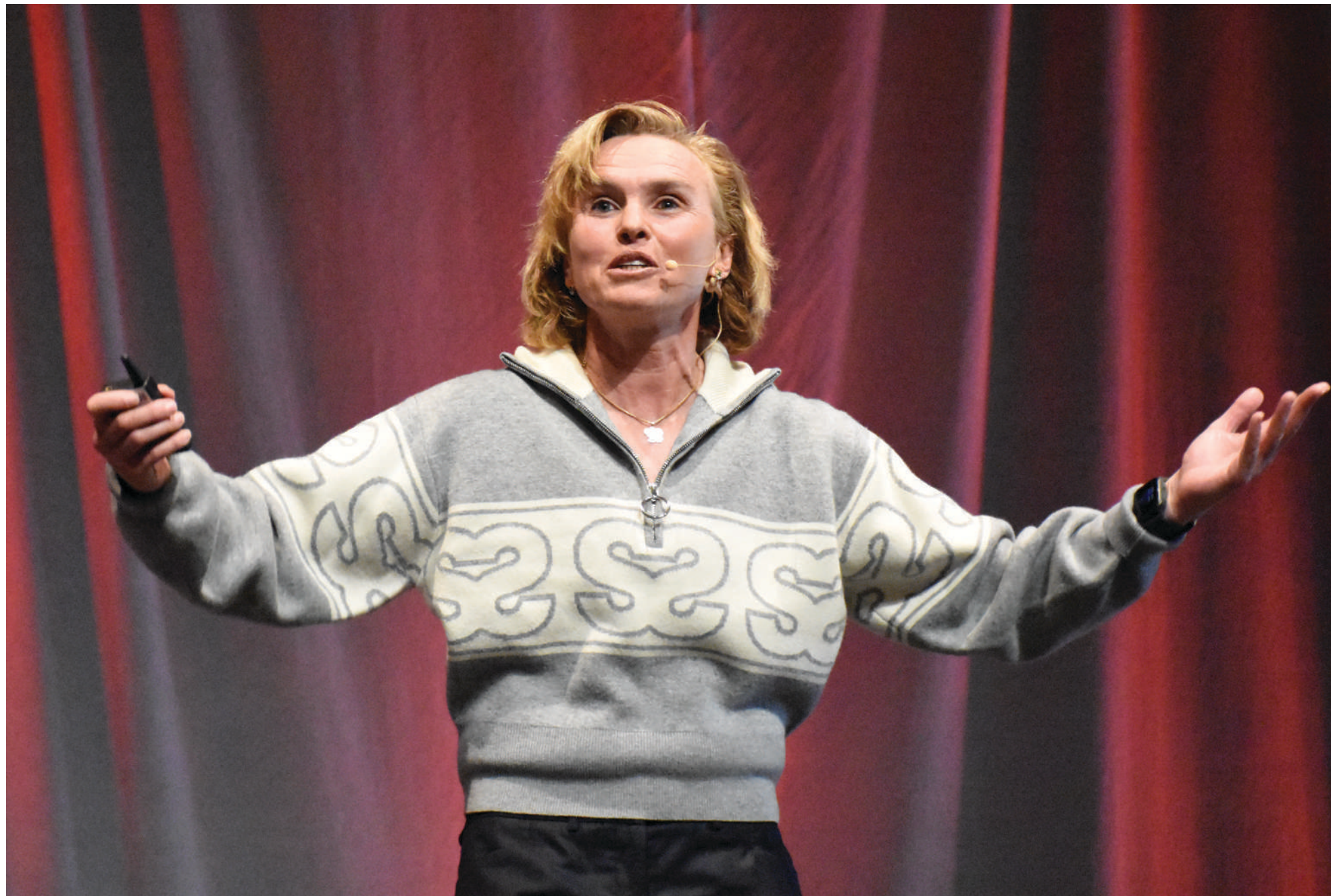




ATA NEWS

February 21, 2023 | Volume 57, Number 9

News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association



CORY HARE

Leah Goldstein delivers a keynote address at North Central Teachers' Convention in Edmonton on Feb. 9. Goldstein is an ultraendurance cyclist who, in 2021, became the first woman to win the overall solo division of the Race Across America. Her talk was entitled No Limit Mindset.



No two are alike

Teachers' conventions are always different and impressive.

Read Shelley Magnusson's editorial on page 2.



Artificial intelligence

Emerging AI tools are both disruptive and exciting for teachers.

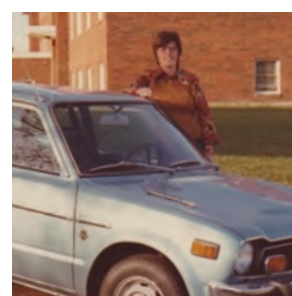
See page 5.



'Oh man!'

Netflix appearance an experience of a lifetime for Edmonton teacher.

See story on page 9.



'Toy car'

Parking lot adventures provide memories for retired teacher.

See Moot Points on page 16.

Conventions never fail to impress



EDITORIAL

Shelley Magnusson
ATA News Interim
Editor-in-Chief

By the time you read this, most of the teachers' conventions will be finished or very close to it. However, as of this writing, the only convention that has occurred is the North Central Teachers' Convention, the convention I attended myself as a teacher.

Attending my first convention back in 1993 as a new teacher living and teaching 450 kilometres away from Edmonton, I was surprised to learn that we were not only expected to attend, we were also expected to pay our own way. Meals, gas, hotel — all were part of our professional responsibility as teachers. We would pile four people to a car, drive to Edmonton after school let out and check into the most economical hotel we could find that was close to downtown and didn't look too seedy.

It was an expense that I hadn't really budgeted for. In later years, thanks to tenacious bargaining, we got half a day to travel so we could arrive in Edmonton at a decent hour, and our board agreed to take \$100 off of our

cheques from October to January and then give it back to us to help pay for convention expenses. (Yes, we knew they were paying us with our own money, but it helped.) If I am making this sound like quite the ordeal, it was. It was also some of the best learning I have ever experienced.

During the car rides to convention, we would all be looking at our booklets trying to narrow down what session we were going to attend. We talked about past conventions, and we talked about

At convention, we pooled our classroom budgets to buy class sets of novels that we could share. We looked at resources and yes, we shopped. I bought many a book bag while at teachers' convention, a couple of which I still use today. We attended our preferred sessions and got angry when the one we wanted was full, but that sometimes meant we went to a session that we hadn't planned on that ended up being incredibly useful. We saw teachers from other divisions who we saw only once

like me and some who were veteran teachers. I learned from them all.

