

Teachers share

TALEND See page 12.

BACK **IN** CLASS HIGHLIGHTS

DIGITAL NEWS



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ATA NEWS

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Teacher Shannon Sasseville and her son Ellis try out the monkey bars during the first week of school at Ecole Morinville Public School in Morinville.

DARRYL PROPP, TEACHER,
ECOLE MORINVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL



No cuts? No way!

Government annual report shows cuts in education spending.

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ATA calls for dismissal of curriculum advisor

Chris Champion criticized for anti-Indigenous views.

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Research project quantifies teacher concerns

ATA checking the pulse of school re-entry successes and challenges.

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No cuts? No way!

Government annual report shows cuts in education spending



EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Raise your hand if you've heard Adriana LaGrange say there have not been cuts to education.

Now keep your hands up if you believe it. That's what I thought.

Since last fall teachers have been witnessing cost cutting by school boards. Many divisions came out and flat out said they had their funding reduced in last fall's 2019 provincial budget.

Yet, despite the reality on the ground, the minister, premier, finance minister and other officials maintained the consistent message: no cuts to education.

We could see the chart they posted in our sleep. We could recite from memory the bottom line number they pointed to — \$8.223 billion in operational spending maintained from 2019 through to 2023.

Well, I needed to rub my eyes when I opened the government's 2019–20 annual report in August and read the end-of-year actual: \$8.134 billion.

Just because something is repeated often enough, that doesn't make it true.

Page six of the annual report, which outlines all government revenue and

expenses for the year ending March 31, 2020, reads as follows regarding education: "The change from 2018–19 includes decreases of \$87 million in operating expense, primarily from lower school board spending."

As the kids say, we have the receipts. Spending in education for 2019–20 was reduced by \$87 million when compared to 2018–19, and that only accounts for 7/12 of the school year, which carries on past the March deadline for these statements. Furthermore, it does not account for the additional cut related to COVID school closures that took effect in May.

Interestingly, even in the face of this evidence, the government maintains its mantra.

"To be clear, government funding to school authorities was not cut in 2019–20," reads the statement from LaGrange's press secretary Colin Aitchison in response to this finding. "What appears in the annual report is what school authorities actually spent — this includes the funding provided by the province, but also their own revenues."

"When comparing the actual amount spent in 2018–19 to 2019–20, the \$87M difference is due to school jurisdictions spending less than they did in the 2018–19 fiscal year, not what they were funded by the province."

Yes, these numbers principally show the reduction in spending made by school boards (which I would call cuts, nonetheless). But I disagree that they do not also represent a decrease in provincial funding.

We also have the receipts for that! [School board profiles from 2019–20](#) are posted to the government's open data portal. They show that school divisions were projected to receive a total of \$6.615 billion in operational funding from the Department of Education.

Through a [freedom of information request](#), the Association found that the actual funding provided to school divisions in the 2018–19 school year totaled \$6.741 billion. A decrease of \$126 million.

The new findings from the government's annual report reaffirm the previous information obtained by the Association and clearly identify cuts in education, contrary to the minister's claims.

I don't write this column so much as a "told ya so" as I do for the purpose of fact-checking current claims.

Government officials are now proud to point to an increase in funding to school boards of \$120 million (\$117 million when you exclude charters) for 2020–21 as part of an argument that school divisions have the funding they need to battle COVID. This sounds impressive

until you reconcile it with the fact that boards were cut funding by \$126 million in 2019–20 and are still down from where they were two years ago.

But it's OK, argue ministry officials, boards also have \$363 million in operating reserves they can access. Well, not quite. School boards have not produced audited financial statements since Aug 31, 2019, so the \$363 million number appears to be at least a year old.

Furthermore, when the government introduced Budget 2019 in the fall, the minister recognized funding would be tight and encouraged boards to use reserves in order to preserve programs and staffing last year. As a result, school board reserves are not that high any more. To put it simply, they can't spend that money twice; much of it has already been used.

It can all be quite confusing. Sadly, I'm left to believe that the government spokespeople may be actively peddling this confusion in order to continue to advance their debunked claims of "no cuts."

In the meantime, school boards are left to fight COVID with no new funding from the provincial government. At least Justin Trudeau stepped up. ■

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

Think twice before hitting 'post'



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive Secretary

Question: I am very frustrated with how things are changing so quickly with the re-entry plan. We keep getting mixed messages. Is it OK to vent my frustrations online?

Answer: Teachers need to be mindful that their conduct is bound at all times by the standards of the Code of Professional Conduct. All active members of the Association need to adhere to the code 24/7 be it at school, at home or on vacation. Substitute teachers are bound by the code following the first day of subbing in a school year and until the end of the school year or until they are removed from the substitute teacher roster.

