, I have always believed that if a person wants to change something, whether personally or professionally, they can start at any time of the year.

When it comes to goals, I tend to work in a backward design approach — determine what I would like to see, then work my way back from that, setting smaller goals and tasks along the way. I

think that comes from the drama teacher in me — set the production date and work backwards.

However, making new goals requires some reflection on previous ones. To me, a new year's resolution is dependent on what occurred in the past year. Teachers have had another challenging year, with the impacts of the ongoing pandemic on our students and classrooms and political uncertainty being top of mind.

There are a lot of things we need to see change for the better in public education. Along with a change in the calendar, 2023 brings us a provincial election during which politicians will try to create a direction and future for

education in our province. It is up to us, as teachers, school leaders, parents and citizens to make sure they are making informed decisions around public education. This is what the ATA's Stand for Education campaign is all about, making sure that public education is a top priority.

I have talked to teachers who have never really been politically active for a variety of reasons. However, this election will require all of us to be active and use our voices. What is your hope for your students, colleagues and school? Together, we can work toward that goal to make 2023 a better year for everyone. ■

STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS

Anti-racism advocate to join ATA's PD program area

Chris Sikkenga
ATA News Staff

Bringing experience in public speaking, leading workshops, multiple ATA committees and 22 years of teaching, Gail-Ann Wilson Mitchell is one of the newest executive staff officers to join the ATA's Professional Development program area.



Gail-Ann Wilson Mitchell, new PD staff officer

Gail-Ann Wilson Mitchell may be a familiar name to many members. She was a guest editor of the fall 2021 issue of the *ATA Magazine*, a keynote speaker at the ATA's Women in Leadership Summit last March and advocated against the draft social studies curriculum on stage at the Ditch the Draft rally in April of 2022.

"My experience working as a local professional development chair and diversity consultant has been extremely rewarding because for many people PD is transformational to their professional practice," Wilson Mitchell said.

Wilson Mitchell consults with businesses, government and community groups on how to intentionally address anti-Black racism while building inclusive communities. Currently she is the co-chair of the ATA Status of Racialized Teachers Ad Hoc Committee. Wilson Mitchell is coming from Edmonton Public Schools, where she is a diversity education consultant.

"I am an advocate in the areas of social justice, human rights and anti-racism and my wish is to ensure that all teachers receive the support they need for professional success and employment retention," she said.

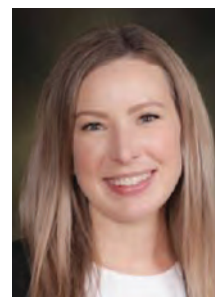
Wilson Mitchell is a former high school social studies teacher. She has her BEd and a master of arts in communications and technology from the University of Alberta. ■

PD program area welcomes Black Gold teacher

Jen Janzen
ATA News Staff

There will soon be a new face in the Association's professional development contingent.

Terra Kaliszuk will be joining the ATA as an executive staff officer on Feb. 1.



Terra Kaliszuk, new PD staff officer

Kaliszuk began her teaching career with Black Gold School Division in 2003 and has been with the division ever since. She's worked in several schools and communities teaching junior high English language arts, social studies, science, art and CTF programs. She has also been facilitating professional learning in various capacities for years.

"It is such an honour to be part of a peer's learning journey," Kaliszuk said. "As teachers, we are surrounded by amazing, expert colleagues from whom there is so much to learn."

Kaliszuk spent three years seconded to Alberta Education where, under the previous government, she worked to support curriculum implementation and resourcing. She received a bachelor of education in secondary education from the University of Alberta, focusing on secondary education, English language arts and biological sciences. She followed that with a master of education degree in educational leadership with a research focus on professional development and sustaining professional change.

Along with being part of the ATA's instructor corps and providing instruction at the provincial level, Kaliszuk has written about social and emotional learning for *Leaders and Learners* magazine, and also created two PD workshops for the Association.

Her career path began at an early age, as Kaliszuk's dad was also a teacher.

"I spent many hours on the weekend in my dad's classroom, helping to organize his collection of books or put up bulletin boards," she recalled, adding that the "warm, supportive and learning-focused environment" that she felt among her Association instructor peers is what led to her desire to work at the ATA. ■

5 MORE THINGS

about Gail-Ann

What excites you most about your new position?