After I joined ATA staff, I attended every convention in the province for many years as part of my communications role. One thing I learned is that no two conventions are the same. This year I will attend six of the nine conventions across this province, and at each one I will learn something new. For me it never gets old, it never gets stale, it never fails to excite and impress me. And when I think about the fact that these nine conventions are all organized by teachers — teachers who work all day doing one of the hardest jobs there is and then attend meetings in the evening and on weekends, giving up their time to plan the professional development for their colleagues — I don't know of any other organization that could pull this off.

So thank you to all of you who help to make these days as memorable as they are. Thank you. Due to a shift in my responsibilities, this is the last year that I will be traipsing all over the province with the ATA president to attend teacher conventions. I can tell you I am going to enjoy each and every moment, and I may just buy myself a new book bag. ■

“ One thing I learned is that no two conventions are the same. ”

what was happening in our classrooms. During those car rides I learned about my colleagues — their histories, their families, their fears and their dreams. I learned which books I should be reading and who had a great lesson plan they would share. I learned where the secret stash of Sharpies was kept and how to convince the maintenance man that my classroom really wasn't the temperature that showed on the thermostat.

a year, and we went out to supper with our friends and colleagues.

On our trip back we would talk about who we had seen and what we had learned. We talked about how we were going to use what we had learned on Monday morning. We debated some ideas: would they really work in a real classroom, or was this some idea that sounded good but wasn't practical? I was so lucky to attend teachers' convention with my colleagues, some who were new

Efforts underway to address website woes



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive
Secretary

Question: I'm very frustrated by the Association website. When I am looking for information, I have difficulty finding it and sometimes I'm bounced from the current site to a legacy site. What's the problem and what are you doing to fix it?

Answer: Thank you for asking a question that I am hearing fairly frequently from members.

Let me start by assuring you that providing members with a well-designed, fully functional website is a priority for the Association, and we are actively working to make improvements. But I understand your frustration and aim to provide both an explanation and some hope for the future.

It's important to realize that the website is very much the visible tip of a larger information technology iceberg. Our work, by necessity, involves bringing our entire IT infrastructure up to industry standard. It is not possible to fix just one part of

the whole, and this is a monumental undertaking made more difficult by several different factors.

First, there is the complexity of the Association's work. Because we provide an unusually wide range of very different services to a large and diverse population, it is very difficult to design a website that is optimized for everyone. We are, however, trying to be responsive to member needs and are analysing how our site is used to enable us to focus on improving access to those services and information most sought after by members. This may mean, however, that some members (typically and unfortunately those with specialized roles and interests) in the short term will not find the site to be as useful to them as they would like. The complexity of our site contributes to an enormous transitional challenge. Thousands of pages of information on the existing site have to be individually and manually evaluated for accuracy and relevance, rewritten and tagged with new metadata, and then imported over to the new site.

Second, we are having to address a technology deficit that has accumulated over the course of many years to build capacity that we can then sustain into the future. This means fundamentally changing the way we conduct our IT

business. We will be moving away from maintaining of our own infrastructure and relying on purchasing services and support from vendors rather than attempting to build and maintain our own customized software and hardware. For example, rather than maintaining our own servers, we will be relying to an increasing extent on cloud-based solutions. Website hosting and maintenance will be undertaken in concert with a provider who is designing back-end services that will greatly improve search functionality and other tools essential to an optimized user experience. This new approach will better enable the Association to continually upgrade our services at a manageable cost.

Third, we are experiencing some of the constraints around technology that are common across all sectors including a critical shortage of staff who are available and qualified to manage complex IT systems and implementations. Not only are we facing our own recruitment challenges, a vendor that we had engaged to assist with website development was unable to retain key staff and, as a result, has failed utterly to meet our expectations. This unforeseen development has forced us to move to a new service provider, upending our plans and setting

us back many months. Fortunately, we seem to now be back on track, and intend to make significant progress before the end of the school year.

The proposed budget for the 2023/24 year presented to local presidents earlier this month and currently being circulated to delegates of the Annual Representative Assembly (ARA) includes a major restructuring of our budget to respond to the challenges and strategy outlined above. We have been asked if we could use additional funding to speed up the work, and while we will be considering options for possible consideration at ARA, we do need to be cautious. The solutions we need to implement are not easily scalable, and as good stewards of members' money, the staff and elected officers of the Association want to ensure that our plans for the upcoming fiscal year are achievable and cost effective.

I anticipate that we will provide additional information about our progress on our IT projects to members, including the redevelopment of the website, on an ongoing basis. ■

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



Voting for Council is your right

VIEWPOINTS



Grey Jeffery
ATA Past President

Fake news. I don't accept these results. This election was stolen.

We have heard many statements like these over the past number of years and many of us are tired of them. But many others make a connection between the politicians who made the statements and the elections in which they were running. There are those who say that it's just not worth it any more, I'm just not going to vote. This is the top of a very slippery slope.

Voting is the cornerstone of democracy, and if we leave this franchise to the polarized extremes, the downward spiral we have been witnessing will only continue. You may now be asking "That's all well and good but why is this in the *ATA News*?"

We are now into our biennial ATA election cycle and your vote counts. We have one of the largest fields of candidates that I can recall in my 39 years of involvement. There will be many different points of view expressed, and each of us should want to support an aspiring Provincial Executive Council member who shares our own opinions. You will have ample opportunities to inform yourself about the candidates' positions. Print literature will be available in your schools. There will be in-person and virtual forums. There are candidate websites, and their bios have appeared in the *ATA News* (see the Jan. 31 edition).

When we all pledged acceptance of membership in the ATA at our induction ceremony in our first year of teaching, part of that pledge was participation in the democratic processes available to each of us. While it may be that some do not recall this, it has been in the pledge as long as I have been

involved in the ATA. For some of us, voting has led to further involvement, but you don't have to become provincial president just because you exercised your democratic right.

It has been a time of turmoil in our profession and in our Association the past number of years, so we need strong, decisive and informed leadership in order for government to hear and act on our opinions. Your participation

“When we all pledged acceptance of membership in the ATA at our induction ceremony in our first year of teaching, part of that pledge was participation in the democratic processes available to each of us.”

in this election helps insure the strength of our voice. Over the past years, both President Schilling and I heard at various times, "You don't speak for teachers." Voting turnouts in the 25 per cent range make this hard to refute, but if we all have our say in this election,

the next president and council will be much better armed to advocate for us.