With the prevalence of social media, it is easy to quickly post a frustration

or comment online. Doing this may be problematic because employees have a "duty of fidelity" to the employer that requires them to raise concerns about district protocols and decisions through proper channels, which does not include public commentary. Disciplinary action against teachers as a result of such activity has occurred on numerous occasions. While we do enjoy freedom of speech, the duty of fidelity to one's employer curtails what can be said publicly. Further, it is essential to remember that your personal comments can convey a strong message to students and parents, and as such you must be mindful what you say and post on social media.

Critical comments about colleagues may breach the Code of Professional Conduct, and they are strongly discouraged. The code requires concerns about a teacher's reputation or competence to be shared with the teacher before expressing those concerns to a proper official, and these concerns must be done only in confidence (articles 13 and 14). Expressing comments online does not constitute a proper official and is not

acceptable; teachers who have done so have found themselves in breach of the code. Further, even if the name is not mentioned, but it can be ascertained who the comment is about, a complaint could be filed and lead to an investigation for possible unprofessional conduct.

“A sober second thought can save you the stress of being investigated for possible unprofessional conduct and can help maintain a positive working environment.”

Finally, teachers can express concerns about what the government may or may not be doing. However, these comments must still be made in a professional manner as the code governs a teacher's behaviour — not the behaviour of someone else. Contrary to popular belief, postings on a social networking site like Facebook are not restricted to those listed as friends. People familiar with the technology or those who buy

corporate accounts can gain access to a person's page.

Everyone is trying their best in these challenging times, so there will be some confusion and tension, at times, over changing directions. Before sending or posting a comment, sit back, reflect on

what you wrote and take an objective look at what is in front of you. A sober second thought can save you the stress of being investigated for possible unprofessional conduct and can help maintain a positive working environment. ■

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



Education the key to addressing racist attitudes against Indigenous people



VIEWPOINTS

Adam North Peigan
President, Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society of Alberta

As we enter a new school year, it is not without controversy as the government of Alberta has recently appointed Chris Champion as an advisor to the K-4 curriculum review panel. Champion moves into his new role and brings with him strong opinions about the Indigenous People of Turtle Island (Canada) – opinions that are outright racist and that promote hatred toward Indigenous people.

This is ridiculous and once again questions the integrity of Indigenous people.

The era of colonization, the signing of treaties, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls are all an important part of Canada's history. The Truth and Reconciliation commission tabled 94 Calls To Action and lists as a strong action item that governments create

Champion's recent assignment to the curriculum review panel is a patronage appointment. Personal handouts like this, on the backs of all Albertans, must stop.

It is vitally important that our children are taught the true history of Indigenous people in our classrooms as an investment in developing our future leaders as they move into influential careers. If you as teachers can influence our children now with the appropriate teaching of true curriculum, it will only help shape their future when it comes to developing and implementing policy decisions.

I believe that Chris Champion's perceptions of Indigenous people have no place in our classrooms, and his appointment to advise on curriculum review is not promoting reconciliation.

As teachers in the classrooms, you have a great responsibility to ensure that our kids are being taught the true history of Canada and to be mindful, whenever appropriate, that it's OK to bring Indigenous people into your classrooms as resources. There are also numerous resources available throughout the province, whether they be from the ATA, the Alberta School Boards Association, museums or your local Friendship Centre.

The Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society of Alberta (SSISA) has been a strong advocate in promoting education on the atrocities of the Sixties Scoop to mainstream Albertans. We have in our possession the National Sixties Scoop Exhibit, which is available upon request, that would be ideal for all schools in Alberta as an appropriate educational tool. It is our belief that providing venues for reconciliation is an opportunity to influence unhealthy attitudes that fuel racism toward Indigenous people. ■

age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, treaties and Indigenous people's history in Canada.

Most recently, Indigenous leaders in Alberta called for the removal of Chris Champion as an advisor to the curriculum review panel, as it was felt that his views were not favourable to the development of meaningful curriculum. Thus far our calls for change have been unanswered, as the government continues to support this individual. Also, it has become common knowledge that Champion worked for Jason Kenny when the latter was a federal cabinet minister. It can be interpreted that

Champion has published and edited for the *Dorchester Review* and is quoted as referring to victimhood centered on residential school survivors as over the top, which minimizes the impacts of residential schools in Canada. This is an outright attack on the integrity of our survivors, who are now Elders in our Indigenous communities in Canada.