Most of my experiences have been focused on working with teachers locally in Edmonton. As an executive staff officer in PD, my wish is to learn from many diverse voices and improve both educators' and ultimately also their learners' experiences for the better.

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

Learning about people matters as much as learning about content. Sometimes the things your students need most have nothing to do with what's on your lesson plans.

What is the greatest life lesson that teaching has taught you?

Amplifying the best qualities in people is what I treasure most about working in education. No matter what I've aspired to be, my greatest lesson learned is that being a good educator is rooted in being a good human.

Favourite song to put you in a good mood?

"Drops of Jupiter" by Train

Favourite hobby/activity/project on the go at home?

I love walking! Many years of playing soccer have left me with bad knees, so I've stopped running. My favourite activity is walking in the water anywhere hot and sunny. Does taking long walks on the beach sound really cliché?

5 MORE THINGS

about Terra

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

As you may have gathered, I absolutely love designing and facilitating professional learning. I am so proud to offer these skills in the service of my profession.

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

Be kind to yourself. Teaching is an intense profession, and it is easy to get into a habit of negative self-talk when you feel like you're running hard to stay in place.

What is the greatest life lesson that teaching has taught you?

The importance of empathy. Making a purposeful effort to understand and truly value others' perspectives enriches one's professional and personal life.

Favourite song to put you in a good mood?

There are so many! I love music of all kinds, but if I had to pick one it would be "Lemon" by U2.

Favourite activity/hobby/project on the go at home?

I love to make art, crafts and custom shirts when I have a moment to myself. My family and I are also four-season hikers — there's nothing like the great outdoors!

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.

New year brings new code of conduct

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

On Jan. 1 a new code of conduct for teachers and teacher leaders took effect. The *ATA News* sat down with ATA president Jason Schilling to discuss his thoughts about the new code and the new disciplinary process that accompanies it.

How significant is this change?

This is a huge, significant change for the Association. We've been performing this regulatory function for over 80 years and now that has been changed. It's something that we've not seen in generations.

What are your thoughts on the new code itself?

I think the new code could have been a lot worse. Initially they were talking about mixing together competency and conduct into the same code, and that would have been unworkable. It would have created a mess. They have kept professional conduct and professional competency separate, which is a good thing.

There are some areas of vagueness in there. For instance, one section of the code talks about ideological advantage. There is a definition that goes with the code but it's still quite vague, so I'm wondering what that will look like and what that means, and how we will see complaints go forward. I know that's caused a lot of concern for some members.

What else has caught your eye?

The code that we had up until Dec. 31 indicated that you needed to let the other person know that you were going to file a complaint of professional conduct against them. This new code doesn't require that, so some teachers have some concerns about that.

We've been urging teachers to talk to the other person before they file a complaint. The new code does not require that now, but you should still talk to them because you might be able to resolve the issue by having a conversation.

But in situations where you have a power differentiation, where somebody might be abusive to you, taking out the step of having to report to them that you're going to file a complaint might be a benefit.

How much do you know about the new disciplinary process and how it will work?

We have a general idea, but so much of this is so new. Things changed over on Jan. 1, but there are still a lot of questions about what the process is, what will it look like, and who from the panel will be involved.

There are a lot of questions that still need to be answered and, unfortunately, some of the answers have to come from seeing how the process unfolds.

What are your thoughts on the makeup of the professional conduct and competency panel that will hear complaints against teachers?

I'm concerned that there are only two active members on this panel. Previously, the panels that were created by the Association were made up primarily of active members. There were public members as well. You need people who understand teaching and the profession when you're making judgments about professional conduct and competency.

What are your thoughts on the minister now having the final say in all discipline decisions?

The minister could always accept or change a recommendation made by a professional conduct committee concerning the suspension or cancellation of a teacher's certificate. Certification has always been under the control of the minister. Most ministers, Ms LaGrange being an exception, exercise their power infrequently, if at all. In any event, penalties affecting membership status were outside the minister's jurisdiction.

The new process allows the minister to intervene and alter any penalty imposed by a hearing panel or arrived at through consent agreement. We keep hearing the ministry and the minister say that the Association couldn't be involved in teacher discipline because there was a conflict of interest and that this new process is at arm's length from government; now the minister has enshrined in legislation the ability to interject her opinion at the end of the process, so I don't know how that makes the hearing and consent agreement processes truly independent from government.