Teachers should always model proper behaviour, and with a strong turnout, perhaps we can show all Albertans the importance of participating in democracy. The provincial general election will follow two months after our own and could very well be a crossroads for public education in our province. Let's model appropriate behaviour for our fellow citizens and help to rebuild faith in the democratic process.

Elections will also be taking place within each ATA local in the spring. It is said that change begins from within, and there will be many opportunities to "kick it up a notch" and seek a position within your own local. Whether it be on a committee, in an executive spot, or as a school rep, you can become part of the decision-making process for all the teachers in your area. Regardless of whether your interests lie in collective bargaining, professional development, diversity equity and human rights, substitutes or women in leadership, a slot is there for you to fill and share your knowledge and your passion. Give it a shot. It sure worked out well for me.

Your candidates will be available for you to meet in person, question and get to know better at your upcoming teachers' convention. Find the booth and have some conversations. The people running are committed to improving teaching and learning in Alberta and are happy to talk to any and all of you.

Voting will be online through the ATA website from March 13 to 16 and takes very little time. Your school rep is available to help you with the login if needed. Have some fun with it. Find another school to challenge for highest voter percentage. I'll leave the prize up to you.

There are many things coming at us from all directions, and we need a strong voice to respond. You can help strengthen that voice. All you have to do is vote! ■

YOUR VIEWS

ON TWITTER

On charter schools

Wing Kar Li, PhD @wingkarli

Charter schools are private schools parading as 'innovations' but really they just leach full public dollars to serve the exclusive few. Alberta needs to stop trying to import this failed American/UK experiment.

Support Our Students @SOSAAlberta

The truth is that charter schools siphon students and resources away from public education. They can skim students and exclude those with complex needs. They're hotbeds of privatization pure and simple.

On standardized testing

Lisa "Call me Cassandra" H-M is fed up @lhaukme

Standardized assessments, grades, tests and useless "assessments" like HLATs & PATs cause despair and hopelessness & do not honour the growth my students demonstrate and are so proud of. Burn down the system that serves no one.

On curriculum

Lorraine Cook @LorraineABStrong

Clearly we need to get politicians and ideologues away from our social studies curriculum.

In support of EAs

Tarita @EveryAlbertan

Time for a #SMPurpleWave showing support for our amazing #EAs. Edmonton Public School Board is in meetings with their EAs Feb 16, 23, 24 regarding wages and working conditions. Their working conditions determine our kids' learning conditions. Show your support. Wear purple.

Shamelessly Shantel @ShantelSherwood

EAs will be in meetings fighting for pay and support they badly need. Will be supporting our EAs by wearing purple these days and hope all those who love EAs will be too! #abed

Jason Smith @RealsmithJ

In one of my classes, I have an EA to support me! Her feedback is so helpful to my programming and direction. Our EAs are worth their weight in gold and I wish they were paid and respected as such...

chandra @canadachandra

Educational assistants absolutely deserve better pay and working conditions! I'll definitely be wearing purple as a show of support for our hard working EAs.

INSTAGRAM FEEDBACK

On Florence Glanfield being scheduled to speak at the upcoming Women In Leadership Summit

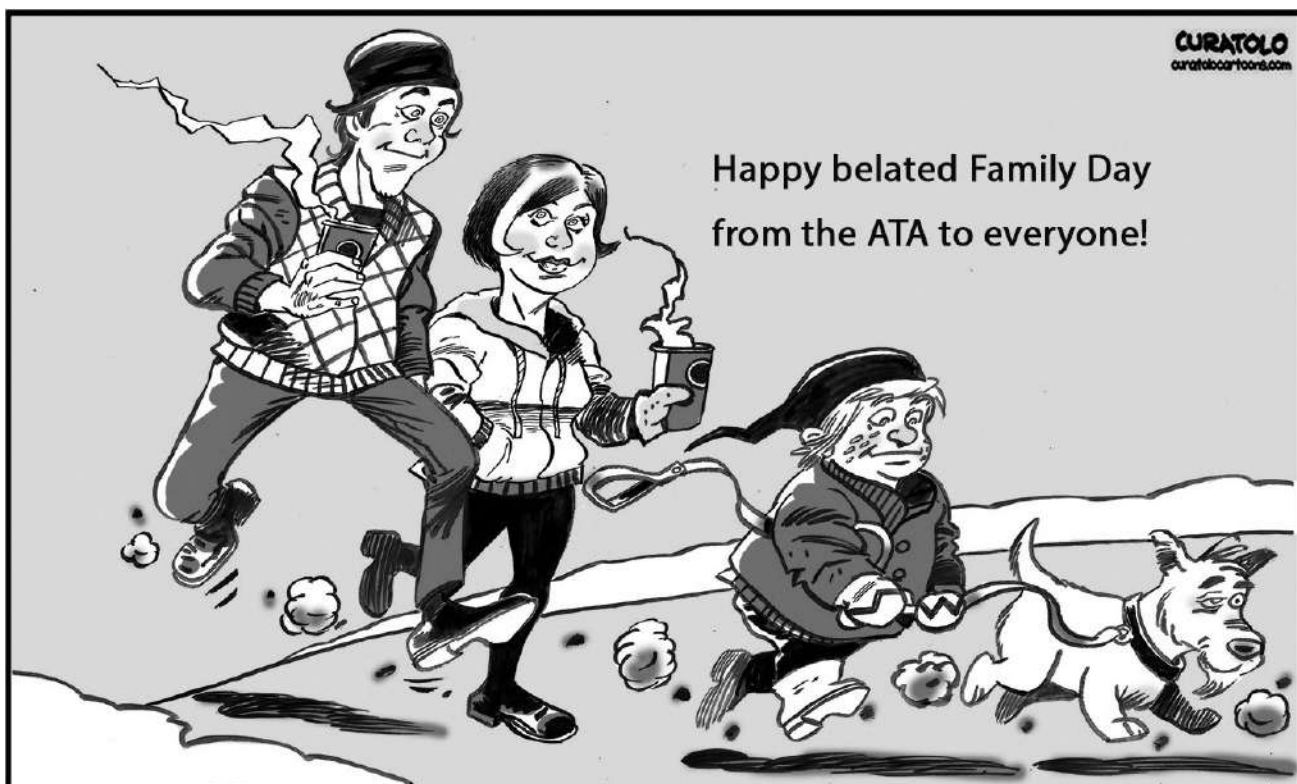
silaskills

I took a university course with Florence. She is a source of strength and joy! What a gift to give to everyone to hear her share her heart with all of us women!