Chris Champion's belief that the inclusion of First Nations perspectives in school lessons is a fad is absolutely deplorable and lacks insight into the true history of Canada. Further, he writes that the KAIROS blanket exercise brainwashes children.

“If you as teachers can influence our children now with the appropriate teaching of true curriculum, it will only help shape their future when it comes to developing and implementing policy decisions.”

YOUR VIEWS

Social media reaction to the ATA's call for curriculum advisor Chris Champion to be fired.

FACEBOOK

Darlene Gillis

Removing structural racism is a long-term health and safety issue for our staff and students. The effects of racism and the trauma inflicted, directly and indirectly, on someone's health over the span of a lifetime is enormous. Taking a stand against the participation of this man, who could be responsible for creating questionable curriculum and policy that schools would be legally required to follow, is the right thing to do.

TWITTER

Alberta Jewish News @ABJewishNews

It is in our best interests as Albertans to not have individuals with hateful views and opinions, like Chris Champion, in positions of power. This is especially true when it comes to matters concerning the curriculum that will be the basis for what our children learn every day.

Kathryn Mathias @KathrynMathias1

Excellent. Having a curriculum advisor such as Chris Champion, who believes inclusion of First Nations perspectives in school lessons is a fad, is a sure way to perpetuate systemic racism, IMO.

ON TWITTER

Rick @baileydog8

As a retired principal, I can only say that I am in awe of colleagues as they navigate school opening under very trying circumstances. Amazing. Stay well everyone.

Dr. Sterling @CAPedCrusaderMD

Every day I hear from patients how anxious they are to return to school during #COVID19. The battle against this pandemic and protecting our future is fought on many fronts. Teachers are #frontline workers and deserve to be recognized for the heroes they are.

Jennifer Garrison @DrJenGar

What gets me about COVID cases in AB schools is not that it's evidence of spread in schools (that will take a week or so to see.) It's families having to take 14 days off any time one kid in a too-large class is sick. This cripples families, even if we don't get sick.

Melissa @BeeTweetn

My kids' school is using federal funding to reduce some of their giant class sizes (like 37 Grade 5s in one class). A huge thanks to our federal government for stepping up while our provincial government continues to fail us.

FOR THE RECORD

“We're not going to micromanage our way out of this. We're only going to get through this if people exercise personal responsibility.”

– Premier Jason Kenney responding to a question about whether increased restrictions are needed to slow the spread of COVID-19.



Central bargaining set to resume after COVID delay

Teachers invited to complete new survey to reflect changing context

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

Teacher representatives will meet with representatives of the government and school boards later this month to commence central table bargaining after a COVID-related delay was agreed to by both sides this spring.

Members of the Association's Central Table Bargaining Committee (CTBC) will begin the three phases of bargaining by meeting with the Teachers' Employer Bargaining Association (TEBA) to commence list bargaining to determine which topics will be discussed at the central table and which topics will be discussed at local tables. After list bargaining is completed, the central parties will negotiate the matters assigned to central table bargaining, and local bargaining will follow at individual tables for each of Alberta's 61 public, separate and francophone school divisions.

Collective agreements covering teachers employed by Alberta school divisions expired on Aug. 31, 2020. Until a new collective agreement is reached or a work stoppage occurs, provisions of the expired collective agreements remain in effect.

"The COVID pandemic has had profound impacts on the entire education community, and both sides agreed in the spring that we could set aside collective bargaining for now while we focused our energies on COVID," says the ATA's associate co-ordinator for collective bargaining, Sean Brown.

"The process needs to resume, however, and we need to get to the table to start discussions on a number



of important issues — old and new — that affect teachers' work lives."

Brown reiterated that the delay to bargaining and the expiry of the collective agreement does not affect the current working conditions for teachers. He has heard concerns from teachers that collective agreement provisions, like assignable time protections or the guaranteed 30-minute break, are no longer in effect as a result of the agreement expiry and the COVID pandemic.

"Not true," says Brown. "All aspects of the 2018-20 collective agreement still apply and if teachers are concerned their collective agreement is not being respected, they must call us for advice."

Bargaining survey relaunched

Teachers are being encouraged to participate in a second bargaining needs survey in order to update the CTBC on how bargaining needs have changed since the arrival of COVID.

"COVID has changed so much," says CTBC chair and North West district representative Peter MacKay. "Teachers may have new expectations related to health benefits, family medical

leave, assignable time, salaries and many other parts of their collective agreement, as a result of how COVID has impacted us and the economy."

The initial bargaining needs survey was open from March 3 until March 23, a period that spanned over the stoppage of in-class learning amidst the growing pandemic. CTBC wants to make sure that no teachers missed the opportunity to complete the survey as a result of the pandemic's emergence.