Overall, how are you feeling about where this is sitting?

I'm fundamentally disappointed that government went down this path to strip the regulatory function from the Association. We had been working with the government on improving the regulatory process and had made considerable progress, but the minister made a unilateral decision that it was something that the Association would no longer be doing. That decision was made without consulting us and it was a surprise. We could have found a better path forward that would have served our members and the public, but this is something that the minister has decided to do.

Do you have a takeaway message for members?

Our responsibility now as an association is to make sure that teachers' rights are protected through the process, and if they should happen to have a complaint of unprofessional conduct filed against them, to immediately call the Association for assistance. The Association will be here to assist you. ■

New code for teachers — the pros and cons

A new code of conduct for teachers took effect Jan. 1, 2023. Created by the provincial government, the new code replaces the code that had been created and administered by the ATA.

The new code contains the following elements that the ATA supports:

- The new code
 - is generally reasonable and quite similar to the Association's previous code,
 - incorporates direct references to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Alberta Bill of Rights,
 - handles conduct and competence separately,
- recognizes professional judgment and intent,
- corrects some problematic elements of the Association's code,
- applies to all certificated teachers regardless of whether they're employed in a public or private school, and
- applies to teachers and teacher leaders.

The new code contains the following elements that are a concern for the ATA:

- **Code language (preamble):** "The conduct of teachers and teacher leaders, both on and off duty, bears directly on the community's perception of the ability of teachers and teacher leaders to fulfill their unique position of trust and influence. Society and the school community hold teachers and teacher leaders to a high standard of conduct."

THE ATA'S TAKE: We don't know what this will mean or how the government may interpret this clause.

uninformed or underinformed opinions, but does not include programs of study established under the Act"

THE ATA'S TAKE: The question arises, what is ideological advantage? Although it is defined in the preamble, it is unclear what this could include. It mentions perspectives taught in a biased manner with the intent to take advantage of a student. It will be important to see how this is interpreted.
- **Code language (1.g.iii):** "the teacher or teacher leader shall not (iii) while in a position of authority, teach or lead in a manner that exploits the teacher's or teacher leader's relationship with students for ideological advantage, material advantage or other advantage"

Preamble: "In this Regulation, "ideological advantage" means perspectives taught to students in a biased manner with the intent to take advantage of a student's
- **Ambiguous provisions such as those related to "community perception" and "ideological advantage" will only become clear through adjudicative processes.**
- **The code privileges Alberta Education policy.**
- **It may embolden problematic parents/community members, motivated by ideological considerations.**
- **The code diminishes teachers and is a step backwards for the profession.**

The new code is missing elements that the ATA feels are important:

- No reference to protesting assignment of duties (not qualified or difficult to teach, Article 8 in previous code).
- No mention of items related to contractual obligations and providing notice for resigning in the *Education Act* 215 and 216 (articles 9 and 10 in previous code).
- No mention of adhering to negotiated agreements (Article 11 in previous code).
- No reference to how a teacher would protest administrative policies and practices or adopting a position of authority by administrator (Article 16 in previous code).
- No reference requiring an administrator to provide opportunities for staff expressions of opinion (Article 17 in previous code).
- No longer a requirement to advise colleagues first, prior to making a complaint about their competence or performance (articles 13 and 14 in previous code) even when this involves a routine disagreement among colleagues.

NOTICES

On Sept. 26, 2022, a hearing committee of the Professional Conduct Committee established under the *Teaching Profession Act* found that Donna Marie Ross engaged in unprofessional conduct. The hearing committee ordered that Donna Marie Ross is ineligible for membership in the Association for a period of two years commencing Sept. 26, 2022.

On Sept. 7, 2022, a hearing committee of the Professional Conduct Committee established under the *Teaching Profession Act* found that Alyssa Barbara Tungul engaged in unprofessional conduct. The hearing committee ordered that Alyssa Barbara Tungul be permanently ineligible for membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association.

For more information

The code of conduct and related information can be found at <https://www.alberta.ca/code-of-professional-conduct.aspx>.

The ATA has posted a Q&A for teachers.