FOR THE RECORD

“Education is the key to unlocking the world.”

– Generated by AI tool ChatGPT in response to this input: Write an inspirational quote about education in seven to 10 words.



Get ready for election action as roundtables conclude



EXECUTIVE REPORT

Elissa Corsi
ATA Executive Staff Officer

The public engagement portion of the ATA's Stand for Education campaign is nearing completion with just two events still to come. A francophone virtual discussion will take place Feb. 16 and an Indigenous community event, also virtual, is scheduled for Feb. 22. Registrations for these are being taken at standforeducation.ca.

These events will be the last in a series of roundtable discussions that have been taking place over the last several months. Teachers, parents, school councils and many others have been sharing their hopeful visions for the future of public education at in-person and virtual roundtable events, and through online submission processes co-ordinated by both the ATA and the Alberta School Councils' Association. Many ATA locals have also hosted their own roundtables.

The roundtables have been a powerful way to come together with parents and other supporters to help develop a shared vision for a strengthened public education.

We're excited to see the level of engagement that has taken place and the positive solutions that community members are presenting to support and/or improve public education in Alberta. The focus is clearly on Alberta's children and the supports they need now and for the future.

Several clear themes have begun to emerge from conversations around the tables across the province. These themes include

- **Equity:** the education system needs to be more equitable, address students' mental health and support children who live in poverty;
- **Supports:** all students should be provided with learning supports, trained professionals, and the technology they need to develop to their full potential, especially children with exceptionalities and those in rural areas where it's difficult to access these resources;
- **Curriculum:** a new modern, inclusive curriculum should be developed in consultation with teachers and curriculum experts;
- **Investments:** the public education system needs sustainable, increased investments, from technology to infrastructure to the hiring of more teachers;

- **Class sizes:** efforts must be made to reduce class sizes and to address the complexity of children's learning needs in the classroom.

The final report will summarize the outcomes from the public engagement process and will be released in early March. It will serve as one important tool for engaging with candidates from all political parties.

The path to the election

Over the next few weeks, the Stand for Education campaign will shift from the public engagement roundtable phase into the election period, when we will encourage teachers to actively engage with political candidates and their parties to mobilize, raise their voices and take action so we can make education one of the key issues during the election.

The following is an overview of ATA's path to the election. More information will be provided over the coming weeks.

There are a few important political dates to note as we count down to the May 29 election. The government resumes sitting in the legislature Feb. 28, and the budget will be released the same day. The spring session will be short; there is no constituency week scheduled before session ends March 30.

In March, the Stand for Education website will be revised to include more information and resources so teachers and the public can stay informed and actively engaged during the election period.

The ATA will produce print materials and launch an advertising campaign as well as a social media campaign: "I stand for public education ... do you?" In April, the president will tour the province, and in May, the ATA will host an all-party education debate.

Locals and teachers will be asked to do four main things on the "path to the election":

1. Mobilize support for the campaign.

- Encourage people to join the campaign and stay informed. Ask them to sign up at standforeducation.ca to receive updates and access resources. Locals can help distribute print materials to teachers, parents and allies.

2. Engage with political candidates.

- Reach out and schedule in-person meetings with candidates from all parties. Ask them where they stand on public education, and tell them why you are committed to strengthening the public education system. Speak out and show your support for the social media campaign.

3. Support and help promote the president's tour.

- Find a date that the ATA president can join one of your local meetings to share information about the

STAND FOR EDUCATION



StandForEducation campaign and the upcoming provincial election.

4. Host all candidate education forums.

- Organize all-candidate constituency forums. The ATA has election mobilizers to help with all your provincial election activities. Please reach out to them.

We are only 14 weeks away from the election. Start planning now how you'll get involved in the election and show your support for the Stand for Education campaign. ■

Register now to vote in PEC election

ATA News Staff

Teachers should register for an online account today to ensure they're able to vote in the ATA's upcoming Provincial Executive Council election.

That's the message coming from election organizers as they prepare for an online vote that will take place from March 13 to 16.

While all ATA active and associate members in Alberta are eligible to vote, only those who have registered for an online account and are in good standing will have the ability to cast a ballot. For this reason, new ATA members and associate members are being strongly advised to register for their online account now.

"Without a verified and valid account, you can't vote," said Nikki Cloutier of the ATA's Teacher Employment Services.

Account verification is a manual process that involves behind-the-scenes work by ATA staff. While most new applications for an ATA online account can be processed almost immediately, there are some instances where additional verification may be needed.

"It all depends on what member information the ATA currently has on file," said Cloutier. "If we still need critical information, such as their postal code, date of birth or a current copy of their teaching certificate, gathering that data from the member could take some time."

If a member doesn't have an account and has waited until the voting window has opened to apply, any information gap could cause problems.

"Their account may not be verified before the voting window closes, and that would be unfortunate," Cloutier said.

Waiting until the last minute to create an account for the election could also cause a bottleneck in the verification process, which could increase wait times even more.

"We encourage anyone who doesn't have an online account with the ATA to sign up as soon as possible," Cloutier said. "The sooner, the better."

Voting integrity

The detailed information collected during verification is needed to ensure the integrity of the vote, said Tanya Desjarlais, team lead with the ATA's Information and Technology Services (ITS) department.

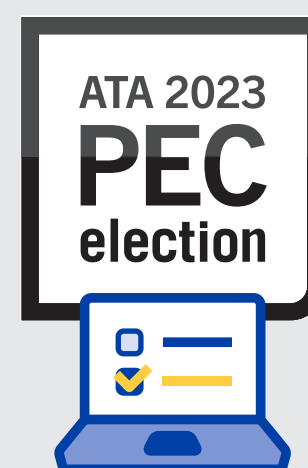
"We need to make sure that only eligible voters are taking part," Desjarlais said. "We also use it to determine which district voting page the teacher is directed to when casting their electronic ballot."

Teachers who already have an online ATA account are encouraged to verify their account information now to ensure it is still valid and up to date. A simple way to check is to log in on the website and update your profile. Occasionally, a member may forget their login or password, and after several failed login

attempts, their account will be disabled. The member will then have to call the ATA and have their account reactivated. This process also takes some time.