The new survey will reassess some areas explored in the initial survey to see if attitudes have changed and will also ask some new questions on issues related to the pandemic. The survey will remain open until Sept. 27.

The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete and can be completed using mobile devices, although a desktop or laptop computer is optimal. The survey should only be completed during personal time.

Local bargaining 2018 – 2020

Thirteen school divisions remain without local agreements for the last round of bargaining where collective agreements expired at the end of

August of 2018. In some cases, local bargaining was pre-empted by COVID, but other units were able to achieve agreements since school was suspended.

"The trend for local agreements is well-established," says Brown. "We should be able to get these units to an agreement this fall, but unfortunately some boards are dragging their feet."

A strike was averted in the Horizon School Division when an agreement was reached after teachers there authorized the taking of a strike vote. Local bargaining reached an impasse in June and the government-appointed mediator declared that the two sides were too far apart to reach an agreement. At a general meeting on Aug. 24, teachers voted 87 per cent in favour of authorizing the ATA to request a government-supervised strike vote. The vote spurred a resumption of negotiations, and an agreement was reached on Sept. 1 and subsequently ratified by teachers.

Brown says local bargaining continues in the other remaining units, and he expects that agreements should be achievable without work disruptions. ■



A link to the fall bargaining needs survey can be found on the home page of the ATA website at teachers.ab.ca. Links can also be found on the Bargaining Updates and Members Only pages. **The survey closes at 11 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 27.**

ATA calls for dismissal of curriculum advisor

ATA News Staff

An advisor who has called the inclusion of First Nations perspectives in school lessons a fad needs to be dismissed from his role in advising on Alberta's social studies curriculum, says ATA president Jason Schilling.

Chris Champion was one of eight subject area experts hired in July to review drafts of new K-4 curriculum that's being developed by Alberta Education. The appointment has been

criticized due to Champion's views on First Nations, the KAIROS blanket exercise and residential schools.

Champion, the founder and editor of the *Dorchester Review*, referred to the inclusion of First Nations perspectives in school lessons as a fad in an article published in the spring/summer of 2019. He also wrote that the KAIROS blanket exercise, which illustrates how European settlement was harmful to Indigenous people, brainwashes children. In his writing he has also expressed doubt about the suffering experienced by survivors of residential schools.

Schilling said Champion has no place advising the curriculum writing work given the views expressed in his writings. He said the appointment to advise curriculum is in direct opposition to the Joint Commitment to Action that both Alberta Education and the ATA signed in 2016.

"Chris Champion has got to go," Schilling said. "The minister must either dismiss Champion or rescind its endorsement of the Joint Commitment."

Champion previously worked for Premier Jason Kenney when he was a

federal minister as well as the federal Canadian Alliance party.

Kassandra Kitz, acting press secretary for Education Minister Adriana LaGrange, told CBC via email that the government is committed to including Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum.

"Their views and unique education needs have been captured in the curriculum development work done to date, and that won't change as we move forward," Kitz said. ■



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.

Time for action

Authorities need to make decisions and spend money to address re-entry problems, says ATA president

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

It's time for school boards and superintendents to start spending the federal money they've been given and address issues that are affecting the safety and well-being of teachers and students.

That's the view of Alberta Teachers' Association president Jason Schilling as the new school year settles in and the number of COVID-19 cases continues to rise.

"Teachers and principals are concerned right now," Schilling said. "They're feeling a lot of stress and anxiety with the re-entry plan. There's a lot more that has been added to their plates."

Teachers in some areas are reporting that they are being required to do much more cleaning than was expected, giving them little or no time to transition between classes or take a proper lunch break.

Many teachers are also being required to take on additional students in their classes as teaching colleagues are being

moved to online delivery.

"We need to ensure that school boards are hiring extra staff," Schilling said.

Schilling is participating in regular meetings of education stakeholders, facilitated by the government. He said he uses these meetings to express the concerns that he's hearing from teachers, such as the need to reduce class sizes and increase the capacity for physical distancing.

"We still have teachers out there who don't have their teaching assignments yet," Schilling said, "so we're really trying to hold the feet to the fire of those who are in charge of this plan."

Over the summer, call volumes to the ATA were nearly 50 per cent higher than the usual volume, as teachers had questions and concerns related to school re-entry, collective agreements, contracts etc.

Federal funding of \$250 million, announced in August, has been provided to school boards on a per-capita basis to address pandemic-related issues, but so far there is little evidence of the money being spent and improvements happening, Schilling said, adding that the onus is on school boards to take action.