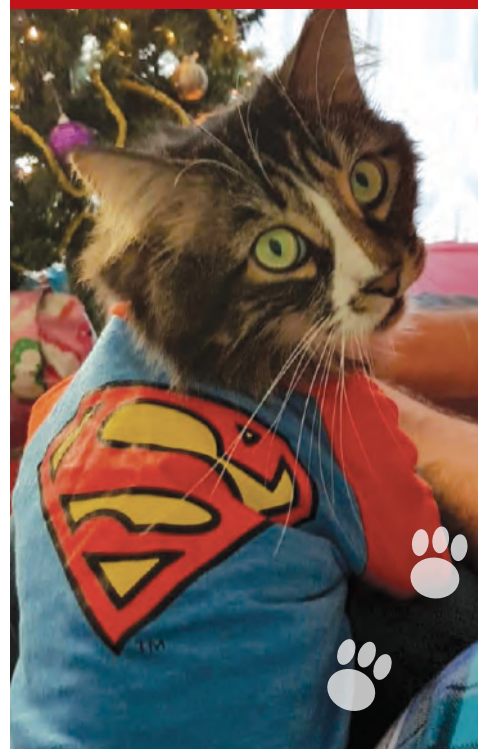


Furry friends provide work-life balance and paper shredding services



Teacher's PET

We asked teachers to send in pictures of their pets along with an explanation of how the animal helps them in their profession.



Leo

Leo is a very special kitty, to me and to all the classes that I have taught over the past eight years.

First, my students helped me find him! I was teaching in the northern community of Fort McKay when I decided that it was time to get a new fur baby. My students and I checked the Edmonton Humane Society's website every other day for over two months looking for the perfect match. When we came across Leo, we knew that we had found him.

Leo was a street cat. He was in pretty rough shape and was also polydactyl — he was a mutant kitty with 28 toes!

My class and I discussed how important it is to help rescue animals. We then tied that into finding ways to help the most vulnerable people/animals in our community. We also discussed the importance of accepting people/animals for who they are and that being different is 100 per cent OK!

Leo helps my students see me as an individual and a regular person, not just as their teacher. He also reminds my students that everyone is on a different life journey and we all deserve to feel safe and be loved.

Mai-Lynn McEwen
Grade 5
St. Theresa School, Wabasca



Fred

Fred greets me at the door when I get home and instantly helps any stress from the day disappear. If he could, he would come to school with me, as I often find him trying to sneak into my school bags. He also "helps" by reminding me to leave my school work at school by shredding any work I bring home — sorry kiddo, my cat ate your homework! (true story).

Kristen Lien
Grade 2 French immersion
Holy Child School, Edmonton



Wicket

Wicket is a four-year-old shih tzu who is sweet, friendly and playful. When he's not road tripping across the country with me (two-month coast-to-coast camping trip last summer), he's a volunteer therapy dog with the Pet Access League Society (PALS). He works hard and absolutely loves his job. He always has time for a cuddle with me after a long day at school too! This photo is from our summer road trip — Wicket at the Bonavista Lighthouse in Newfoundland.

*Julia Davis
Grade 8
St. Helena Junior High, Calgary*

Ollie

Ollie, a Siamese cross, is special because he's my source of entertainment, companionship and stress relief. I tell my students of his escapades, like eating my tomatoes, and it creates a commonality among us to discuss our pets and create a wonderful class environment.

*Shawna Watt
Grades 10-12, special education
James Fowler High School, Calgary*



Simba

Simba is a golden lab and golden retriever mix. Simba is a local celebrity in our community and is a friend to all the children. His unconditional love is a joy to come home to after a long school day. His love for the outdoors gets us out for a variety of walks in the evenings, which is a great way to decompress after work!

*Kirsten Chornawka
Grades 8-10, math and science
Harry Collinge High School, Hinton*



Chico

Chico is a Berna-doodle that belongs to my daughter Amanda, but I get to dog sit when she is busy with school and/or work. He is special because he is cuddly, cute and constantly getting into something or other. He keeps me active too.

Chico helps me in my profession as I can always start a dialogue with many of my students about their pet dogs and we immediately form a dog bond. We share silly stories and fun facts about what our dogs do or have done, and we always share a laugh or two.

*Angie Roppo-Bustillo
French as a second language,
wellness, Fully Alive
St. Timothy Catholic School,
Edmonton*

Watson

Watson the Wabbit is a well-known and loved member of the Cooper's Crossing staff. He loves to hang out with students and listen to them read. He enjoys pats and scratches as the students arrive each morning. He devours treats and his vegetables but also nibbles everything in sight (including books, paper, shoelaces, erasers and more books).