Cloutier's advice is to make sure you have your active online account up and running now to avoid disappointment later. ■

CREATE AN ATA ONLINE ACCOUNT



Head to teachers.ab.ca and log in. You'll be prompted to enter your credentials or create an account. There is no cost to sign up.

For assistance:
OnlineSupport@ata.ab.ca
1-855-407-3891
(toll-free in Alberta)

Emerging AI technology creates a stir

Teachers have questions and concerns about new tools that can write anything in seconds



ISTOCK

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

The emergent artificial intelligence (AI) tool ChatGPT is stirring up concerns and conversations in teaching circles due to its ability to produce written material on any topic in seconds.

Accessed through a website, the tool enables any user to type in a request such as “write a letter to the president of the ATA about ChatGPT,” and it can write it within seconds. The request can specify the desired word length and grade level.

ChatGPT and other tools like it are a major disruption for teachers, says Dana DiTomaso, an internet marketing expert who writes a weekly technology column for CBC Edmonton.

“The thing with this disruption is it’s come out of nowhere and suddenly it’s everywhere,” she said.

One of the main concerns is the prospect of students using such tools to do their written homework assignments for them. A post-secondary instructor herself, DiTomaso recognized this risk right away when she began experimenting with ChatGPT.

How does ChatGPT work?

When asked to perform a specific writing task, ChatGPT scans the Internet, assesses how

that type of material is written elsewhere and uses this to predict which word should come next as it assembles its own “original” response. It does this very quickly and produces a series of sentences and paragraphs that appear to be coherent and on-topic, says internet marketing expert Dana DiTomaso.

“It’s sophisticated in the sense that it can bring together multiple different sources to put together something that’s new-ish,” DiTomaso says.

“They call it AI because there’s some intelligence behind it, but the intelligence is really deciding what the next word is likely to be, based on the prompt given and its experience reading various pieces on that topic on the Internet. So, essentially, it’s a very sophisticated word prediction device.”

“I immediately started putting in my own questions for my own course just to see what it came up with,” she said.

She recommends this approach to all teachers.

“Put in your own stuff, see what it comes up with and have that as a reference.”

While ChatGPT has been the focus of much conversation since its release in November, other

such tools exist and more are on the way. Microsoft and Google are both poised to launch versions of their own that are built specifically for their search engines.

Included in that wave is image-generating AI that is sure to affect art teachers, DiTomaso said.

AI CREATES A STIR
continued on page 7

Emerging AI tools are both disruptive and exciting

Q&A with an ATA technology expert



EXECUTIVE REPORT

Danny Maas
ATA Executive Staff Officer

How much of a game changer is ChatGPT?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) text generation tools like ChatGPT that are emerging are, in my view, the most disruptive technologies I’ve seen since interactive whiteboards and projectors entered classrooms, and possibly since the internet itself entered our schools.

What concerns do teachers have about ChatGPT?

The primary concern of teachers is with student work that is created by generative AI tools like ChatGPT and the difficulty of knowing how much of what the student provides the teacher is based on their understanding versus what the AI tool has generated for them. These tools can generate text in so many different writing forms, and in such clear and effective natural language, that it becomes extremely difficult to determine whether a piece of writing came from a student’s mind, from ChatGPT or somewhere on the continuum between these two.

How does this technology compare to others that teachers have already been dealing with?

Since students began submitting work done outside of the classroom, there have always been some questions regarding plagiarism, copied work or work completed by another student. In the digital age, this risk was amplified somewhat by access to internet resources and typed digital submissions not being as easy to identify as handwritten work.

With tools like ChatGPT, this risk of students submitting work not their own is amplified even further, as these tools can generate very precise written submissions. For example, you can ask ChatGPT, “write an 800 word essay at the Grade 7 level summarizing the theme of freedom of choice found in the novel *The Giver*,” and in 20 seconds or less it’s completed. Furthermore, the tool “remembers” the conversation and would allow the user to say, “write another version of this essay but talk more about X and less about Y,” and the tool will generate new text. For teachers whose primary method of identifying student understanding is through written work done outside of the classroom, this turns the classroom learning and assessment model completely on its head.

What types of strategies/actions are teachers undertaking in response to this technology?

Teachers are beginning to do a variety of things in response to generative AI tools. They’re teaching

students about the ethical uses of AI in their lives as digital citizens. They’re treating ChatGPT like a “thinking partner” to generate and evaluate ideas, questions, responses and other outputs during class time. They are rethinking their methods of assessment to include less written work done outside the classroom and more performance-based tasks in class, more written work or quizzes being done live in class, or more submissions from students of video responses of themselves talking through screen recording tools such as Flip.

What are some positive aspects of the technology that teachers can tap into and use productively?

The most exciting aspect of these generative AI tools is the potential time savings for teachers in generating classroom learning materials. Here’s an example I tried, related to Grade 4, as I was first exploring ChatGPT. I first asked the tool to generate eight multiple-choice questions about the parts of a plant, suitable for fourth grade students as a retrieval practice learning activity, which it did in a few seconds. My next command was, “Create an answer key for these questions,” which it did.

Thinking about cross-curricular connections related to this plant growth and changes unit in

EMERGING AI TOOLS
continued on page 7

NOTICES AND EVENTS

Temporary supervisor positions available

Are you interested in helping youth gain work experience during the Calgary Stampede? Applications are now being accepted for paid supervisor positions with the Stampede Work Experience Program. Each year the program employs more than 260 youths aged 13 to 17. For many, it is their very first job. The program is seeking

individuals who enjoy leadership and are interested in gaining experience and exposure to working collaboratively with external partners and community organizations.

Applications are being accepted through the Trellis Society career page (www.growwithtrellis.ca). The application deadline is April 21.



JUNE 1 - 4, 2023
St. Albert, AB

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Check out childfest.com for all the details on feature performances, paid and free activities and more!

SCHOOL & GROUP tickets on sale NOW!

FEATURE PERFORMANCES



Aloft Circus Arts presents **BRAVE SPACE**



Brush Theatre Presents **DOODLE POP**



OTACIMOW DĀCĪJĀ: **STORYTELLER**



Manual Cinema Presents **LEONARDO! A WONDERFUL SHOW ABOUT A TERRIBLE MONSTER**



ILL-ABILITIES Presents **NO EXCUSES, NO LIMITS**



St. Albert Children's Theatre Presents **SEUSSICAL JR.**

STUDENT PRICING

Thursday and Friday:

Use presale access code **SCHOOLICF23** to purchase tickets. Groups of 10 or more will automatically get a **25% discount!**

Feature Performances from \$12
Paid Activities from \$5.25

Book your Children's Festival experience for your class online at tickets.stalbert.ca.