ATA president Jason Schilling is urging school authorities to start spending the federal money they've been given to address COVID issues in schools. ISTOCK

"They actually need to start making those decisions and addressing the needs in the building," he said.

He said that teachers want to be at work with their students, but they want conditions to be safe.

"That's something that they're not seeing, and they feel like they're not being listened to."

Outbreaks and individual cases

As of Sept. 10, outbreaks of COVID-19 (defined as two or more cases) had been reported at two Calgary schools — St. Wilfred Elementary and Henry Wise Wood High School — as well as Chinook High School in Lethbridge. The previous day, Alberta Health Services confirmed that 16 individuals with COVID-19 were present at 16 schools while infectious. The identified cases did not obtain the infection within the schools.

"It seems the majority of our new cases are coming from close contact, household transmission, social gatherings or other type of events that aren't necessarily easily controlled by formal public health restrictions or measures," said chief medical officer of health Dr. Deena Hinshaw.

Societywide, the number of COVID cases in Alberta has increased to levels last seen in May. On Sept. 9, Premier Jason Kenney said he doesn't intend to impose more restrictions on society, as doing so would come at the expense of people's livelihoods.

"We're not going to micromanage our way out of this. We're only going to get through this if people exercise personal responsibility and that's what we call on Albertans to do." ■

In their own words

Teachers share their thoughts on school re-entry

■ Finding out that Ontario teachers are being provided two medical masks a day and kindergarten teachers are being given medical gowns doesn't make me feel very enthusiastic about our two cloth masks for the year. Usually I find joy in back to school; not this year.

■ I am finding it tough. Love seeing the kids, but it is not fun sitting in rows and nagging about masks, hand sanitizer and distance non-stop. Sad to not be able to do group work and work the way I usually do.

■ It's very, very overwhelming. In a school full of people, you feel very alone. Questions are left unanswered and protocols are all wishy-washy. But

the bright side is the eager, smiling children that walk through that door every day. They are the only thing that keeps me going every day.

■ I'm excited to return to school and see the kids. They're generally a great bunch and I am lucky to teach at the school I do. However, I am more than a little concerned with my class sizes (34, 34, 38, 29). I see 126 students come through my room (high school) and feel it is only a matter of time before transmission occurs. The kids have been OK about wearing masks and sanitizing their desks, but we've been able to go outside and give breaks. When their fatigue sets in surrounding the preventive measures — say

mid-October — I expect cases to rise.

It's exhausting managing this and worrying about the future.

■ Too much time spent sanitizing desks, pumping cleaner in each kid's hand as they enter and exit the room, but we still have the entire curriculum to cover.

■ Now, after this week, we will be losing teachers, so our numbers will go from 23 to 29/30. This is not helpful to pack in the kids. Many have gotten behind without doing any work at home, and now let's cram them in. Where is the money from the government going? I don't see any on the front lines!!

Research project quantifies teacher concerns

Jen Janzen
ATA News Staff

Five minutes of teacher feedback could turn into a heap of insight for the Alberta Teachers' Association as it conducts a Pandemic Pulse Research project this fall.

Administered weekly and taking place entirely online, the five-minute surveys will gather a quick pulse of the teaching profession, recording successes or challenges of school re-entry plans.

ATA president Jason Schilling says it's important to keep tabs on how teachers are coping.

"Teaching and learning conditions in COVID-19 have been challenging and complex," he said. "The Association

will use the feedback we receive from teachers to inform our advocacy and our support."

The ATA's research staff is partnering with Alberta doctors and infectious disease specialists to administer the survey. There are two categories of respondents: a group of teachers and principals who will be regularly surveyed in order to gauge changing conditions throughout the year. A second, randomly-selected group of teachers and school leaders across Alberta will be the comparison population.

Results of each survey will be posted on the ATA website within 48 hours of the survey completion.

Highlights from the first survey, which took place from Aug. 28 to 31, include

- Class sizes are large: 25 per cent of the respondents indicated that their largest classes will have 30 to 40 or more students, making physical distancing a significant (if not impossible) challenge.
- It is estimated that 15 per cent of the classes across Alberta will have between 30 to 35 students, 8 per cent will have 35 to 40 students, and 3 per cent of teachers will be teaching classes with more than 40 students.
- Seventy per cent of Alberta teachers did not receive two reusable masks from the Alberta government on their first day with all staff back in school buildings.
- Given the last-minute changes in school jurisdictions, 27 per cent of teachers do not yet know their teaching assignment(s), and 70 per

cent of schools are still working on their timetables for classes.