Watson provides therapeutic support to students and staff. Students who need some "chill time" love to sit next to him and read stories. He constantly makes us laugh with random binkies, giant flops, nose boops for attention, and the occasional temper tantrum if he doesn't get his way.

*Caitlin Campbell
Grade 3/4
Cooper's Crossing School, Airdrie*

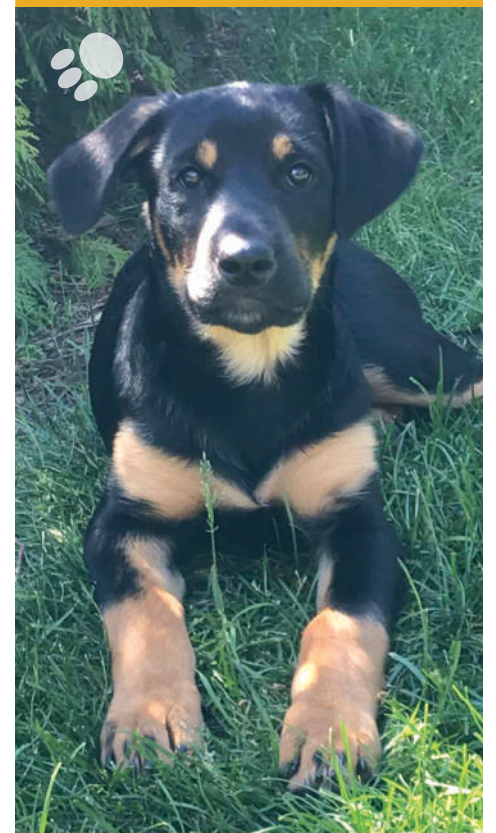


Nouggie

Nouggie is a lab/shepherd cross. He is special because he is the baby of my family. He makes me feel like a new mom as he's by my side constantly and always making me laugh.

Nouggie helps me in my profession by whining and bumping my side with his head when I've been looking at the screen for too long. He reminds me to take breaks and put the work away come a certain hour. He subtly suggests we need to go for a walk or play ball outside, even in the winter.

*Tammy Thero-Soto
Assessment consultant
Edmonton Public Schools*





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ATA unveils new teacher exchange options

Teachers and school leaders can connect with colleagues in Australia, Mexico and international schools

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

Three new exchange opportunities are available to Alberta teachers who are interested in connecting with colleagues from other parts of the world.

The ATA's teacher exchange program is currently accepting applications for a new two-week in-person exchange to Australia, as well as virtual exchanges with colleagues in Jalisco, Mexico and 16 Alberta accredited international schools located throughout the world.

Virtual exchanges have been popular and successful since they were introduced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the ATA's exchange liaison Carolyn Freed expects that the return of in-person exchanges will generate significant interest.

"I get the sense that people want to reconnect. People are wanting a little bit of a return to normalcy," she said.

With the new in-person exchange, the Alberta participant will travel to Australia for two weeks in late July, then host their Australian counterpart in

October. The program is open to teachers and school leaders and is a partnership with the states of South Australia and Queensland.

When applying, teachers indicate their area of interest and are paired with a colleague with similar interests.

Jalisco, Mexico is another new exchange partner. This virtual program will take place over a four-week period starting in May.

Third, a new program enables Alberta teachers to apply for a virtual, one-month exchange with a counterpart located at one of the 16 Alberta accredited international schools. These are located in 10 countries throughout the world: Mexico, Bermuda, Morocco, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Cambodia, Vietnam, China, Hong Kong and Japan.

Exchanges are a great way for teachers to broaden their understanding of education issues, make meaningful connections and continue their love of learning, Freed said.

As one exchange participant put it: "One day you will wake up and there won't be any more time to do the thing you've always wanted. So, hey, why not do it now?"



Aoife Cahill (right), a principal with Elk Island Catholic Schools, poses for a photo with her Icelandic exchange partner Ingileif Ástvaldóttir.

ALSO AVAILABLE

Short-term, in-person exchanges are also available to Germany, Spain and Iceland.

For more information or to apply for an exchange, contact exchange liaison Carolyn Freed at: Carolyn.freed@ata.ab.ca.