Tickets are available on a **first-come, first-served basis!**

Need Help Planning Your Day?

Contact our School Liaison at **587-920-9851** or childrensfestival@stalbert.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

780-447-9460



The Alberta Teachers' Association



Humane Educator's Toolkit

To request this toolkit visit: everylivingthing.ca/KitRequest

This toolkit explores how demonstrating respect, care and empathy for animals can be expanded to include people and the environment!

Included in the toolkit:

- Information and curriculum-aligned resources
- Activities including: the Seven Sacred Teachings and One Health in the Classroom
- Animal stickers

Off Script

with ATA President Jason Schilling



Students choose you every day

When I am fortunate enough to address new teachers, I always talk about the importance of relationships in education – the ones we create with our students, their parents, our colleagues and our school's community. If you have been in the classroom, you know exactly what I am writing about. The relationships we build in our schools are important as they are a source of support and energy. I encourage new teachers to foster the good relationships and learn to steer around the toxic ones, though that is always easier said than done.

Recently, I have run into some former students who are now teachers. We reminisce about the funny things that may have happened in class, such as the fact that I acted out a scene of *King Lear* with a Mr. Potato Head. Or we simply talk about what they have been up to since graduation.

You never know when and where you might run into a former student or what their reaction might be when they recognize you. At some point in our

careers, for a variety of reasons, we are someone's favourite teacher and conversely someone's least favourite teacher. These moments with former students are special and it is always fun to run into them (though I am sometimes unsure what to do with the comment that I still "look the same").

So why do I bring this up today? Well, as I write this, it just happens to be Valentine's Day – always an interesting holiday. Now, I am not really one to celebrate Valentine's Day. Really, it's just an excuse for me to eat chocolate, which I can do pretty much any day of the year. However, this holiday does remind me of relationships, both personal and professional. Teaching is difficult and challenging work but also rewarding and wonderful. We often don't know the impact we have on the lives of our students.

Colleagues, you are the best part of someone's day; you are their safe space and the reason a student is excited to come to school. If you ask me, that's pretty special and should be celebrated every day. ■

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

AI CREATES A STIR

continued from page 5

She compares the sudden emergence of the technology to the release and proliferation of the first smartphones.

"This is the kind of technology that will change how people do things, and I think it's only going to change more and more from here."

Embracing it

ChatGPT has prompted many conversations among teachers and school board officials, said Jodie Walz, who sits on the executive of the ATA's Education Technology Council (ETCATA).

Her own school division, Calgary Catholic, has held PD sessions on the technology and is embracing the new technology rather than trying to clamp down on it.

"We're taking a very positive approach, as it's definitely going to impact teachers," Walz said. "How can we use this as a positive? How can we have a positive influence on teachers and use the tool to positively influence students?"

Part of the PD that the division has been offering is an exploration of the tools that are available to detect when a piece of content has been created by AI, but Walz stressed that these detection tools are not a fail-safe because they're always playing catch-up.

"So you really need to think about what you're assessing and what you're doing and get to know those students and build those relationships with students," she said.

She added that conversations with students about digital citizenship and academic integrity should be central to any strategy for dealing effectively with AI technology.

Walz said AI technology has the potential to be helpful to teachers in a variety of ways.

"It gives you concrete ideas. You can double-check facts. You can supplement your instruction with other resource and materials," Walz said. "It's a very powerful tool to assist teachers. We definitely don't want it to be the teacher." ■

Bogus claims bring consequences



PITFALLS & PRECAUTIONS

Chris Gibbon
ATA Staff Officer

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

Educating kids is a tough gig, and teachers need the support of their benefit plans to make their teaching career a little easier and less painful. Teachers can access many supports from their extended health care plans, including prescription medication, physiotherapy, massage therapy and other services. They also have access to excellent dental and vision programs as well as extended disability and life insurance.

From time to time, a small percentage of teachers

find creative ways to file claims for services that were not provided or that were paid for by another benefit plan or agency. Such actions are nothing short of fraudulent. Many health plans, especially those like ASEBP, are not-for-profit trusts that provide sustainable and holistic health benefits to teachers and other education workers. By defrauding the benefit plan, these unprincipled people cause premiums to rise for the employers, who in most cases pay for all the benefits.

In a recent case, a teacher submitted fraudulent claims over a period of several years, and an audit determined that this teacher had defrauded the benefit plan of thousands of dollars. In addition to suffering employment ramifications, the teacher also had to pay back the full amount to the benefit provider. A hearing committee of the ATA's Professional Conduct Committee also issued a letter of severe reprimand as well as a fine.

If you are ever unclear about what is covered or not covered by your benefit plan, be sure to call the ATA's Teacher Employment Services program area or look on the benefit plan provider's website for answers. ■

EMERGING AI TOOLS

continued from page 5

science, my next command was, "Create a short story of about 800 words at a Grade 4 level about a girl who learns what plants need to live." This could be used in language arts as a model text while continuing the learning in science. The story was really quite interesting: a young girl named Sophie learned about the essentials that plants need to survive, as her own plants were not doing well.

Continuing with language arts in a potential model writing lesson on the use of dialogue and quotations in stories, I next commanded, "Rewrite this same story but include dialogue between characters," and immediately I saw a very similar story generated in which Sophie spoke to her mother about the challenges she saw with her plants.

To assist students with identifying punctuation in language arts, I finally commanded, "Rewrite this exact story but leave out all punctuation," which it did.

I did all of these things to generate materials for multiple lessons in about three minutes. In fact, teachers are asking ChatGPT to write a series of lesson plans to generate lesson ideas, write sample texts for students to analyze in class, and even generate potential feedback comments they could adapt given the criteria of assignments they have. The potential time savings for teachers is

immeasurable, and it allows the teacher to spend more time generating excellent lesson ideas and less time on the menial tasks of the classroom related to generating learning materials.

What is your main message for teachers with respect to this technology?

My main message for teachers regarding the emergence of generative AI tools is to always remember that they are the teacher who leads the classroom learning experience; who knows and understands their students; who evaluates their students' understanding and provides the feedback they need in the way they need it; and who builds and maintains strong relationships with their student, colleague and parent communities.