- Generally, teachers are feeling demoralized about the Alberta school re-entry plan. Alberta teachers and school leaders found that their first week back in the school building was more difficult than expected (53 per cent).
- Half (55 per cent) feel unhappy or very unhappy, and the levels of anxiety and exhaustion are both extremely high (90 per cent) for teachers and school leaders across Alberta.
- A majority of respondents (65 per cent) would have preferred a return to Scenario 2, where in-school classes would have partially resumed with additional health measures. ■



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Pandemic prompts changes to federal income support

ATA Teacher Employment Services

The Government of Canada has made significant changes to support programs during the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic. Effective Sept. 27, the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) is transitioning to a simplified Employment Insurance (EI) program. Eligible teachers will have access to a new set of temporary and taxable recovery benefits. In the interim, the CERB will be extended by an additional four weeks, providing a new maximum of up to 28 weeks of benefits.

Qualifying for EI benefits is normally based on the number of insurable hours a teacher has worked in the year prior to their application or since their last claim. However, the pandemic has prevented some teachers from accumulating the number of insurable hours that is normally required. Recent changes will help teachers qualify with a minimum of 120 hours of work. EI claimants will receive a one-time insurable hours credit of

- 300 insurable hours for claims for regular benefits (job loss);
- 480 insurable hours for claims for special benefits (sickness, maternity/parental, compassionate care or family caregiver).

The hours credit will be available for new EI claims for one year. Additionally, as of Sept. 27, new EI claimants will receive a minimum benefit rate of \$400 per week (or \$240 for extended parental benefits), if this amount is greater than what their benefits would otherwise be.

If you are a teacher with limited or no access to paid sick leave, and you become unable to work because of illness or the need to self-isolate due to COVID-19, the new Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB) would provide

\$500 per week for up to two weeks in a one-year period, effective Sept. 27. Teachers would not be required to have a medical certificate to qualify for the benefit; however, you may not claim the CRSB and receive other paid sick leave for the same benefit period. Teachers would need to have missed a minimum of 60 per cent of their scheduled work in the week they are claiming the benefit.

If your child's school or daycare facility closes to prevent the spread of COVID-19, you may be unable to continue to work. As of Sept. 27, for a one-year period, the new Canada Recovery Caregiver Benefit (CRCB) will provide \$500 per week for up to 26 weeks to teachers who are unable to work for at least 60 per cent of their normal weekly schedule because they must care for a child who is under 12 years of age, or are providing care to a family member with a disability whose normal care arrangement has been interrupted for reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

How do I apply for one of the new federal support programs?

If you are already receiving benefits through Service Canada, you will be transitioned to the EI program once you have received the maximum CERB benefits for which you are entitled, if you are EI eligible and continue to need income support.

Teachers who are currently receiving the CERB from the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) who believe they are entitled to EI will need to apply through Service Canada after Sept. 26.

The CRA will administer the Canada Recovery Benefits, and Canadians will be able to apply through the CRA. In the coming weeks, the CRA will provide more details on how and when Canadians can get ready to apply at www.canada.ca/coronavirus. ■



Teacher values are shining during pandemic

Recently a colleague gave me a copy of David Johnston's book *Trust*, a book I had been looking forward to reading as part of my own professional growth. Johnston, a former governor general, says that his teachers possessed "a particular value or set of values that [he] admired and wished to adhere to in [his] own life." His commentary about teachers and values sat with me for a while as the ATA worked on strengthening the government's re-entry plans for the fall.

When I reflect on what Alberta teachers have been asked to do since March, changing the way classes were taught literally overnight, it strengthens my admiration for my colleagues. Teachers have demonstrated many

admirable values, such as resiliency, creativity, professionalism and empathy.

These last few weeks of summer have been unlike anything I have experienced, and that is probably true for many of you. The frustrations, anxiety and stress of starting a new year teaching during a pandemic are profound. Once again, teachers are being asked to do something extraordinary, to deliver education in a way they have never had to do before.

As they did last spring, teachers are demonstrating that their values are providing a tremendous service to their students, their students' families and the entire public education system. My admiration for my colleagues is growing stronger by the day. ■



Teachers involved in creative side projects or with stories about memorable lessons are encouraged to send their submissions into the *ATA Magazine*.

ATA Magazine seeks submissions from teachers

Cory Hare
ATA News Managing Editor

The *ATA Magazine* wants to hear from creative teachers.

The magazine's editors are busy gathering material for upcoming issues and are on the lookout for teachers who have memorable lessons to share with their colleagues, and teachers who have creative works to publicize.

About a year ago, the magazine launched a redesigned format that includes more content submitted from teachers in the field. The redesign brought about the creation of two new features: Most Memorable Lesson and Who's Out There?