Protesting teaching assignments still an option

Despite new code of conduct, teachers can still protest assignments for which they are unqualified



PITFALLS & PRECAUTIONS

Chris Gibbon
ATA Staff Officer

As of Jan. 1, 2023, teachers and teacher leaders have a new code of professional conduct that does not include section eight of the previous code. This section enabled teachers to protest a teaching assignment for which they were not qualified.

In relation to school authorities

8 The teacher protests the assignment of duties for which the teacher is not qualified or conditions which make it difficult to render professional service.

With the new code in place, teachers must still be mindful to protest assigned duties for which they are not qualified to teach or where conditions of the

assignment make it difficult to render professional service.

So, how does one go about protesting a teaching assignment? As with most professional relationships, it is always best to have a conversation with your school leader first. If you have stated on your resume or curriculum vitae that you taught Science 7 in the past, it may be difficult to protest teaching it again even though you had no preservice training in the subject. Thus, be careful what you write on that resume.

If, in fact, you are not qualified to teach the subject area, it is important to speak to your school leader immediately. The longer you leave things to fester, the more difficult it may become to do scheduling changes. Further, having two university-level science courses may not make you an expert in teaching high school sciences. You need to be very clear with any school leader of your level of competency in your subject specialization.

The other issue you may need to protest is conditions that make it difficult to render professional service. Having 30 academically inclined students in

your English 30 class may make for a lot of marking, but having 15 kids in a Grade 5 class with multiple learning needs and no aid may be even more challenging. Some education experts have said "if you aim for the outside pins, you'll be sure to get them all." The problem with some class complexity is that those pins are in different lanes. For assignments such as this, it is once again important to have that conversation with your school leader.

If your problem is still not resolved after a conversation, it may be necessary to express those concerns in writing to your school leader. This is extremely important if your principal decides, down the road, to move to an evaluation on you. It will be more difficult for a school leader to be critical of someone who raised concerns well in advance.

If you ever find yourself in this predicament, be sure to reach out to ATA Teacher Employment Services. A staff officer will be able to help you create speaking points for a meeting with your school leader or edit a draft that you wish to submit so that your protest is documented.

Council aims to support gender equity

PEC POINTS

Audrey Dutka
ATA News Staff

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held Dec. 1–2, 2022, Barnett House, Edmonton.

1. Selected Gail-Anne Wilson and Terra Kaliszuk to fill two positions of executive staff officer, professional development, with duties to commence mid-February 2023.

2. Authorized an overexpenditure of \$25,000 for the 2023 Political Engagement Seminar.

3. Referred a recommendation to host two Beginning Teachers Conference events—one in Edmonton and one in Calgary—to the December meeting of Finance Committee for consideration.

4. Referred a proposed resolution to the December meeting of Finance Committee to consider a grant program in the amount of \$20,000 to support teachers, groups of teachers and local women in leadership committees to establish projects that support gender equity in schools and in the teaching profession.

5. In lieu of sending Christmas cards, approved a \$2,000 Christmas charity donation to the Alberta division of the Canadian Mental Health Association.

6. Approved the name of one teacher for addition to the Indigenous Education Professional Development Facilitators name bank.

7. Approved the names of four teachers for addition to the Association Instructors name bank. The bank is used as a source of appointments to the Association instructors corps as the need arises.

8. Appointed a field member to the Status of Racialized Teachers Working Group for a term to June 30, 2023.

9. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of one charge of unprofessional conduct for which the teacher was convicted of an indictable offence under section 151 of the Criminal Code of Canada for unlawfully touching a student, under the age of 16 years, for a sexual purpose. The hearing committee ordered a penalty of a declaration that the teacher is permanently ineligible for membership in the Association and a recommendation to the minister of education that the teacher's teaching certificate be permanently cancelled.

10. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of three counts of unprofessional conduct for using an inappropriate word while

assigning project work to students, for making an inappropriate statement while coaching a student and for speaking to a teacher colleague about a student in an inappropriate way. The hearing committee imposed a penalty of a letter of severe reprimand to encompass all three charges and a fine of \$1,000.

11. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of two charges of unprofessional conduct for slapping a student on the cheek and for using the cultural values of colony lifestyle to rationalize the striking of a student. The hearing committee ordered a penalty of a letter of severe reprimand for both charges, a declaration that the teacher be ineligible to hold membership in the Association for two years and a recommendation to the minister of education that the teacher's teaching certificate be suspended for two years.

12. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of two charges of unprofessional conduct for grabbing a student by the shoulders and physically repositioning them and for swearing in the presence of students. The committee ordered a penalty of a single letter of reprimand for both charges and a fine of \$500.

13. Received the report of an appeal committee that considered a matter of appeal costs and ordered the \$1,000 appeal deposit be returned to a teacher but made no other order with respect to payment of costs.



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ATA-CHANGE FOR CHILDREN *Teacher Exchange to Nicaragua*

July 16-30, 2023

Applications are now being accepted

Spend two weeks in Nicaragua assisting with the professional development of fellow teachers in two unique regions of the country. Work alongside teachers to provide art and cultural programs to students in marginalized neighbourhoods in Estelí, Nicaragua. Then travel by boat into the tropical forest, to support Indigenous Miskito teachers in the areas of bilingual education, technology for learning, and Indigenous knowledge development.

The goal of the exchange is to improve the quality of education available to marginalized children and young people in Nicaragua through collaborating with teachers. You will have the opportunity to learn about approaches and challenges to teaching in remote Indigenous communities and the critical role of education in development.

Travel and living expenses are covered by the ATA.

We are looking for ten Alberta teachers to participate in this exchange who have experience with art for learning, integrating Indigenous knowledge and cultural perspectives, bilingual education, and/or the use of technology for student learning.

Spanish language ability an asset, but not a requirement.

To apply, visit [teachers.ab.ca>My ATA>Programs and Services>International Cooperation>Change for Children Teaching Tour-Nicaragua](https://teachers.ab.ca/MyATA/Programs%20and%20Services/International%20Cooperation/Change%20for%20Children%20Teaching%20Tour-Nicaragua)

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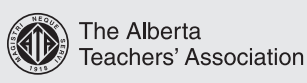
Storage shed for sale

The Alberta Teachers' Association has a storage shed for sale **as is**. The exterior has vinyl siding and asphalt shingles, and the interior is insulated with plywood walls. There is no floor. The shed is 105 x 244 inches, with an 83 x 83-inch overhead door and a standard entry door on the side for quick access.

This is a sealed-bid auction. Please mail your bid letter in a sealed envelope marked "Attn: Tracy Pohl—Shed Bid" to Alberta Teachers' Association, 11010 142 Street, Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1. Bids will be accepted until **March 17, 2023**, at 5:00 PM.

Your bid should reflect the fact that the buyer is responsible for all related costs, including relocation and insurance. The shed should be picked up by June 30, 2023.

For more information or to make an appointment to view the shed, please contact Marvin Bushie at marvin.bushie@ata.ab.ca or Tony Vandenberg at tony.vandenberg@ata.ab.ca or by telephone at 780-447-9400 or 1-800-232-7208 (toll free in Alberta).



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TALENT

January 10, 2023 | Volume 57, Number 7



WHAT ARE YOU HOPEFUL FOR IN 2023 ?

Good health for everyone.

Rishma Khakoo

Improving my **work-life balance**.

Kelly Cashion

I want my students to **be well** and be **successful**.

For myself, let's see what the next year brings ...

Dave Thiara

A government that **respects** education!

Tom Yohemas

I'm just hoping to **finish the school year** with my love for teaching intact.

Lori Karoly Szmul

I look forward to being able to **just teach**. Just teach. I am tired of being expected to do everything from being a nurse, social worker, at times parent and data collection agent and the many more hats we wear.

Chris McLean-Sleger

Healthy kids and people, less spite and rage-farming in the world especially in politics, a sense of **hope** and **positivity** in many facets of our world.

Janel Winslow-Sherwin

Being **valued** and **respected** for efforts to develop and change, over ability to meet expectations of what teaching was or is stuck repeating.

Adam Quraishi

I'm hopeful for **health**. I'm so tired of being sick. RsV COViflu no more please. My kids and I can't take it anymore.

Katey Scully

That teachers come to **recognize** their worth and contributions, and are willing to stand up to whatever government is in power to fight for better teaching/ learning conditions, and for **improvements** for our profession.

Heather Quinn

Responses gathered via Facebook.