While generative AI tools can provide ideas and materials to save teachers a great deal of time, they must never relinquish their autonomy and responsibility as the leaders of classroom learning. They can also help students navigate these new technologies in ethical ways that help their lives, as the functionality and proliferation of these tools will only expand exponentially in the years to come. ■

Danny Maas is an executive staff officer in the ATA's Professional Development program area. An expert in emerging technology, he has held various technology-related leadership roles throughout his 30-year career in education.

BITS & BYTES



ETCATA's latest issue of its newsletter, *Bits & Bytes*, urges teachers to try ChatGPT for themselves at openai.com.

The newsletter also includes a link to a YouTube

video in which two teachers explore the various possibilities of ChatGPT: Navigating ChatGPT, Chatbots, and Artificial Intelligence in Education (Panel Discussion). ▶





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2023 **gotcha!** PHOTO CONTEST

Cash prizes available!




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 and associate 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. 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!



SUPPLIED

Students perform a school concert during a music exchange program in Wabasca.

Music exchange program connects students

SUCCESS STORIES

Curtis Walty
Northland School Division

A music exchange program offered by Northland School Division is connecting students from a northern Alberta school with peers from Brandon, Man.

The program has brought together students from Mistassiniy School in Wabasca and Vincent Massey High School in Brandon. The Brandon students visited Wabasca-Desmarais from Nov. 30 to Dec. 5, and a return visit will take place in April.

During their time in Wabasca,

students from the participating schools performed concerts at Mistassiniy School, St. Theresa School and Oski Pasikoniwew Kamik (Bigstone Cree Nation Community School).

Brandon students also received a community tour, learned how to make a leather pouch with deer hide and beads, cook bannock and enjoyed some moose for lunch. They listened to an Elder tell stories, played hand games and participated in a round dance.

"When we parted ways, there were a few tears shed, but students are looking forward to the second half of our exchange in Brandon this coming April," said Boyd Davies, music specialist for Northland School Division. ■

Curtis Walty is the media relations manager for Northland School Division.



SUPPLIED

Students from Brandon's Vincent Massey High School gather with peers from Mistassiniy School in Wabasca for a group photo on the shore of North Wabasca Lake.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

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

Cooking on TV a tasty recipe for Edmonton teacher

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

Appearing on a Netflix culinary competition provided the experience of a lifetime for an Edmonton teacher who's been a lifelong fan of both TV and cooking.

Cook At All Costs required contestants to bid on ingredients then prepare two themed meals under severe time

constraints. For teacher Tiff Pino, it was a thrilling and exhausting roller coaster ride.

"It was probably the coolest experience I've ever had," Pino said.

An outreach teacher and graduation coach at Edmonton's Cardinal Collins High School, Pino is also a dedicated foodie who takes pleasure in spending an entire day in the kitchen and whose culinary leanings have been heavily influenced by her Italian heritage.

So it was a bit of a scramble for her when, two weeks prior to taping, she learned that the theme of her episode would be "southern comfort," in other words, she'd have to prepare dishes that were based on the cuisine of the southern United States. Pino practiced dishes like chicken, waffles and jambalaya but found it difficult to source other southern staples in Edmonton.

It wasn't until the morning of the taping that contestants learned of the show's ingredient auction format.

The competition involved cooking two dishes, one of the contestants' choice (Pino chose ravioli) and one that was mandated. As it turned out, Pino had to prepare crawfish, grits and collard greens, all ingredients she tried but failed to find in Edmonton during the weeks leading up to the show's taping.

"As much as the items in my ingredient box were new to me, I understood how much love and tradition goes into southern dishes," Pino said. "Those are things I put into my own cooking every day, and I am very proud of the food I created."



Casting call

Getting onto the show was an act of endurance for Pino. It began with a family application to appear on CBC's *Family Feud Canada*. The Pinos cleared a few of the preliminary stages before falling out of the running. However, a producer later reached out and asked if anybody in the family was a home cook. Pino jumped at that offer, which led to months and months of auditions and finally a taping at the CBC studios in Toronto last April.

The show taping was a whirlwind but also a marathon, lasting from 6 a.m. to midnight.

"It was like Christmas," Pino said. "Everything's a surprise. Everything's exciting. I was exhausted by the end of the day."

All eight episodes of the show have been available for viewing on the streaming service since December. Pino appeared in episode three.

One of the show's promotional videos shows her engaged in frenzied cooking action and declaring "Oh man!" which has since become her signature catch phrase. Thanks to various friends and family members, she now has a mug and T-shirt bearing her face along with her catch phrase.

The appearance garnered global attention on social media, boosted Pino's street cred with her students (many participate in her school's cooking employment program) and earned her an invitation to deliver a cooking session at the Greater Edmonton Teachers' Convention.

Her experience on the show also reinforced her personal conviction to always be authentic.

"The big takeaway was being myself was the best choice and I'm so proud of that," Pino said. ■



NETFLIX

Edmonton teacher Tiff Pino prepares to bid on an item during a taping of *Cook At All Costs*, a Netflix show that combines cooking with game show-style bidding.