Most Memorable Lesson is an anecdote recounting a lesson that was memorable for its spectacular success or failure.

"As teachers, we all know that we often learn the most from those lessons

that go horribly wrong, but it's also fun to share those lessons that go well, so those are the stories we're looking for," says editor-in-chief Joni Turville.

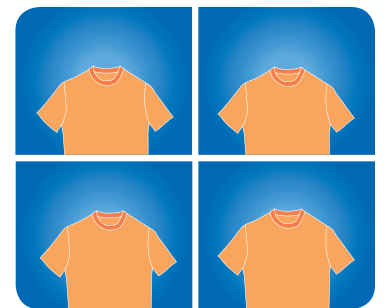
Who's Out There? is a listing of creative works by Alberta teachers, such as published books, podcasts, music albums or even art gallery showings.

"We're really excited to provide numerous outlets for teachers to connect with their colleagues, so I encourage all teachers to contribute to the magazine as much as possible," Turville said. ■

Have an idea?

Teachers wishing to contribute to Most Memorable Lesson or Who's Out There? can contact *ATA Magazine* section editor Jen Janzen at jen.janzen@ata.ab.ca.

Orange Shirt Day to take place virtually



ATA News Staff

Orange Shirt Day will proceed as a virtual event this year.

Held every year on Sept. 30, the event encourages the wearing of an orange shirt and normally sends busloads of teachers and students to gatherings across the country, but this year teachers can register and select from a variety of events that are available to livestream for their students. Teachers can also download free educational resources.

Designed for students in grades 5 through 12, the virtual event will

provide an opportunity to learn first-hand from residential school survivors, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, artists and leaders from nations and cultures across the country.

Originating in 2013, Orange Shirt Day was created by residential school survivor Phyllis Jack Webstad, whose new orange shirt — bought by her grandmother — was taken away from her on her first day at residential school when she was six years old.

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation is hosting the virtual event. ■

To register

Visit <https://education.nctr.ca/> to register.

Engage in Real Science

Make plans this school year to engage your students in a national STEM project from Let's Talk Science!

LIVING SPACE

Grades 6 – 9

How do you think your 'Living Space' on Earth compares to that of the International Space Station?

Let's Talk Science has partnered with the Canadian Space Agency to help students explore how environmental variables such as carbon dioxide, humidity and temperature influence human well-being through a classroom monitoring experiment that teaches data analytics, programming and digital literacy.

Learn more at
[letstalkscience.ca/
livingspace](https://letstalkscience.ca/livingspace)



Grades K – 12

Use the excitement of space to teach scientific inquiry at every grade level. Using two sets of tomato seeds provided by Let's Talk Science – one that has travelled to the International Space Station, and one control set - participants investigate the effects of outer space on seed germination.



Order seeds today!
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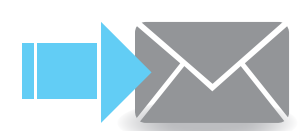


Apply today for the Aspen Foundation's Social Justice Learning Grants



DEADLINE: OCTOBER 6 2020

Applications available to download online on the Aspen Foundation website www.afle.ca

SLIP US A TIP!

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



DIGITAL NEWS

The ATA News is available in a digital format.

For the latest issue, visit teachers.ab.ca > News and Info > ATA News. Subscribe to receive an email when a new issue is available.

<http://bit.ly/ATAeNews>

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The Alberta Teachers' Association



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The ATA Educational Trust

Supporting teachers' professional learning

This year, the ATA Educational Trust will award over \$90,000 for

- **\$600** grants to help teachers with attending a conference, workshop, seminar, institute or symposium.
- **\$500** grants to help teachers attend an ATA specialist council conference or event. The names are chosen in a draw.

Grant application deadline: September 30

www.teachers.ab.ca > My ATA > Programs and Services > Grants, Awards and Scholarships > ATA Educational Trust

AR-ETF-25c 2019-09

CALLING ALL MEMBERS

Watch for committee opportunities that arise throughout the year!

The committees

To assist it in the business of the Association, Provincial Executive Council maintains committees that address topics of concern to teachers and carry out various aspects of the Association's affairs. Each year, a number of practising teachers are selected to serve on Association committees as well as to represent the Association on boards and committees of other organizations and provincial bodies (such as Alberta Education and education faculties).

The commitment

Committee members come prepared to speak—from their perspective as a field member—to the forces affecting the respective committee's work.

While most positions begin on July 1, positions are also filled during the year as needed. Standing committee positions are generally three years in length. As a committee member, you would attend the committee's meetings (the number of meetings varies by committee). Travel and incidental costs, as well as release time, are covered to enable committee members to attend meetings.

Throughout the year, vacant positions and application information are posted on the ATA website
(My ATA > Members Only > Provincial Committees > Serve on a Committee)

» Those interested are encouraged to reach out to their district representative(s) to better understand the work that Association committees undertake.

To learn more, please contact Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca, 780-447-9425 or 1-800-232-7208.



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TALENT

September 15, 2020 | Volume 55, Number 2



BACK IN CLASS

Students at Banff Elementary School show their "COVID-free hands" that they use to give high fives and play freeze tag while physically distancing.



Shea Fedorak of Berry Creek Community School in Cessford shows off one of several masks she had custom-made.



Staff at Senator Buchanan Elementary School in Lethbridge had special buttons made so students could see their smiling faces. "Smiling with your eyes is hard so this will help!" said principal Lenee Fyfe on Twitter.

Despite the difficult circumstances, what have you enjoyed most about returning to the classroom?

Alicia Lynne MacAlister

● The kids I never would have expected it from saying "I am actually really glad to be back."

Donna Knopper-Singleton

● All the lovely comments from the parents about how positive their child's first day of kindergarten was. And of course reading to them and not having to worry about my Wi-Fi glitching up or having a lag! The kids can respond in a normal and spontaneous way.

Jo-Anne Wickes

● I heard a parent in Shoppers talk about how grateful she was to her son's high school teacher, and was buying her an orchid. It made my day!

Ashley Gerein

● Seeing even kinders wear masks all morning and wash their hands so well. Parents have been doing their homework.

Brenda Smith

● Their faces when they clue in to how Curious George is about to "solve" his problem. Well, like, their eyeballs I guess.

Amanda Bain

● I have been so proud of how quickly the kids have adapted to new protocols in school. I was so nervous, but being around the kids reminds me how important school and teachers are. I sure missed teaching in a classroom!



Lorelei Gertz-Cummins

● Despite having to wear a mask constantly in my class, the students have been pretty great about adjusting to a new normal. After a few days in, teaching has come back to me like riding a bicycle.

Lana Marie

● When my class laughed and cheered playing PIG. My heart soared!

Cindy Mandseth

● Staggered entry is awesome and "zombie" line-ups sure help keep kids in their own spaces! Definitely NOT that awful sanitizer we were provided.

Allison Plamondon

● Actually seeing the kids in the classroom made me feel so much better, I feel 100% better about things this Friday than I did last Friday. I love that throughout the craziness, kids are still kids and it didn't take long to feel a bit of normalcy

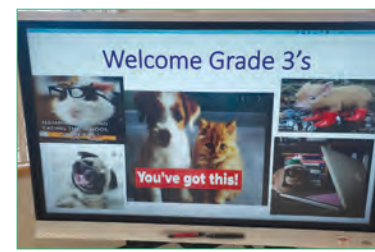
again. The first little note that a student made me saying they love school made it all worth it.

Jennifer Anne

● Seeing my little ones playing, (distanced and sanitized), on the playground. For the first time in months, it felt "normal."

Debbie McKinlay

● Feeling the kids' excitement for learning!



SUSAN MCGUIRE-SYMLINGTON

Ahh ... September!

MOOT POINTS

Ray Suchow

Special to the ATA News

Perhaps my most poignant back-to-school memory, especially since I've taught junior high most of my career and am frequently reminded of my own antics at that age, is frequently labelled as "the most unique" or "the grossest way to make a friend ever" by those who were there or by those who hear about it afterwards.

One day in September, as a new classmate and I walked home after school, we tried to figure out which was scarier, our homeroom teacher's gravelly voice or

the bright green jumpsuit (with huge red flowers) that she'd worn. Our reasoned analysis was interrupted by the sight of a rotting tomato on the sidewalk. Suddenly, here was something that could end our first day of junior high in a great way! But how?

We quickly decided that a vehicle running over it would be cool to watch. However, after placing the tomato on the road and being dismayed by vehicles swerving to avoid it, we were ready to give up when Edmonton Transit came to our rescue. To our everlasting joy, the good ol' route 27 bus obliterated our tomato into a red atomic mist! It was vaporized! We cheered happily, congratulated each other, then made plans to meet in the morning and walk to school. Forty years later, our friendship remains strong, and is probably the only one on the planet based on

the glorious demise of an unfortunate piece of fruit.

So, if you see junior high students making schemey fingers while nearby produce trembles, or a certain junior high teacher smirking because he's thinking about the same thing, have no fear—we're only midway through September, and there are more amazing days to come! ■

Ray Suchow teaches computer science and religious studies at Christ The King High School in Leduc.

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.