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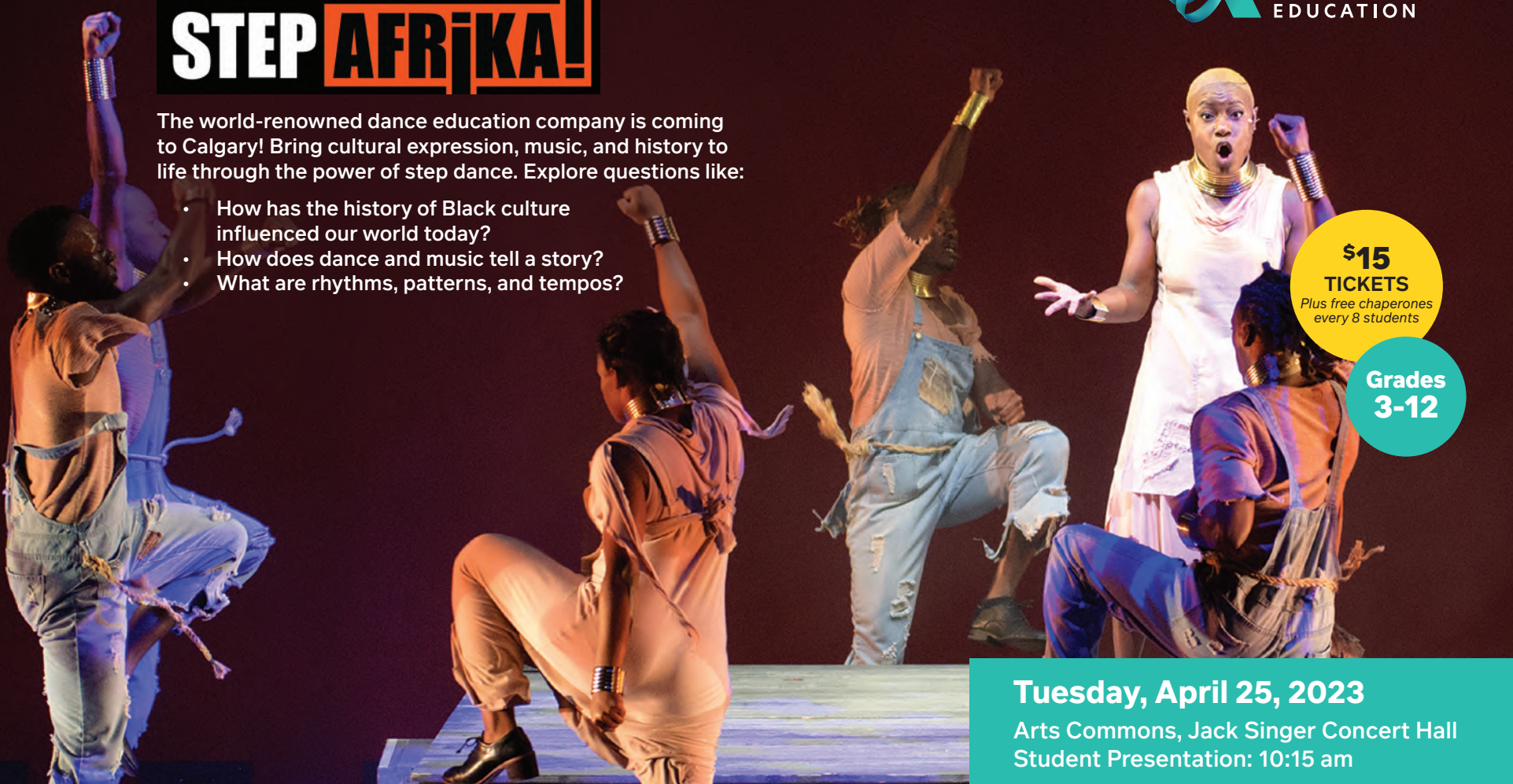
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- CTF/FCE Advisory Committee on the Teaching Profession

All active and associate members of the Alberta Teachers' Association are eligible for the positions. Members must hold the highest level of membership available to them.

» All applicants are encouraged to reach out to their district representative(s) to better understand the work that Association committees undertake. If you have any questions, please contact Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca, 780-447-9425 or 1-800-232-7208.

Find more details and application information on the ATA website

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Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies

APPLICATION FOR GRANTS Descriptive or Experimental Studies

Deadline: May 1, 2023, 4:30 PM

Applications will be accepted by e-mail; however, they must be received as a single letterhead-oriented attachment to the e-mail.

The Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies (AACES) invites applications for grants to support descriptive or experimental studies in education.

Grants in excess of \$6,000 are awarded only rarely because of limited available resources. Grants cannot be given for travel unrelated to the proposed research project.

Note: The application to the Ethics Review Committee must be initiated and a copy of the submission to that committee must be included with the proposal.

Online applications and the guidelines for grant applications are available at: [Alberta Teachers' Association > Public Education > Education Research > Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies \(AACES\)](http://Alberta Teachers' Association > Public Education > Education Research > Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies (AACES))

Application forms may be e-mailed to sudeep.dua@ata.ab.ca OR submitted to

Administrator, Alberta Advisory Committee for Educational Studies
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Completed applications received by May 1, 2023, will be considered at the spring meeting of AACES.

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Adventures with a

'toy car'



Irene Gagné with her 1974 Honda Accord, which drew a lot of attention due its relatively small size compared to the "boats" of the day.

MOOT POINTS

Irene Gagné
Special to the ATA News

In the summer of '74 I spent a few months in Great Britain, touring in an Austin Mini and loving it! Upon my return to Canada, I found that Honda had come out with their version of a Mini, the Accord. I was ecstatic — I would have a beloved tiny car, here at home.

The Accord came with a manual transmission and a choice of five colours. My blue one was one of the first 10 in Edmonton and soon became a hit wherever I went, nowhere more so than at my K-7 school. Some students would run off the bus and deke through the parking lot (a no-no) just to have look.

Some of the Grade 7 boys even took it upon themselves to play a joke on my "toy car." They would meet at the lot just before returning to class, lift one end of my Honda (like a wheelbarrow) and roll it elsewhere. Once they even placed it crossways between two other vehicles, making it impossible for me to leave the school grounds until both cars beside mine were gone.

This was a time when cars were long, heavy boats, so my car was way more fun! After the second relocation and my warnings went unheeded, I had to tell the principal. He gave the boys a good lecture about private property and the dangers of what they saw as a joke, and that for sure any repeat would be met with severe consequences.

All was fine for several weeks, but one afternoon, during my prep time, I had to get some art supplies out of my car, and I found my "wheels" between two playground structures not far from the parking lot. They'd assumed I wouldn't see it until after classes were over. Not a chance, boys!

I went to the three classrooms where I thought my culprits resided and asked the teachers if I could borrow some muscle power for a small job I needed help with. I even named a few who might help. The teachers readily accepted my request and sent the boys to meet me in the mudroom. Once out there, my work gang realized they had been busted. The pleas for mercy were numerous and I saw some start to sweat a little.

"Oh, please Miss G., don't tell on us ... we'll put it back where it was. We just wanted to do it one last time. Pleeese!"

I stood pondering their request and then said, "We'll see. Let's go."

My helpers rushed out to the car and heaved it up and slowly brought it back to the parking lot. But before they made it completely into the stall, I piped up, "Hang on fellows, that's Mr. T's spot. Mine is over here," I said, pointing to a spot two cars over. I really couldn't remember where I had parked that morning.

With gasps and grunts, Honda was back in a stall with the rest of his companions. I debated moving one more spot, but mutiny looked close at hand. On our way back inside, I said, "I guess we won't find out what those severe consequences were, right guys?" Heads bobbed in agreement.

After classes, a couple of the Grade 7 teachers asked me what in the world I had those boys doing. Apparently, they returned very tired and sweaty.

"But, hey ... not complaining," one of the teachers added. "It was quieter and who wouldn't like that?" ■

Irene Gagné is a retired teacher who taught for Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools.

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